

Voices in Tolkien:
Aquinas, *The Lord of the Rings*, and True Myth
in the Twenty-First Century

by

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Abstract

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Abstract: J. R. R. Tolkien in his writings both in fantasy literature and critical reflections clearly shows his passionate religious faith, deep knowledge of mythology and the significance of language in understanding cultural formation. His Catholicism links him to the great transmission of Church teaching most notably that of the foremost medieval philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not surprising therefore to find that Tolkien’s masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings* [1954/55] resonates in accordance to his religious world view. Primary importance can be ascribed to the Thomist discourse on the Virtues [the four cardinal and three theological virtues] and the concept of the Good. This study undertakes to explore how the Virtues and the Good are realized in the main personages of *The Lord of the Rings*, and how these are transmitted in film and associated adaptations by way of the Internet to a wide-spread audience. The answer is sought as whether the voices in Tolkien are being heard in the Twenty-First Century.

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Prologue:

The title of my thesis introduces three stages of investigation into my unifying theme - the Virtues and the Good - from their explication by Thomas Aquinas, to Tolkien's actualization of the same in his book, and how that legacy is brought into a new mythic setting in the present. I have come to this subject matter from two perspectives - that of a Tolkien reader with a particular interest in the author's contributions as a lay theologian and how Tolkien's Catholicism has transmitted Thomist teachings into the Twenty-first Century.¹ The rebirth of Tolkien enthusiasm through popular culture and media raises the question of whether either aspect of J. R. R. Tolkien's main work - *The Lord of the Rings* - its Catholic underlay and Thomist realization in the principle characters, have likewise been brought into the present day in an effectual manner. Specifically I was interested in how the Seven Virtues and the concept of the Good as distilled in the writings of Thomas Aquinas may be heard today through Tolkien's virtue based fantasy literature and as harmonized in his exposition of sub-creation and eucatastrophe.²

It was necessary in order to answer these questions to explore links between Aquinas and Tolkien, to offer an introduction to the Virtues, lay out Tolkien's theological premises and discuss how these were actualized in *The Lord of the Rings*. The Catholic Church of Tolkien's youth had re-emphasized the legacy of Thomas Aquinas. Father Francis Morgan, Tolkien's guardian,

¹ Allen B. Robertson, "Two Paths to Joy: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe" in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, Oregon: Resource, 2015): 20-31; Allen B. Robertson, "Tolkien and Narrative Theology: Story, Hope and True Myth" (Unpub. paper, 2013)

² J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984)

possessed a copy of the great *Summa Theologica*, which became Tolkien's replete with his own annotations. Hence there is no counter-argument that the *Lord of the Rings* author was unfamiliar with the medieval theologian and philosopher. His own statements in correspondence and lectures furthermore reveal that his Catholic insight was as much a part of his writings as were his mastery of philology, northern European mythology and the saga tradition.³ It was Tolkien's exploration of sub-creation and eucatastrophe which legitimately places him in the sphere of a theologian similar to his contemporary C. S. Lewis.

The writings of Aquinas have supplied this analysis with the unifying framework for Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance - the Four Cardinal Virtues, together with Faith, Hope and Love - the Three Theological Virtues - provided Tolkien with discernible characteristics for his main personages both in their positive aspects and in the negated opposites or absence.⁴ Aquinas's great goal, the Good, in effect bracketed his own theological synthesis wherein the Good is equated with our origin and end in God.⁵ Here is the parallel with medieval romance epitomized in the Grail Quest: the sought after end is perfection. Tolkien propelled the narrative beyond this literary precedent by showing that even though

³ Thomas Wagner, "Lord of the Rings appeals to Christians. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, drew on his faith to create trilogy" in *Halifax Herald* [Nova Scotia] 2002 Feb. 2 Saturday; Stratford Caldecott, *The Power of the Ring: The Spiritual Vision of J. R. R. Tolkien* (New York: Crossroad, 2012); John Seland, "Dante and Tolkien: Their Ideas about evil" in *Inklings Forever* 5 (2006)

⁴ Peter Kreeft, *Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica Edited and Explained for Beginners* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990); Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006; 1st pub. 1966)

⁵ Cf. "Pope John Paul's Address to the Eighth International Thomistic Congress - 13th September 1980" *L'Osservatore Romano* 20 Oct. 1980: 9-11. Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the Renewal of Thomism" *Nova et Vetera* 30, no. 3 (2005): 443-58

appearing to fail - as Frodo did at the Cracks of Doom with the One Ring - nonetheless the Good had reached out already to bring him literally and figuratively from the brink. This is the sublime message of Aquinas, that though the Virtues transform and guide one to the Good, in the end it is divine grace which supplies the defect in mortal frailty. Hidden in each individual is the *Imago Dei* which is adumbrated in the *Summa Theologica* and is the basis for Tolkien's sub-creation concept. Eucatastrophe which to Tolkien was his way of expressing the direct participation of God in creation - temporality and materiality - to create the unexpected "happy ending" which is that which enables the creature to return to its ultimate source, is likewise bound up in the *Imago Dei* of Aquinas.

The Virtues as analyzed by Aquinas are modes of thought and existence which propel one along life's pilgrimage toward its desired end. That is to say the Virtues are not ends in themselves. In the course of my dissertation I make reference to architecture in *The Lord of the Rings*, and by analogy to the fashion in which the *Summa Theologica* (as well as *Summa Contra Gentiles*) is constructed. The Virtues are philosopher's stones capable of transforming that which is base into something precious; the wounded nature of humankind can be altered into a spiritually elevated being. This is not an appeal to theurgic catalysts. Each virtue possesses worth and creativity because each flows from the source of all things - the perfection that is God. To conform one's life to the Virtues is to draw closer to an unfettered fulfillment of one's potential.⁶ Materiality is replaced akin to Aquinas's definition of Transubstantiation - the form remains but

⁶ Rebecca Kondyck DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey and Christian Vandyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory and Theological Context* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009); Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazor Press, 2005)

the substance is changed. The person likewise may be said to be subject to the Orthodox concept of deification - the in-filling of the Holy Spirit by which Christ lives fully in the transformed individual. This many faceted viewing of the Virtues is reflected in Tolkien's sub-creation belief - we create in imitation of the Creator, and are the creations of that Creator who continues to mould us over the course of our lifetimes. Tolkien's challenge in *The Lord of the Rings* was to infuse the Virtues into a fantasy world that was pre-Christian; indeed it was a pre-Judeo-Christian cosmogony. The Virtues were the splinters of the greater Light refracted into his world just as elements of Truth are refracted into past mythological narratives across all cultural boundaries.

Tolkien's Christian understanding placed the Incarnation and the Resurrection in a temporal and eternal nexus. Both were predicated on God's creation of humanity and God's drawing humanity to God's Self. The eucatastrophe of the Incarnation and Resurrection as the unexpected happy ending was given attention in Tolkien's lecture on Fairy Stories using - as I have stated above - the idea of fragments of Truth in myth which anticipated the foregoing. *The Lord of the Rings* as sub-creation had its own eucatastrophe in the destruction of the One Ring at the dramatic conclusion of the Quest by Frodo and Sam. Periodically in the text there are references to Providence or phraseology which implied that something was "meant to happen" - a balance between Divine foreknowledge and Free Will in the narrative. Implicit in the statements was that there was an overarching design meant to work for the good of life on Middle Earth. The Istari Gandalf who proclaimed on the Bridge of Kazadum the "I am a servant of the secret fire" was alluding to Tolkien's great web of mythology as later published under the title of *The Silmarillion*; it was a metaphor for Eru [that is, God] instilling the divine spark into

the vision of the world which endowed it with reality - Tolkien's version of the Imago Dei.⁷ This invested presence of God in Middle Earth consequently gave sanction for Tolkien to invoke the Virtues.

Elaboration of how the Virtues were realized in *The Lord of the Rings* was approached in the characters of the text with the main focus on Frodo and Sam, Merry and Pippin, along with the other persons of the Fellowship - Gandalf, Aragorn, Boromir, Gimli and Legolas. Successes and failures were gauged in growth of each one during the course of the Quest in order to denote transformation as achieved through aspects of the seven Virtues. Contrasts as found in anti-Virtues or their absence were found in Sauron, Saruman and Gollum as well as other figures of the story - Denethor and the Orcs. Reiterated in the negative sphere are echoes of Aquinas on evil being the absence of the Good; Tolkien repeatedly refers to the nothingness of the Nine Riders, the nothingness of the abyss that awaited the Balrog, and the reduction of Sauron to an "evil eye."⁸

It was a risk to include in the Aquinas-Tolkien virtues discourse an examination of the poetry and songs scattered throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien provided the incentive in his own statement that most people underestimated the significance of the poetry. In order to appreciate this pronouncement I abstracted all the poetry so that without the prose text as distraction I could view the former in relation to the Quest and to my own Virtues thesis.

⁷ Joseph Pearce, "True Myth: The Catholicism of *The Lord of the Rings*" in *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 2001): 34-38; David Rozema, "Pre-Christian Infusion: Faith, Hope and Charity in The Lord of the Rings" Catholic Distance University: edu.edu. 2008

⁸ Kristin Kay Johnston, "Christian Theology as Depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* and the Harry Potter Books" in *Journal of Religion & Society* 7 (2005): 1-9; Richard J. Purtill, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality & Religion* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003)

Individually many of the poems and prophetic sayings seem only to function as adding atmosphere or verisimilitude of historicity. Seen in groupings, however, a very different picture emerges. These parallel and support the story line, move from the mundane to serious, and attend to the Virtues. They are illustrative as well of the importance of sub-creation.⁹ In *The Lord of the Rings* it is only the races which are represented by the Fellowship and those who aid them which are shown to create song and verse. The elements of darkness such as the Orcs or Saruman are incapable of creating anew in imitation of the Creator.¹⁰ Hence in their fashion the songs and poetry are aspects of the Light giving evidence of Tolkien's Providence in Middle Earth.

Corruption and mockery are the products of anti-virtues; just as Morgoth in the beginning could not generate new life but only corrupt it (that is, in twisting captured Eldar into Orc-kind) so too Saruman took Orcs and humans to engineer the Uruk-hai. Neither the love of life nor joy of being were present in these creatures and with that void was the loss of creativity. It was the negation of the theological triad of Faith, Hope and Love. By contrast, for example, when even in a seemingly hopeless setting Tolkien presented Sam the Hobbit on the steps of the orc tower uttering a song of hope. Similarly Galadriel's song as the Fellowship sailed away on the Anduin, which spoke of a longing for the Undying Lands has its relationship to Tolkien's commentary on

⁹ Cf. Thomas Kullman, "Poetic Insertions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 23, no. 2 (2013-2014): 283-309; Francesca Bugliani Knox and David Lonsdale, ed. *Poetry and the Religious Imagination: The Power of the Word* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2015)

¹⁰ A caveat if given for the One Ring's incantation, "Three Rings ..." - arguably an expression of power and dominance cast as a form of poetry. It has been pointed out as well that the goblins in *The Hobbit* taunted a wizard and dwarves with Bilbo perched in trees, with a form of verse, an anti-verse that celebrated the negative - as did Sauron's ring incantation. The author is indebted to Michael C. Drout for *The Hobbit* item.

our longing for the Lost Eden, or akin to what Lewis called “sensucht.”¹¹ For the author of *The Lord of the Rings* that longing was in part the call to our end in the Good.

Other examples of transformation narratives between Aquinas and Tolkien are invoked to show that the latter belongs within a continuum of Christian writers. Dante and Dickens represent high literature [*The Divine Comedy*] and popular inculturation [*A Christmas Carol*]. The Hobbits in their homeland are not unlike the realm of Dicken’s 1840s London with its mix of hierarchies, idealized home-life, and evident disparities arising out of mortal imperfections. Overall *The Lord of the Rings* is a form of divine comedy moving from darkness, through hope, to final enlightenment. Its medieval vision and spirit conforms with Dante’s time as well as his nearness to Aquinas [who is mentioned in *Paradisio*.] The Virtues and Tolkien’s eucatastrophe theme can be traced in *A Christmas Carol* which lead to Scrooge’s reclamation. Dante’s poem, on the other hand, is a great depiction of a pilgrimage which leads from fatal choices with their consequences, to a shift along moral, ethical living, informed (whether knowingly or not) by the Virtues, and culminating in the Beatific Vision or the Good.¹² The ending of *The Lord of the Rings* is irradiated by the eucatastrophe of the Ring’s destruction along with glimpses of the Light that awaits the conclusion of each individual’s life whether in death or the journey oversea. All three narratives both in poetry and prose show that free choice remains for each person who cannot plead ignorance nor avoid the examples set before them.

¹¹ Robertson, “Two Paths to Joy”: pg.

¹² Seland, “Dante and Tolkien” ; pg. 367. “Literary Influences, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” in Michael D. C. Drout, ed. *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (New York: Routledge, 2007)

The post-Tolkien decades have seen several attempts to realize *Lord of the Rings* in aural and visual media. Concurrent with these have been the development of Internet forms which permit an amazingly diverse growth of Tolkien studies, fan bases and extravagant off-shoots (many of which bear no relation to the original text or author's intent.) Whether one uses the sayings "to separate the wheat from the chaff" or "separate the gold from the dross" the final challenge has been to encounter the residual message of Tolkien found in modern media, notably in filmography.¹³ It was not a goal to minutely analyze the Jackson trilogy or the earlier animated version of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Critique and response to written, animated and film forms were used to determine if the idea of the Virtues and the Good have passed into the possession of modern audiences. Tolkien was not a direct didactic writer as was C. S. Lewis in his fantasy literature. The message of the Virtues has to be memorable in the persons and their actions as revealed in the text. Adaptation of prose and poetry in film necessarily is an abridgement as well as rewriting of certain sections to fit into contemporary themes or "box office" requirements which further impairs the ur-text. There is a tendency to emphasize Northern warrior society values such as courage, loyalty, resignation to fate; yet out of the cut and paste of film script changes elements of the Virtues persist in aspects of prudence and justice, fortitude and temperance; the theological virtues suffuse the hope for success in destruction of the Ring, Frodo's relationship with Gollum, and Sam's persistent faith beyond betrayal and loss. The return of Gandalf from death is a eucatastrophic scene which reflects the Quest's end. That

¹³ Domenico Bettinelli Jr., "Tolkien on the Net: An Odyssey for the new millennium" in *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 2001): pg. 46; Steven D. Gradamus, "From Book to Film: Will Peter Jackson's filmography be faithful to Tolkien?" in *The Catholic World Review* (Dec. 2001): pp. 44-45, 47; Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes, ed. *Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Macon, Georgia: Regent's Park College Oxford with Smith & Hodges, 2005)

which holds the Virtues in tension in film is the tendency to equate their aspects with temporal, secularized right thinking without any tie to metaphysical orientation. That is particularly strained when the Theological Virtues are translated into an atavistic Common Good conversion. To what end do we as individuals and as a society strive? Is it to submit to an overarching drama written by the State, or to capitulate to hegemonic dictates of in-the-present enthusiasms? Tolkien suggests in his narrative that Virtues are the same regardless of the passage of time, that they are reflections of innate human characteristics and partake of a timelessness rooted in the Imago Dei. When film-adaptations endeavour to tie *The Lord of the Rings* to a set form of twenty-first century democracy [usually translated as that of the United States or Western Europe] over and against dictatorships and unequal social status they move away from memes which offer truths that are not tied to time or place.¹⁴

Transposition of the narrative *The Lord of the Rings* to on-screen stage drama even when distorted for the film-maker's lens has not erased the importance of light, joy, loyalty, sacrifice, compassion, and strength of spirit. Viewers are struck with the familiar which resonates in each person as a full range of emotions and hopes. Tolkien can place each one of us in a dark place surrounded with all that should lead to utter despair. His text offers the cathartic way out into the light. The Virtues and the Good guide Tolkien's story and by that means carry along readers and

¹⁴Michael A. Hall, "The Influence of J. R. R. Tolkien on Popular Culture": Hon. Thesis: Southern Illinois University Carbondale: 2005; William Dinghy, "A Poet for the Kingdom: The Sacramental Stories of J. R. R. Tolkien": [catholic culture.org](http://catholicculture.org) (per St. Austen Reviews) 2014; Jeffrey Mattinson, "A Potion too Strong? : Challenges in Translating the Religious Significance of Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" to film" in *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2003)

film audiences.¹⁵ Life does not remain static; it is a pilgrimage as much as the Quest of the Ring offering choices, transformation, and focus for the inevitable “gift of Eru” which is death.

Aquinas firmly believed that everything began and ended in God. Tolkien recapitulates that narrative which is outside and beyond the State, and other secular institutions. *The Lord of the Rings*, in the end, rests in hope.

¹⁵ Cf. Bradley J. Bizer, “The Christian Gift of J. R. R. Tolkien” in *New Oxford Review* (Nov. 2001): 25-29; David Rozema, “Pre-Christian Infusion”

Introduction:

Story Teller, Theologian: Why Tolkien and a Saint?

Tolkien's great popularity was achieved before the advent of the Internet and all subsequent social media developments. Print text was the great social medium by which *The Lord of the Rings* was disseminated in hardcover and paperback editions. Magazines and newspapers were the advertising formats for reviews, sharp critiques and a rapidly expanding secondary literature on Tolkien and his creation. Relatively inexpensive paperback printing of *The Lord of the Rings* facilitated rapid spread of the story among a younger reading public notably at colleges. Another threshold was crossed when articles on Tolkien's writings began to appear in academic journals in addition to the more populist magazines; some of the latter were either devoted to fantasy literature in general or to all things Tolkien in particular.

It has been observed that in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* became part a new age of self-assertion, idealism and ecological revisionism. Verlyn Flieger, in a BBC documentary done after Tolkien's death, saw the attraction of Frodo, Sam and the other Hobbits in the achievement of great things by ordinary persons. Public protests and alternative life-styles drew on the imagery and themes perceived to be underlying Tolkien's great epic. That is not to say that all inspirations bore actual resemblance to or were ever intended to be depicted in the book by its author. It is quite plain that Tolkien extolled the pleasures of good pipe tobacco. The latter was not an allusion to the use of mind-altering drugs. Though much dross did and continues to appear under "Tolkieniana" writings it is

undeniable that Tolkien's literature and articles have had and continue to have a widespread impact.¹⁶

One asks, however, what it is that brings out a positive response in readers to Tolkien's most popular fantasy creation, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the impetus to read all things by and about him? Tolkien wrote that he wanted to try his hand at writing a truly long story that would hold people's attention. *The Lord of the Rings* is not a revisionist critique of social structure, nor is it a political treatise; there is no economic theory (at least not as economists would recognize it), nor is it meant to probe consumerism or avant garde innovation. It would appear to be the antithesis of all these things. *The Lord of the Rings* is set in a quasi-medieval world populated with mythical beings, wizards and demonic forces. Quest, heroic action, noble sacrifice and exile run through its pages. There is no concession to late Twentieth Century political correctness having been shaped in Tolkien's imagination before the former was an issue. The phenomena of a Twenty-First Century readership defies all such considerations in a society of consumerism, rapidly expanding communications technology and a disintegration of community. Moreover a liberal society ideology prevalent in Western culture runs counter to certain moral and ethical

¹⁶ Jane Ciabattari, "Hobbits and hippies: Tolkien and the counterculture" (2014 November 20: BBC: Between the Lines): "*The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* became required reading for the nascent counter culture, devoured simultaneously by students, artists, writers, rock bands and other agents of cultural change." Michael A. Hall, "The Influence of J. R.R. Tolkien on Popular Culture" (Hon. Thesis: Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2005); Greg Harvey, *The Origins of Tolkien's Middle-earth for Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003); Annette Snowden, "The Hobbit that Became a Habit" *The Canadian* 1978 April 8: pp 8-10; Maria Beatrice Bittarello (University of Stirling) review of Christopher Garbowski's *Spiritual Values in Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings* (Lublin: Marie Curie-Sklodoaska University Press, 2005) in *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 16 (Summer 2007): [muse.jhu.edu] - 2 pp.

models set out in *The Lord of the Rings*. The question remains - what magic is at work in Tolkien's literature?

Even more curious is the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* was written by a devout Roman Catholic of the pre-Vatican II era, a Catholic who in his own right is receiving recognition as a lay theologian. It has been remarked by more than one commentator that *The Lord of the Rings* is devoid of overt religious allusions or signs of worship rites and liturgies. The enquiring reader, though, perceives that while there is a lack of outward forms there is a moral framework in *The Lord of the Rings*; at the same time many of the leading personages are neither wholly virtuous nor perfect. They are in effect more like most readers in make up and aspirations. It is the Every Man and Every Woman characterization which permits identification between the reader and the world of the text. Samwise Gamgee is very much the Every Person of *The Lord of the Rings* who is indispensable to the fuller portrayal of Frodo. He is a touchstone of many readers' secret desire to have adventure yet keep one foot firmly planted in reality.

Behind the text and at its surface are the concepts of Quest and Pilgrimage. The former is predominant while elements of the latter keep appearing. Frodo's quest to reach the Cracks of Doom to destroy the Ring of Power has a focus. Pilgrimage is suggestive of a seeking and inner desire, or longing, for meaning. The quest is a prominent theme to be found in medieval literature, as in the cycle of Arthurian legends, while pilgrimage was a feature of medieval life and writing. Pilgrimage as an act of faith or self-exploration has continued in the Catholic tradition while gaining a wider interest among non-Catholics or persons of no fixed creed. The outstanding pilgrim route begins at Chartres Cathedral and ends in Spain at Santiago de

Compostela. Chaucer memorialized an English pilgrim route in the *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁷ Our present Western culture has no stated purpose other than to give all allegiance to the State or to social “causes.” Meaning in the individual’s life has been left with a void that no amount of possessions, social influence or power constructs can adequately address. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* offers a story of purpose, validation and fulfilment. It is these elements which draw in readers who sense, if not fully able to articulate within themselves, that there is an answer to the modern world. Deeper reading of *The Lord of the Rings* brings out the awareness of those virtues which give orientation in life and positioning on the path to the Good.

All of the levels of *The Lord of the Rings* component parts blend together. It is a quest story; it is a great adventure; it is an entertaining masterpiece of fantasy literature; and for the truly attentive it is a path and key toward a fulfilling life - not as a wizard nor a Hobbit but as actualized humans being drawn to their beginnings on the journey of life. Bilbo’s song of adventure journeys keeps echoing today that hope:

“The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began
And I must follow, with willing feet,
Some adventure for to meet.”

¹⁷ Cf. Medieval Irish literature concerning Irish monks and their seafaring tales known as *immrama* or wanderings: see Gerald Murphy, *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland* (Dublin: Published for the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland by Colm O loch lain, 1961): pg 25. See also James H Wilson, *Christian Theology and Old English Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974): pp 58, 60 where Wilson focuses on *peregrines* (peregrinations, wanderings) as part of exile motif in *The Seafarer, Doer*, among others; in this sense as applied to LOTR both Bilbo’s and Frodo’s “The Road goes ever on and on” echoes this medieval literature with which Tolkien was intimately familiar. Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

Life is an active engagement not solely with basic requirements for food, shelter and clothing. It is relationships beginning with awareness of the self, ties to family and friends, social consciousness of others, and ultimately immersion of realization of the Good, the Other, the One who is not abstraction, the Originator who seeks us out individually as much as we seek the former out to in-fill the void, that is, fullness of life in God. That is the Thomist explication behind Tolkien's text, the well-spring of discourse on the virtues and our telos or end in the ultimate Good.¹⁸ Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* shows the complexity of relationships while illustrating how things - artefacts and imagined power structures - either in concrete form or abstractions are incapable of meeting the needs of true relationships. The One Ring as a thing became Gollum's obsession and abyss. Power attached to the Ring was equally fruitless and would lead to a barrenness of relationships. Compare these two examples to Gimli the Dwarf over whom, as Galadriel foretold, no earthly wealth would possess, that he would be free to perceive beauty, love and true friendships. By not possessing he obtained a life rich in meaning.

Tolkien's connection to St. Thomas Aquinas, author of the magnum opus of medieval scholasticism, the *Summa Theologica*, exists in several strands beginning with their Catholicism.¹⁹ The Church of Aquinas and that of Tolkien were not identical in that shifts in

¹⁸ Studies of St. Thomas Aquinas are as numerous as the volumes of his master work *Summa Theologica*. The Good and virtues may be pursued in such texts as Thomas Gilby's *St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Texts* (Oxford University Press, 1955); Peter Kreeft, *Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica Edited and Explained for Beginners* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990); Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey and Christian Vandyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory and Theological Context* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009)

¹⁹ The renewed interest in St. Thomas Aquinas had been generated in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeternis patris* (1879). Tolkien would come into possession of his guardian Father Morgan's own set of the *Summa Theologica*.

interpretation and forms had transpired in the intervening centuries between the two men. Faith was the binding cord as well as a common liturgical heritage. Both men were educators who knew the importance of clarity in transmitting ideas as well as encouraging other minds to take up the ways of intellectual pursuits. Words in text were equally significant: Aquinas the theologian and philosopher looked to nuance and orthodox understanding; Tolkien the philologist and literary scholar delighted in the meaning of words both past and present. Aquinas presented his teachings in the logical construction of his era which once properly understood are completely accessible to inquiring minds today. *The Lord of the Rings* text is a fantasy narrative following a most logical outline and necessary coherency of mythology in the author's greater Middle-Earth sub-creation. A dedicated reading of either authors' texts can bring enlightenment as well as sheer enjoyment. Those who would balk at the idea of the *Summa Theologica* (a multi-volume encyclopedia) being exciting need to recognize that part of the pleasure is the realization that one is communing with a mind that lived over eight centuries ago. Aquinas was interested in beginnings and endings in creation, how we are to understand it in the light of divine revelation and in what ways one can form one's life to seek true actualization of potential while moving toward our origins in the Creator. The exploration of the seven virtues - the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues - are embedded in the *Summa Theologica*; they are the life habituations which Tolkien infuses into his characters as they undergo the pilgrimage toward the Good, so adding texture to the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. Justice, fortitude, temperance and

prudence together with faith (fides), hope (spes) and love (caritas) are the golden threads between Aquinas and Tolkien.²⁰

Tolkien as lay theologian adds to his story his understanding of sub-creation and Eucatastrophe (the unexpected turn of events or happy ending) which form his own Christian response to the concept of Imago Dei (to be made in the image of God), and the dual interventions of the Incarnation and the Resurrection.²¹ He gives back to Aquinas a mythopoeic vision of orthodoxy which is wholly co-inherent with traditional Catholic teaching. *The Lord of the Rings* is not a Gospel recast according to Tolkien. It is indeed a long story to hold one's imagination in wonder, delight and reflection. Perception of the author's structure and means of giving vitality to the text allows more of the richness of Tolkien's narrative to be revealed. It is a means likewise to endeavour to comprehend the enduring appeal of *The Lord of the Rings* and other writings of this fertile mind.

The corpus of Tolkien related books and articles coming from the scholarly community is a tribute to recognition of the intellectual depth of the author's literary creations. These varied attempts to reveal Tolkien's attraction for a wide ranging reading public cover themes of the

²⁰Kerry J. MacArthur, "The Theological Virtues in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" in *Mapping the Catholic Cultural Landscape* ed. Paula Jean Miller and Richard Fossey (Lanham, Maryland: Sheed & Ward, 2004); David Rozema, "Pre-Christian Infusion: Faith, Hope and Charity in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Catholic Distance University: www.edu.edu 2008); cf. Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010)

²¹ Allen B. Robertson, "Two Paths to Joy: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe" in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship* ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, Oregon: Resource, 2015): 20-23. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and The Critics and Other Essays* ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1984): pp 122, 155; Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth: A Literary Life* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998, 1999 ed.): pp 103-4 re: concept of eucatastrophe.

heroic figure, vivid alternate world word portraits, archetypal imagery (both Jungian and Freudian), and ecological visionary reimagining of the earth. Direct discussion of Tolkien's faith was frequently avoided or referred to obliquely. One can see this at play in modern media forums (eg. blog sites) and the cinema editions of *The Lord of the Rings* which emphasized the heroic, magic and action over the deeper qualities of character in friendships, sacrifice and spirituality.²²

Tolkien's writings are quite distinct from C. S. Lewis's didactic novels. Nonetheless to omit either man's religious formation and convictions would be to impoverish interpretation. Writers who do explore faith in Tolkieniana have by their choice assented to the idea that imaginary literature can be a vehicle for metaphysical revelation. Most interestingly this engagement has led to Protestant scholars delving into the Catholic imagination in an ecumenical disposition of intellectual exercise. This attention to *The Lord of the Rings* is analogous to study of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the latter as mirror of its age and as a source of poetic spiritual insight.²³

²² Steven D. Greydanus, "From Book to Film: Will Peter Jackson's film trilogy be faithful to Tolkien?" *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 2001): pp 44-45, 47; Stratford Caldecott, *The Power of the Ring: The Spiritual Vision of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Bloomington, Indiana: Crossroad, 2005); Hall, "Influence of J. R. R. Tolkien on Popular Culture"; Katharine F. Crabbe, *J. R. R. Tolkien* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981) : Crabbe's five chapter titles reveal the author's attempt to plumb the intellectual depths of the Tolkien corpus: The Quest as Life, The Quest as Fairy Tale: The Hobbit, The Quest as Legend: The Lord of the Rings; The Quest as Myth: The Silmarillion, The Quest Realized: Secondary Worlds.

²³ Aidan Nichol's review of Alison Milbank, *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians: The Fantasy of the Real* (London: T & T Clark, 2007) in *The C. S. Lewis Chronicle* 6, No. 1 (Hilary 2009); Damien Casey, "The Gift of Iluvatar: Tolkien's Theological Vision" *Australian Journal of Theology* (Feb. 2004) Issue 2; Gunar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writings of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (Philadelphia, PA: Pilgrim Press, 1971); Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983)

Traditional evangelical Protestantism and Radical Orthodoxy have plunged into Catholicism both modern and medieval. The school represented by Milbank et al (Radical Orthodoxy) is a post-modern semiotic challenge to the evanescent dialogues of Derrida and Foucault ; the former have fixed upon Aquinas as the medieval mind who best distilled Catholic philosophy through the crucible of the transformative Word in the Eucharist. [Milbank earlier found inspiration in Plato and St. Augustine before turning attention to the Angelic Doctor.] Now members of that school have followed through with the Thomist continuum to be found in J. R. R. Tolkien. One may say that, for example, Catherine Pickstock, having entered the philosophical semiotic lists would with her colleagues turn to an expert in words, Tolkien, who sought meaning, cultural revelation, and re-visioning in the communication of words. Tolkien's own theological espousal of sub-creation and Eucatastrophe places him in the Thomist legacy in detailed analysis of the Word, words and meaning. Unlike the post-modernists who decry the mutability of words between persons or persons and texts, one has in J. R. R. Tolkien a delight in words as pregnant conveyances of truth. Advocates of Radical Orthodoxy see in the Aquinas Eucharist the convergence of sign, symbol and "the thing itself"; Tolkien's theological insight compares with the Thomas agency in seeing several dimensions co-inhering in the same time and space.²⁴ The Incarnation "is" just as the Creator "is" so that "splintered light" from the Incarnation is cast back to the formation of human mythological narrative seeding truth among a multiplicity of cultures. Tolkien's beloved Northern mythologies and sagas were flecked with

²⁴ John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (Routledge 2001); Catherine Pickstock, "Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist" in *Modern Theology* 15, No. 2 (April 1999); R. R. Reno, "The Radical Orthodoxy Project" *First Things* (Feb. 2000). "Radical Orthodoxy" by Stratford Caldecott and interview with Catherine Pickstock (second spring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott23.thm) (2001)

divine insight and flaws. Even Beowulf, a pagan tale, refracted through Christian scribes, had applicability for aspects of the human condition.

Society exists in a series of inherited and constructed myths which define the narrative of our existence. Generally most people do not understand that state of being yet one is surrounded by alternating realities - nationhood, patriotism, ideal family structures, ethnic identity, faith expressions, domestic holiday observances, etc. It is in this context that study of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is not an excursion into utter fantasy; rather it is looking for truths in an imaginary construct and finding resonances with existing social mythologies. At a deeper level there are archetypes which bind us together - at least in the Western cultural tradition in which Tolkien's literary texts were created. The virtues are embodied in types (the hero who exhibits fortitude; the king who shows justice and temperance as well as caritas) in *The Lord of the Rings* through whom Catholic vision by way of Aquinas and Tolkien are refracted into our society in another aspect of "splintered light."

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has not been examined in relation to architectural forms both literally and figuratively. He has been noted for his vivid landscape images and atmospheric qualities. Equal to this aspect are his invocations of buildings both exterior and interior. These serve to present the verisimilitude of reality to sub-creation; further, there are depictions which call forth comparison to medieval cathedrals and vernacular forms which are in themselves layers of symbols and sign. One text on medieval churches refers to the aedicule - a feature meant to hold a shrine or sacred image - which is realized in the gothic pointed arch; cathedrals became, especially when stained glass filled the great wall spaces, a multiplication of shrine

forms. The word construction which is *The Lord of the Rings* is that edifice of aediculea holding the Seven Virtues and the Good.²⁵

In a revealing letter of 1963 Tolkien wrote that “the value of verse in *The Lord of the Rings* and how it escapes most readers”; this is an invitation to examine the poetry of the text.²⁶ It needs to be remembered that Tolkien wrote verse from his youth, as an academic both in translation and of his own composition, and to inform his Middle-Earth literature. That aspect is duly viewed in this monograph to show that the poetry is not just ornamentation for the narrative - it is integral with the great saga and guides it along. Moreover, verse is one way he had of introducing aspects of his overall mythopoetic realm to readers short of publication of the matter which posthumously appeared as *The Silmarillion* (edited by his son Christopher Tolkien).²⁷ The rustic lines of Hobbit poetry and song link us to popular rhyme and themes while the poetry of Elves, Dwarfs and Men shimmer with medieval and earlier northern European traditions such as

²⁵ Cf. Giles R. Dimock, “Saint Thomas Aquinas and Church Architecture” *The Institute for Sacred Architecture* 3 (Winter 2000); Allen B. Robertson, “Liturgy & Sanctuary: Radical Faith in a Neo-Gothic Space: Commentary on Saint Mary’s Cathedral Basilica, Halifax, Nova Scotia” (To be published 2016); Robert Barron, *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Gothic Cathedrals* (New York: Crossroad, 2000); John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions and other Essays on Architecture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963)

²⁶ Letter to Baronne A. Baeyens: 1963 Dec. 16: re: “the value of verse in *The Lord of the Rings* and how it escapes most readers” [Excerpt from Tolkien Gateway: Letters not published in “The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien”]

²⁷ Julian Eilmann and Allan Turner, *Tolkien’s Poetry* (Zollikon, Switzerland: Walking Tree, 2013); William Donaghy, “A Poet for the Kingdom: The Sacramental Stories of J. R. R. Tolkien” catholicculture.org (per St. Austin Review) (2014); J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977). See also, J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971; 1st pub. 1966): contains “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil” which is a set of poems both light-hearted (eg. Cat, The Man in the Moon stayed up too late) and others which are subtly sophisticated. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Sir Orfeo* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982; 1st pub 1975)

Beowulf or "Earendel" (in Cynewulf's Crist) or the Wanderer. There is the connection to Aquinas's own verse and the visions of Dante in how faith and the virtues are distilled in a few lines. The sequences and hymns of Aquinas live still in the Catholic liturgical celebrations and were companions of Tolkien's imagination and devotions.

The foregoing must necessarily be explored before considering a full encounter with popular cultural reception of *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien's related writings. Stratford Caldecott has wrestled with film and narrative in the Peter Jackson cinematic realization of *The Lord of the Rings*. He and other commentators focus especially on how film being edited both conveys and expurgates the Tolkien legendarium. Others such as Flieger had observed how the text alone was taken up by the 1960s college generation in ways which would have startled the author. From these disparate vantage points there should be a space from which to consider that which touches the public - both text and film - through Tolkien's own presentation of "splintered light." The virtues and the Good may not be recognized as such yet it may be argued that the personification of these values in Aragorn and Frodo, among others, does reach audiences.²⁸ Awash in materialism and power imbalances our society is open to other ways of attaining fulfilment on a personal and communal level. Faith through the lenses of Aquinas and Tolkien suggest the pilgrimage trail with its final destination as surely as the great camino or way to Santiago de Compostela leads from Chartres Cathedral in France to the shrine of Saint James.

²⁸ Stratford Caldecott, "The Grace of the Valar: The Lord of the Rings" in *Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue* ed. Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes (Macon, Georgia: Regent's Park College Oxford with Smith & Helwys, 2005): pp 193-205; Ray Conlogue, "Tolkien's Universe" *Globe & Mail* 2001 Dec 15: pg. R3 [in anticipation of release of part I of Peter Jackson's LOTR film trilogy]; Roger Ebert, "Hobbits robbed of top billing in Lord of the Rings" *Mail Star* 2001 Dec 15: pg. E1; Jeffrey Bilbro, "The Taste of Strawberries: Tolkien's Imagination of the Good" *Christ & Pop Culture* (2014 August 18) (christandpopculture.com)

Whether cast as the immrama of the Celtic monks of Ireland or the medieval quest for the Holy Grail there is the search for restoration to something which is lacking. Tolkien was well aware of that need: “We all long for Eden, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most human, is still soaked with the sense of exile.” That *The Lord of the Rings* can be an avenue of “virtual” pilgrimage in prose and poetry unites it with St. Thomas Aquinas’s own statement: “Because philosophy arises from awe, a philosopher is bound in his way to be a lover of myths and poetic fables. Poets and philosophers are alike in being big with wonder.”²⁹ The voices in Tolkien draw us to wonder, and to rediscover the virtues which bring our pilgrimage to its end in the Good which is God.³⁰

To approach this exploration I will set the argument out in six chapters. The first - “Modes of Thought” will look at the ground of Aquinas’s and Tolkien’s beliefs, commonality, and justification for holding up the *The Lord of the Rings* as an icon of the virtues and the Good. Chapter two - “Iluvater and the Flame Imperishable” - delves into the Thomist development of the four cardinal and three theological virtues without which any furtherance of Tolkien’s expression of the latter in his writings will to the modern reader remain obscure. Chapter three - “Faery, Myth and Eucatastrophe” - looks at Tolkien the lay theologian whose knowledge of myth and imagination links Aquinas and the Western literary-religious tradition which lay the fertile

²⁹Aquinas, “I Metaphysics. lecture 3”

³⁰ Cf. Amber Lee Peace, “Tolkien and Thomas: Examining the Relationship between St. Thomas Aquinas and J. R. R. Tolkien” (academia.edu); Richard L. Purtill, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality & Religion* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2003); Jonathan S. McIntosh, “Tolkien’s Thomistic Metaphysics in Overview” *The Flame Imperishable* (Blog: jonathansmcintosh.wordpress.com : 2013 Jan 16); Paul H. Kocher, *Master of Middle-Earth: The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972): pp 77-79; Andrew Nimmo, “Tolkien and Thomas: Middle-Earth and the States of Nature” [Centre for Thomistic Studies} *Universities* 10 (Nov 2001)

ground for Tolkien's employment of the virtues. In Chapter four - "The Lord of the Rings and Related Writings" - I examine the main characters in the great text who exemplify the aspects of the virtues and the Good showing that one is well justified in drawing out this religious nature of Tolkien imaginary writing. Chapter five - "Poetry and Hymns" - is an attempt to define how the poetics in The Lord of the Rings reinforces both the story line and the virtues by following up Tolkien's own statement that most readers fail to realize the significance of the poems and songs. Chapter six considers the message of Thomistic discourse on the Virtues and the Good as transmitted in Tolkien's writings into the modern era by way of print and film. Arguably the foundation of faith as given personification by way of the Virtues in characters of Tolkien's sub-creation *The Lord of the Rings* can survive modern media transmutation; the result is an iconic work of literature in its truest sense — seeing heaven through art.

Chapter One:

Modes of Thought: Tolkien, Aquinas and *The Lord of the Rings*

Seven Virtues and the Good are easily written but not so readily understood. That which follows is meant to lay the basis for introducing the expostulator par excellence, Thomas Aquinas, for medieval conceptualization of their meaning, and how this relates to J. R. R. Tolkien's role as lay theologian and premier writer of fantasy literature in the Twentieth Century. Just as Aquinas wrote during the age of illuminated manuscripts so too does an understanding of his and Tolkien's "modes of thought" illuminate their faith and creativity.

Tolkien was a Catholic. Aquinas was a Catholic. Two self-evident statements yet what do they mean for each man, and which Catholicism? The author of *The Lord of the Rings* is separated in time by over six hundred years from the creator of the *Summa Theologica*. During the intervening time there were changes in Church liturgical practices, interaction with new civic polities and the rise of nation states, and technological changes that would have been as fantastic to Aquinas as the creatures of Tolkien are to us. Scholasticism had given way to post-Enlightenment intellectual currents where even the existence of God was called into question in certain philosophical circles. To Aquinas the very premise of God's being was foundational to all philosophy, social organization and reality itself.³¹ The late nineteenth century world of the young J. R. R. Tolkien still retained a widespread acceptance of the Judeo-Christian world view

³¹ Kreeft, *Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica Edited and Explained for Beginners* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990): pp. 11-18; Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; 1st pub. 1992); Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2005)

though battered by agnosticism in academia and radical atheism among philosophers and political theorists such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Thomas H. Huxley (or the latter's grandson Aldous Huxley). Science immersed in objective observations devoid of religious speculation had supplanted faith as the standard of truth in the public sphere in ever expanding social acquiescence. Tolkien's Catholic Church was wrestling with all of these currents of thought while condemning modernism and other "isms" deemed to undermine the primacy of faith. Within the Church there were theologians and laity who knew that they had to confront and offer alternate visions to the rising tide of secular supremacy. The given of faith for the medieval world of Aquinas was no longer assured in the dawning Twentieth Century.

The discourse of Aquinas was the product of both Classical and Christian philosophical thought. It culminated in the scholastic movement's attempts to rationalize belief and to systematize Church teaching to meet the needs of interpretation and internal criticism. Though its conversation was transmitted through the intellectual community of the various European colleges and theological circles it did have its infusion into general culture through literary modes expressed in hymns and other liturgical usages, as well as in the growth of secular literature notably as the vernacular became ever more significant. Hence Thomas Aquinas in his hymnic verse *Pange lingua* [Sing My Tongue the Saviour's Glory] and *Tantum ergo* encapsulated teaching on Transubstantiation and adoration of the eucharistic presence as the cult of the latter received Pontifical encouragement. Later one finds such writers as Dante in his famous Italian vernacular work the *Divine Comedy* [Hades, Purgatory, Heaven] offering criticisms of Church failings, popular beliefs and intense devotion. Through both forms of literature the world of medieval Catholicism as the subject of scholarly study and critique was disseminated outside the

walls of academe. Whether worshippers, readers or audiences fully comprehended the messages of any of these forms was less important than the fact that knowledge was nonetheless spread from urban to rural communities setting the full *sitz in leben* of the Christian message and imagination.³²

The medieval period was one in which literacy was far from common but one in which other media could supplement the written text. Sign and symbol were encountered in liturgical rite and in architecture, notably ecclesiastical structures. The eleventh and twelfth centuries were the foundation period for the rise of the great Gothic cathedrals which more so than the Romanesque period opened the imagination of craftsmen, scholars, and clergy to bring visions of Heaven to Earth. The full glory of the art of stained glass found expression in the introduction of uninterrupted walls of light between soaring piers and vaulted ceilings. Carvings, paintings and mosaics exploded in images of saints, angelic beings and dark demons while the stories and popular renditions of the same were on prominent display for the illiterate and literate alike to see and “read”. Smaller country churches and chapels imitated the cathedrals on their own scale ensuring that something of the greater culture was spread across the land though the presence of earlier structures of worship harkened to earlier witness to the faith. The Gothic cathedrals of Aquinas’s day and after were replications of sign, symbol and evidence of spiritual verity as understood by the medieval mind.

³² Catherine Pickstock, “Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist” *Modern Theology* 15, No. 2 (April 1999): 159-80; Anton Pegis, ed. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas* vol. (New York: Random House, 1945); Jim Fodor and Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, ed. *Aquinas In Dialogue: Thomas For The Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004): 1-3

Centuries later Europe experienced a rebirth of interest in the Gothic style as the eighteenth century drew to a close and the nineteenth century era opened. It was in part a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and Classical form [often called Palladian] as found in the birth of the Romantic movement. Though there was an idealization of the past bound up in nationalism the neo-Gothic movement called for a systematic re-examination of the pre-Modern period with an appreciation of its intellectual, artistic, and spiritual legacies. Catholicism, the brunt of much deist opprobrium and philosophical criticism as the hold-over of superstition and clerical rule, was equally rediscovered by Catholic and non-Catholic for its heritage and the survival of modes of thought which had ceased to be fully appreciated outside its fold. It became the means of re-visualizing the original Gothic cathedrals and source for reading the multiplicity of signs. This architectural movement affected both church and secular buildings. The school which Tolkien attended in Birmingham - King Edward's - was itself a good illustration of neo-Gothic influence. The Houses of Parliament, inspired by the vision of Charles Augustus Pugin and Barry, became a symbol to emulate throughout the British Empire, as for example was carried out in the original Parliament buildings of the 1860s in Ottawa, Canada. Churches, both Protestant and Catholic, began to take up the style in the early 1800s in part to reflect the deep "roots" of a form romanticized in literature for whom the best exemplar was Sir Walter Scott. The disconnect was evident where religious edifices copied the form but not the content of the original Gothic.³³

³³ Robert Bork, *The Geometry of Creation: Architectural Drawing and the Dynamics of Gothic Design* (Farnham, England: Ashcroft, 2011) Robertson, "Liturgy & Sanctuary"; cf. Steven J. Schloeder, "Similis est Homini Patrifamilias: Thinking about the Church as 'Sacramental Sign'" *Sacred Architecture* 24 (2013): 29-31; Richard Kieckheffer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

The intellectual milieu of Tolkien's youth was one of optimism and propelled by the call of scientific, social and cultural evolution. Progress was the by-word though the nature and quality of that word was not unchallenged. Glimpses of the intellectual currents can be seen in the college life of Tolkien and his circle of friends in their interests, debates and hopes for the future. All of this would be dramatically altered by the Great War which shattered so many lives and hopes. Part of the post-1918 reality which involved communist revolution in Russia, socialist political ideologies which sought to address workers' rights and an incessant advance in industrialization in Western society was the question of the continuing role of formal religious denominations and the persistence of faith - or its decline - as addressed by theologians, other intellectuals and the churches themselves.³⁴ World War I has been portrayed as a quantitative and qualitative transformation of religion in the West. That, however, is an oversimplification. The groundwork for a shift in religious temperament was well underway by the late nineteenth century in philosophical, scientific and theological schools. Less attention has been given to the persistence of faith among the populace even if not in its formalized setting. The construct of a Christian context remained as fixed in the landscape of the early Twentieth Century as it had been in the age of Aquinas. Thinkers such as Tolkien would place the Great War in the same succession as past conflicts only altered by mechanization and destruction on a vaster scale. The teachings of the Catholic Church for Tolkien remained unaffected. His intellectual pursuits

³⁴ For a pertinent examination of Tolkien's college education and his experience at the front in W. I see: John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2003). See also: Michael Coren, *J. R. R. Tolkien: The Man Who Created The Lord of the Rings* (Toronto, Ont.: Stoddart, 2001): 27-38; Daniel Grotta-Kurska, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Architect of Middle Earth* (New York: Warner Books, 1976): "The Soldier (1915-1919)" pp. 66-84

would lead him to offer new thoughts on what he regarded as older verities which remained in the human character quite apart from technology or new philosophies. That tradition reached back to Thomas Aquinas and would be translated into fantasy literature as the mode of transmission to a mid-Twentieth Century generation.³⁵

Legacy, reworking, transmission - these three key components of Aquinas' and Tolkien's writings produced parallel modes of thought in a continuum of Catholic tradition. Tolkien did not create an encyclopaedic theological equivalent of the *Summa Theologica* or *Summa Contra Gentiles* as some would rightly point out. Nonetheless his brilliance lay in an ability to recognize the power of imagination and narrative - that which is unique to the human species - and which he understood to be inherent in the teaching of *Imago Dei*.³⁶ Tolkien caught the allure and resonance of medieval literature, notably that of the Northern lands, which made his studies of *Beowulf* or *The Pearl* far more than erudite commentaries on antiquated literature. He pierced the linguistic challenge of Anglo-Saxon, for example, to hear its musicality, timbre, and potential

³⁵Lee Oser, *The Return of Christian Humanism: Chesterton, Eliot, Tolkien and the Romance of History* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007): pp. 52-70; Yannick F. Imbert, "Who invented the stories anyway? a Reform perspective on Tolkien's theory of fantasy" (Ph. D.: Westminster theological Seminary, 2010). David Alton, "The Fellowship of the ring: J. R. R. Tolkien, Catholicism and the use of allegory" : Lecture Feb. 2003 at Catholic society of Bath University ad Bath Spa University College.

³⁶Anita Miller Bell, "Tolkien's Worldview and Theology of Eucatastrophe: A Piercing Glimpse of Joy" : "The Lord of the Rings and Emerging Generation: A Study of the Message and Medium: J. R. R. Tolkien and Peter Jackson" (Ph. D. dissertation: Caspersey School of Graduate Studies, Drew University, 2009): pg. 377: "Tolkien believes a true mythic journey offers not just an enjoyable momentary escape, but also a deep engagement in reality." Deborah Rogers, "Everyclod and Everywhere: The Image of Man in Tolkien" in *A Tolkien Compass* ed. Jared Lobdell (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1975): pp. 75-76; cf. Clyde S. Kilby, "Mythic and Christian Elements in Tolkien" in *Myth, Allegory and Gospel: An Interpretation of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams* ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1974): pp. 119-43

packaged meaning in rich word play. The content or narrative was wound around this framework in a fashion which was highly intelligible to its original auditors. Writing for modern audiences Tolkien appropriated the medieval legacy with its lesson of language, clustered imagery and forceful use of story to convey a message.³⁷ One did not have to be a medievalist to enjoy reading *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or shorter stories; nor were his lectures on the realm of fairy obscure. It was the flavour of the medieval, motifs and themes which could find an attraction among present day [1930s-1960s] readers, a Neo-Romanticism between the World Wars, and after the post-nuclear weapons reality offered relief from mechanization and the industrial complex which had absorbed so many peoples' lives.³⁸ Tolkien's writing speaks to the

³⁷ Jane Chance, ed. *Tolkien the Medievalist* (London: Routledge, 2008); George Clark and Daniel Timmon, ed. *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); cf. Emily McAvon, *The Postmodern Sacred: Popular Culture, Spirituality in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Urban Fantasy Genre* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2012): Chap. Seven: "Christ Figures and the Messianic in The Lord of the Rings": pp. 108-116. See also the posthumous publications: J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrun* ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2009); *ibid.*, *The Fall of Arthur* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollinsPublishing, 2013); *ibid.*, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary, together with Sellic Spell*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollinsPublishing, 2014); *ibid.*, *The Story of Kullervo* ed. Verlyn Flieger (London: HarperCollinsPublishing, 2015)

³⁸ John R. Clark Hall, *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment* rev. ed. C. L. Wrenn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954; 1st pub. 1911) "Prefatory Remarks by J. R. R. Tolkien": ix-xliii: cf. pg. xvii: "If you wish to translate, not rewrite, *Beowulf*, your language just be literally and traditional, not because it is now a long while since the poem was made, or because it speaks of things that have since become ancient; but because the diction of *Beowulf* was poetical, archaic, artificial (if you will), in the day the poem was made." J. R. R. Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and Green Knight* re: "Pearl": pg. 20: "But we are dealing with a period when man, aware of the vagaries of dreams, still thought that amid their japes came visions of truth. And then waking imagination was strongly moved by symbols and the figures of allegory, and filled vividly with the pictures evoked by the scriptures, directly or through the wealth of medieval art." Cf. Bradford Lee Eden, ed., *The Hobbit and Tolkien's Mythology: Essays on Revisions ad Influences* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014)

humane and the human, to loss and recovery; both pairs found echoes in the inter-War years and the rise of ecological concerns in the early 1960s. Nor have they ceased to be relevant today where in spite of the Internet (and in part because of it) the reality of human interaction has been stultified and rendered “unreal”; at the same time the ever expanding ecological concerns for stewardship of the earth keeps the linkage to Tolkien’s astute observations of the natural world (whether “real” or “imagined.”) Yet wound into Tolkien’s visions are his Catholicism and the working out of virtues - virtues which shifted in value from pagan to Christian hue during the medieval period. Thus one finds that the medieval is conveyed into the present including the crystallization of Catholic thought as expounded by Aquinas. Imaginative literature - prose and verse - provide the gate to the virtues and glimpses of a telos for a disoriented world.

Tolkien was not the first writer to use literature in a popular format to convey ideas of faith, politics, or moral teachings. He is certainly more subtle in his approach since he was wary of overly didactic exercises. Nonetheless one may refer to Dante and Chaucer who while originally writing for a select audience (the upper strata of society) left a legacy which filtered into other fields and were diffused throughout the realm of education in school and homilies in Church. Chaucer’s occasions of earthy style may be compared to Tolkien’s rusticity of verse use mixed in with matters of more gravitas; humour is as much a part of life as sorrow, something which Canadian novelist Robertson Davies never eschewed.³⁹ In *The Lord of the Rings* one has both saga, quest and pilgrimage though readers will recognize more immediately fellowship and

³⁹ Merlin De Tardo, “Dante” in *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* ed. Michael D. C. Drout (London: Routledge, 2007): pp 116-17; Brendan Thomas Sammon, “Aquinas and the Poetics of the Middle Ages” [academia.edu] Paper given at The Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference: Villanova University, 2998; Humphrey Carpenter, ed. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Boston, MA : Houghton Mifflin, 1981): pg. 377

mutual responsibility. Allusions to a mythic past also seep out of Tolkien's literature affecting readers in ways explicable in Jungian terminology - archetypes, motifs and ancient challenges that underly nursery rhymes, folk tales and even urban legends. That which was before us, the hidden around us and the darkness of the way ahead remain whether in popular song, verse or story. Authors such as Tolkien who offer suggested clarity and means of guidance in this context remain relevant. The affirmation of life and that which makes life's sacrifices comprehensible are part of the Tolkien legendarium. Its conception as set in a pre-Christian world permits accessibility to persons not committed to one particular faith path therefore widening the field of interest for those who take on the challenge of delving into the histories of Middle-Earth.

The articulation of Tolkien's vision has sympathetic vibrations in the world of Aquinas. Rootedness in pre-Christian mythology of the North is blended with early Medieval saga and texts as sources for motifs and nomenclature. Certain of these elements have maintained a diminished existence in our culture in attenuated fairy stories and old folk tales now relegated to the nursery and early childhood literature. Dragons, ogres, elves, heroic deeds, wicked characters to be overcome, treasures to be recovered, and Tolkien's "happy ending" remain to entrance. It is what offers a sense of the familiar in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. An open door to our childhood and rumination on the unconscious heritage as it wells up in dreams and fantasies plays its part in the accessibility to Tolkien. Looking backward one sees as well the medieval mind from which we are not yet wholly separated; the grotesques of cathedrals and smaller churches, angelic beings and saints, fantastic creatures and organic forms of foliage, trees and ornamental carvings all encapsulate something of the pagan and Christian heritage of Europe. Darkness and Light have their interplay in the architecture which survives for us to see while in

neo-Gothic revival architecture we see latter-day mirror images. The Middle Ages may indeed be “dead” but the echoes have not ceased, nor are all the voices stilled.⁴⁰

The red dragon of the Welsh flag continues to wave over the old former Celtic domains while even England has its dragon in association with Saint George. One may even qualify Loch Ness’s legendary creature as a Scots water dragon. Such images function on many levels but it is sufficient to note here that this is one of the familiar voices in Tolkien which descendants of any of the three nations have carried with them around the globe. Smaug, Glaurung and Ancalagon are therefore not merely reflections of Germanic myths (be it the Volsung Saga or Beowulf). The great primordial dragon or “Leviathan” of the Old Testament as well as the Catholic scriptural account of Daniel, Bel and the Dragon cannot be dismissed as potential sources for Tolkien’s imagination. Indeed Tolkien’s area of expertise gave him intimate familiarity with the dragon lore of the myths on which Wagner drew for the Ring Cycle at Bayreuth. The images are repeated in late Twentieth Century formats with the war-gamers “Dungeons and Dragons,” and the Twenty-first Century novel series, with its television adaptation, “Game of Thrones.” All of the foregoing does not even include the dragon legends from elsewhere in the world. This connectedness to an archetypal image pegs Tolkien into the present as well as the past. It is merely one of several motifs and visuals which traverse the imagination from the printed page to

⁴⁰ Carl Lindahl et al. *ed. Medieval Folklore: A Guide to Myths, Legends Tales, Beliefs and Customs* (Oxford University Press, 2012); George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford University Press, 1972; 1st pub. 1954); Louis Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture* (New York: Electra/ Pizzoli, 1985; 1st pub. 1976); Maureen Stafford and Dora Ware, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ornament* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1974); Wm. Swann, *The Gothic Cathedral* (Hertfordshire: Omega Books, 1969)

call up the familiar among readers. It is the vocabulary of the resonant which can reach the mind even if there is variation on meaning and subtle associated ideas.⁴¹

The medieval world of Aquinas though Christian had not lost all knowledge or belief in other beings or demoted gods especially among the folk. Even the vestigial forms as mentioned which we find in modern day fairy stories or daily folklore echo those roots. Tolkien built on those creations to form his particular versions and visions. The diminutive elves of late Victorian children's books such as those in the Flower Fairy series were rejected for the Celtic "fair folk" or "Fae Folk" - both potent forms suggesting otherworldly and gifted, and perchance even mystical in nature. At the same time Tolkien eschewed the malevolent stories of fairies who abducted children and substituted "changelings," kept mortals captive who might venture into their hidden kingdoms (as in the Irish Sidhe burial mounds) or were inevitably hostile toward non-fairy kind.⁴² The complexity of the myths from remote antiquity permitted Tolkien to legitimately adapt his elves or fairies into the nobler beings of his great Middle-Earth mythology. They, like other beings of Middle-Earth, were vessels of his sub-creation into which the virtues

⁴¹ One should not forget the dragon banner of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings (1066). The prayers of compline from the Liturgy of the Hours in the Catholic tradition include recitation of the verse referring to dragons: "Super apsidal et basiliscum ambulat et conculcabis leonem et draconem". Dragons in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* are a type of anti-virtue beings.

⁴² Cecily M. Barker, *The Book of the the Flower Fairies* (London: Blackie & Son, n.d.); Lindahl, *Medieval Folklore* : pp 128-31; Tolkien, *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* : pp 173-79: Letter to Naomi Mitchinson: 1954 April 25: re: elvish languages; *ibid.*, pg. 236: Letter to Michael Straight [drafts] 1956: re: Elves and Men: "... Elves and Men are just different aspects of the Humane, and represent the problem of Death as seen by a finite but willing and self-conscious person... The Elves represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men. That is, they have a devoted love of the physical world, and a desire to observe and understand it for its own sake and as 'other' - sc. as a reality derived from God in the same degree as themselves - not as material for use or as a power-platform."

and mythos of Christianity might be poured. The colouring was built from the medieval stories, sagas and verse; the hiker's first hand knowledge of the English countryside; childhood memories of South Africa and Birmingham; the hunt for wisdom at college; and the experiences of trench warfare. He created a coherent world out of what for most of us are a maelstrom of personal memory and learned history. Here is a bridge with Aquinas who systematized and made whole the centuries of Christian theology into a brilliant summation. He brought together, questioned, explored and answered from the repository of that which preceded him. The scholastic format of question and answer was tailored for an imaginary teacher-student(s) discourse into which Aquinas poured meaning by way of carefully selected vocabulary. It was a logical discourse which floated on a sea of faith.

Aquinas led his unseen students on a journey of learning and honing of theological skills. It was as much a pilgrimage of faith to read the *Summa Theologica* as it was to follow the mosaic mazes on the floors of the great cathedrals to re-enact the journey to Jerusalem and to God. The tessera of the floor decorations were built up a piece at a time. Aquinas's *Summa* was a logical progression, block by block, in the creation of a great edifice. Moving ahead in time to Tolkien the pilgrimage and quest motif are retained in an equally logical yet colourfully described whole. The great challenge at the end was to learn how to live with what one had learned. That challenge is as true for the readers of Tolkien as it was and is for those who study Thomas Aquinas. The interalia literary genius of Dante in the *Divina Comedia* is no less a pilgrimage, quest and retrieval of wisdom. Visions of darkness and folly are lifted up into precursor glimpses of revelatory reality through limbo and upward to the great summit of Paradise and the Beatific Vision. Emptying, transition and enlightenment are the trinity that by extension can act on the

reader of Dante's work. Even though familiarity with the images and exact meaning of Dante will elude most readers unless assisted by editorial help with his text his extended trilogy poem is accessible. This is Dante, and Aquinas and Tolkien as they stand before any who would question their relevance and ability to speak to us today.⁴³

Tolkien in his literary creations was a popularizer of certain beliefs or understanding of a civilized society - civil in the sense of co-operative community and relationships. The hymns and sequences of Aquinas were in their message popularizations of Catholic teaching made accessible to the people (the more so when translated into the vernacular) - in that way his words still speak to us. Dante may not be an everyday subject of conversation yet his poetry has given rise to sayings and allusions which populate our literary heritage. It is not necessarily conversion which is the outcome of encounter with either of the preceding authors; one looks to a commonality of vocabulary across the centuries to the present. By listening one can appreciate aspects of past modes of thought. The archetypes stir our inner being. The richness of the text grows out of the cluster of associated visions which draw one back to rediscover something "new" or missed in earlier readings. Rather than obscure meaning - as some philologists and

⁴³ See: John Seland, "Dante and Tolkien: Their Ideas about evil" *Inklings Forever* 5 (2006); Tolkien, *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* : pg. 377: Letter to Charlotte and Denis Plummer: 1967 Feb. 8: re: Dante: "... I do not seriously dream of being measured against Dante, a supreme poet. At one time Lewis and I used to read him to one another. I was for a while a member of the Oxford Dante Society...". Dante Alighieri, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri The Florentine: Cantina III Paradise (Il Paradiso)*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1982; 1st pub. 1962): pg. 16; "It is in *Paradiso* that we find affirmed with the utmost clarity and consistency the fundamental Christian proposition that the journey to God is the journey into reality. To know all things in God is to know them as they really are for God is the only absolute and unconditional reality, of whose being all contingent reality are at best the types and mirror, at worst the shadows and distortions..."

post-modernists contend - the spectrum of views adds depth. It is similar to coloured transparent sheets showing stages in a buildings construction overlaid one on the other.

It is possible to lose meaning when modernity chooses to erase the “irrelevant” or “outgrown” in re-presentation of the past. The conversion of text into screen-play is equally subject to selection which often obscures or omits the true essence of the original. Jackson’s adaption of the *The Lord of the Rings* as a trilogy shortens, excises and rewrites the Tolkien text in a way that can create a radically different interpretation of the author’s intent. It is a given that a novel cannot be wholly transferred to the screen and that certain artistic licence will hold sway. The Old Forest and Tom Bombadil, for example, are absent from the film version as well as most of the initial stages of the Hobbits journey along with many rustic songs. Jackson’s main theme was to view Tolkien as a drama with action, great cinematography and heroism. In the process the underlying spirituality of *The Lord of the Rings* was greatly diminished as well as an attenuation of the virtues. The coloured transparencies showing the successive building up of Tolkien’s great narrative have been shuffled and certain sections removed. The total picture is left as incomplete as a fragmentary medieval manuscript. A recovery of Tolkien based on the filmography becomes for modern viewers as much a challenge as it is for an archaeologist to re-envision an Anglo-Saxon village site and the lives of the people who inhabited it over a millennia and a half ago. The truly diligent will rediscover the fullness of Tolkien by going to the text and reading for themselves what the full mythology and themes are that lie within *The Lord of the Rings*. The modes of thought today are filtered to the degree that religion or theology constitute only fragmentary knowledge. It is as a consequence a pilgrimage of learning for filmgoers and readers to uncover more about the past, provided one is among the number who care to

undertake such a life task. A viewing of the Jackson trilogy can be either a finite, circumscribed exercise, or the beginning of one's own Bilbo and Frodo setting forth from the front door onto the path of the world.⁴⁴

The modes of thought as set forth at the beginning of this chapter looked to Thomas Aquinas for whom God filled reality, and Tolkien who lived in a modernist era where agnosticism and atheism had taken on strength and become allied with the scientific outlook which revered human logic over any metaphysical consideration - Catholicism was embattled as was all spiritual understanding. Modern day thought as stated above is constantly filtering data through entrenched liberal secularism which empirically bounds one within an encapsulated insularity which cannot admit of outside references of reality. Descartes's "I think therefore I am" has been transformed into "I think therefore I am the sum of perception even to the point of not admitting the full reality of other persons." Post-modernists in their arguments over the non-transferability of meaning by words from one person to the other have laid the logic for this post-Cartesian isolationism. Rather than a unity of belief or coherency in cultural attributes the Post-modernists' thought is one of fragmentation and disunity. It is far removed from the Thomist synthesis of the Christian vision and the Tolkienesque quest for the lost paradise and paradise restored. Extreme logic would even dictate that the writings of Foucault or Derrida are ultimately meaningless since meaning cannot be jointly shared or transferred. Sign and symbol have

⁴⁴ Cf. Janet Breman Croft, ed. *Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings* (n.p.: Mythopoeic Press, 2005); Greydanus, "From Book to Film"; Caldecott, "Grace of the Valar"; see also: Nicholas Barber, "Is the final Hobbit film a flop?" BBC: Culture: 2014 Dec.12; Jeffrey Mallinson, "A Potion too Strong?: Challenges in Translating the Religious Significance of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings to film" *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 1, No. 1 (Fall 2002): 4 .

dissolved completely. The flaw to this line of reasoning is that one can read Foucault and Derrida, debate their presentations and consider the implications. Their discourse is conveyed in words by lecture or in print. Orality and textuality retain form and utility. It is precision in meaning originating in an author's mind, how it is to be adequately conveyed and the degree to which the recipient mind comprehends the message which is a legitimate philosophical debate. Reversion to Thomism and the Eucatastrophic vision of Tolkien reasserts word, sign and symbol. One may argue that fragmentation is confronted with fragments tied to other fragments of meaning, caught up in a web of articulated tapestry shot with images, symbols and language which have multiple connections and layers of meaning. The mode of thought revealed in *The Lord of the Rings* conveys a search for reintegration and actualization which is part of the appeal to modern day readers of the Tolkien corpus.⁴⁵

The anti-theistic modality of scientism in tandem with demotion of theological studies at modern universities has engendered a world view which while acknowledging the existence of belief in religious systems nonetheless accords the latter the designation given by the later Enlightenment proponents. Faith is outdated, remnant superstition and anti-reason/ anti-rationality. Part of the outcome of such prevalent thinking as sublimated through the educational system (including grade school) is a paucity of understanding of religion or religious belief. One can see the results in popular news media coverage of events where misunderstanding is

⁴⁵ Radical Orthodoxy proponents likewise counter semiotic fragmentation. See: Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998; repub. 2003): pg. 267; "This sign disseminating the tradition into which it is born for it is configured as a history, a ritual, a liturgy, a narrative, a desire, and a community. Such a wealth of signification bespeaks the sign which is also a person, and a people, a body which is dispersed through time as gift, peace, and the possibility of a future." [re: the Eucharist]

frequent. More disturbing is the intellectual deficiency among university academics, even in the field of history, when it comes to evaluating the significance of faith in society and in our cultural past. The concept of a rounded education has been eroded. Under the by-word of the separation of Church and State the freedom to teach faith has been excised from grade schools unless these are specifically religious foundations. The same exists within Canada where historically there has never been such a basis in constitutionality or common law. It is the absorption of American ideals which has so much altered Canadian understanding. The wasteland of emaciated intellectualism has left psychic gaps in people's comprehension of the world around them, their heritage and means to orientation in pursuit of life's goals. It has made them open to the liturgical drama offered by the State and materialism of secular economic systems of any description.⁴⁶ The result is the varying attempts by society's younger generations since the 1960s to seek a way back to a deeper appreciation of the mysteries of life and relationships. One finds the way marked by eclectic collections of "otherness" taken from a myriad of faith traditions most often referred to as New Ageism, or the seeking out and adoption of non-traditional Western forms of spirituality. Rediscovery of the spiritual legacy of the West

⁴⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998; repub. 2006): pg. 30. Robertson, "Liturgy & Sanctuary": "In his forging the narrative of *Torture and Eucharist* Cavanaugh speaks of the imagination of the State which conditions its citizens into its vision of reality, the aforementioned condition for the anti-liturgy. The imagination of a society is the condition of possibility for the organization and signification of bodies in society. The imagination is the dream in which bodies are invested." (see Cavanaugh pg. 20)

has been hindered by the aforementioned hostility or indifference toward religion in the educational and philosophical agendas of the last century and a half.⁴⁷

The fallacy of Post-modernism and secularist agendas that religion is anti-reason and anti-rational are in themselves non-coherent reasoning. A critical examination of Western religious thought reveals it as a legacy of higher education taken as far as logic would admit prior to the full flowering of the Scientific Revolution. Thomas Aquinas's systemization of Catholic theology and philosophy was an encyclopaedic watershed in the Western intellectual tradition. That it dealt with metaphysics in no way detracts from it for it bound up faith and the ethical life in a harmonious mutually supportive manner. Reasoning and rationality came together in the *Summa Theologica* as an apogee of human achievement. The Scholastic structure permitted great flexibility which Aquinas used to his advantage. He approached his work much as a master architect envisions a completed work then proceeds to creatively piece the elements together such that all parts support the whole while allowing for discursive ornamentation. Aquinas's discourse was aided by the common classical Christian vocabulary in which medieval scholars were immersed. The world wherein one could live the ethical life and find fulfillment were rationally explored albeit set in a metaphysical milieu. Faith in God was the keystone for the entire system. Post-Enlightenment developments while elevating the scientific method which led toward the view of non-deification of the experiential world were and remain as heavily dependent on "faith" in the system as were Aquinas and fellow Scholastics in the Middle Ages with regard to a theistic vision. Scientific advances and discoveries indeed call for more "faith"

⁴⁷ Theologian Alan L. Mittleman gives attention to the disparity between scientism and faith from the Jewish perspective in his volume *Human Nature & Jewish Thought: Judaism's Case for Why Persons Matter* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

since data and interpretations taught as evidentiary truths are under constant revision and frequent radical restructuring. This applies to many fields such as cosmology, biological sciences (eg. evolutionary theory), and ecological models. History, sociology, anthropology each have revised presentations of society and human relations such that the logic of the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries no longer holds under current criteria. This is not to say that all previous data collection and observations are rendered wholly invalid. Rather one is led to be consciously aware of the need to be open to new ways of viewing and understanding. That openness cannot exclude the significance of faith in peoples lives, nor can it be as readily dismissive of other centres of personal and cultural orientation. Aquinas still has much to say about the virtues in the twenty-first century for the conditions of human nature have remained unchanged.⁴⁸

Between the polarities of medieval scholasticism and early Twenty-first Century post-modernism lies the speculations and writings of J. R. R. Tolkien. His Catholicism informed by Thomism was well blended with acute social observations grounded in his intimate awareness of mythology as expressed in poetry and early tales of northern Europe. Akin to Fraser's *The Golden Bough* one finds that Tolkien had built up an understanding of human nature through case studies located in mythopoetics as well as insight into pre-modern virtues and faith. One is drawn to comparison with Jung's archetypes for psychic imaging in Tolkien's work though it is not so obvious as in the writings of Canadian novelist Robertson Davies. Steeped in the life of an

⁴⁸ The prologue of the *Summa Theologica* contains Aquinas's plan in order to guide novice scholar students of his day which continues to ring true: "Next, because its main purpose is to communicate knowledge about the living God, about his life both as intimately as his own and as the source and purpose of all things, especially of rational creatures, my exposition is divided into three parts. The first treats of God; the second of the movement of men to God; the third of Christ, whose humanity shows us the way of our going to God." Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Texts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955): pg. 2

academic as he was did not leave Tolkien outside the realm of faith. His lifelong commitment to Catholicism prevented him from succumbing to the fashionable scepticism and atheism current in English university circles of his time. He used his well trained intellect to foster the spirit of an apologist for faith. This role as a lay theologian emerges most clearly in his discussion of eucatastrophe [see further Chapter Three] which while rooted in the Christian Gospel is linked to his knowledge of folklore, myth and linguistics. His reasoning which simultaneously gave rise to his literary fantasy worlds was formed and habituated in the virtues. Tolkien's Thomism is so tightly woven into *The Lord of the Rings* that the reader is informed and guided by its medieval legacy of virtue exposition without being overtly aware of the content. Both the poetic vividness and full character development become the vectors for incarnated archetypes. Life for Tolkien without the Church and the Eucharist was unthinkable. It is not to be wondered at that he sublimated their reality into his sub-creations.⁴⁹

Tolkien did not subscribe to nihilistic pessimism in the human condition nor in the abnegation of religion in forming imagination. His knowledge opened up multiple worlds of vision which freed him from constraints of philosophic linguistic obstructions. Truth was to be

⁴⁹ "The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision... For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism." Tolkien, *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* : Letter to Robert Murray: 1953 Dec. 2: pg. 172. In discussing his then as yet unpublished *Silmarillion* and other tales Tolkien refers to northern myths and sagas that inspired his fantasy writing: "There is the *Children of Hurin*, the tragic tale of Turin Tramcar and his sister Niniel - of which Turin is the hero: a figure that might be said (by people who like that sort of thing, though it is not very useful) to be derived from elements in Sigurd the Volsung, Oedipus, and the Finnish Kullvero." : *ibid.*: Letter to Milton Waldman [ca. 1951]: pg. 150. Also note: "But an equally basic passion of mine *ab initio* was for myth (not allegory!) and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little in the world (accessible to me) for my appetite." (pg. 144)

seen in all things even in the pre-Christian legacy of Europe as much as the Patristic Fathers had discussed what value lie in Classical Greek and Roman philosophy. *The Silmarillion*, *Lord of the Rings*, and related literary explorations are marked by an expanded sense of wonder and respect for older traditions with which he infused the former. Passages from his letters and lectures shine out to reiterate these comments. His diffuse knowledge is the greatest challenge in attempting to draw together so many strands of literary artefacts in order to realize the full breadth of Tolkien's own mode of thought. It may be observed that his untrammelled ventures into Fairy are what contributed to the 1960s fascination with *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The world of anti-establishment orthodoxies, willingness to delve into alternate spiritualities and psychedelic quests was drawn into his elaborate new world. Misreadings aside (as well as readers' own fantasies that Tolkien had to be inspired by psychedelic drugs rather than possessing a far more admirable talent for synthesizing his own religious-cultural legacy) the college sub-culture which praised Tolkieniana radiated into academia and the general public's consciousness. It was a vehicle of transformation and learning which was highly accessible.⁵⁰ Beyond the impact on audiences there is as well the very concept of sub-creation as engendering theological constructs which although within orthodoxy shift perspective. Sub-creation as the imitation by the creature of the Creator carried with it the idea that the Imago Dei is transmitted into story and literature as many splinters of reality or light. Inversely one may say that the creature becomes aware that the Creator delights in imaginative creativity which is the manifestation of loving discourse within

⁵⁰ Cf. Alison Flood interview with Guy Gabriel Kay: "I learned a lot about false starts from J. R. R. Tolkien" *The Guardian* 2014 Oct. 29: Kay had worked for a time with Christopher Tolkien editing the J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*. [The second wife of the younger Tolkien was a Canadian]. Kay (a Canadian) is especially known for his fantasy trilogy the Fionavar Tapestry.

the Trinitarian Godhead. A reading of the Genesis six day story of creation on one level is an account of how all things came into being; yet it is not depicted as an enforced labour or necessity; it is the unfolding of innate vision. The comparative account by Tolkien of Eru's creation story in *The Silmarillion*, the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, moves from music to vision to embodied reality. Despite the rebellion of Melkor it is likewise an unfolding of joyful being. This ties into Tolkien's other theological innovative use of Eucatastrophe - that the Incarnation was the unexpected joyful ending of human history while the passion, death and resurrection were the joyful in-breaking of God calling humanity into the fullness of life.⁵¹

Aquinas and Tolkien were communicators, educators and believers. Their modes of thought were based in the primacy of Otherness within which humanity lived and communed. Intellectual pursuits as in the *Summa Theologica* and personification of the Virtues found in *The Lord of the Rings* through fantasy writing drew on the pursuit of the fullness of human potential as understood and realized in the Western Catholic tradition of which both authors were a part. Aquinas the teacher had organized his master works for students to be immersed in the deeper theological and philosophical considerations of their time. The scholastic method was a means of marshalling thought to answer complex metaphysical questions. Behind it lay the goal to inform

⁵¹ Crabbe, *J. R. R. Tolkien* : pg. 1: "But Tolkien's imaginative faculty was not inclined toward the careful recreation of the world around him, or the slow building up of detail that creates recognizably real characters or settings. Rather, his was mythopoetic imagination, one that created a mythology as it worked, and middle-earth the subject matter and inspiration of the mythology he created, became the home to which the prisoner longed to return."; *ibid.*, pg. 154: "In Tolkien's view stories in which the author has achieved sub-creation and in which the author has succeeded in creating a secondary world are paramount among works of literature in offering the reader fantasy, recovery, escape, and consolation."

the growth of personhood.⁵² Similarly Tolkien made Thomist teachings on the Virtues and his own theological speculations accessible through literary embodiment of his thought. The joy of creativity has an infectious quality which radiates from Tolkien's writings in a way which draws in the reader, gives them pause to think and to emulate heroic models. Hence these linked modes of thought remain permeable to our understanding. Access is as simple as opening the pages of the Angelic Doctor's and Oxford Philologist's books. All that is required is that one read, be open to new experiences and find the deeper joy that inspired each sub-creator:

Aquinas: Pro Obtinedis Virtutibus/ To Acquire the Virtues: "Grant that I may abide on the firm ground of faith, be sheltered by an impregnable shield of hope, and be adorned in the bridal garment of charity. Grant that I may through justice be subject to You, through prudence avoid the beguilements of the devil, through temperance exercise restraint, and through fortitude endure adversity with patience." Anderson and Moser, *Devoutly I Adore Thee* : pp. 33-35⁵³

Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories": "'Dear Sir,' I said - 'Although now long estranged,/ Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed./ Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned,/ and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned: / Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light/ through whom is splintered from a single white/ to many hues, and endlessly combined/ in living shapes that move from mind to mind. / Though all the crannies of the world we filled/ with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build/ Gods and their houses out dark and light,/ and saved the seed of dragons - 'twas our right/ (used or misused). That right has not decayed; / we make still by the law in which we're made.'" (pp. 71-72)⁵⁴

⁵² Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas* : re: theological virtues: "They are the virtues which make us well adjusted to our last end, which is God himself; hence they are called theological, for they not only go out to God but also reach him..."

⁵³ Robert Anderson and Johann Moser, trans. and ed., *Devoutly I Adore Thee: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1993)

⁵⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* ed. C. S. Lewis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1981; 1st pub. 1947)

Each author though conveying the ideas of creativity and the Virtues through the written word ultimately meant that their ideas be inscribed on our lives, in our very persons; their modes of thought are the place to begin to understand the Virtues and the Good.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Alan Mittleman echoes that perspective in his own extended essay *Human Nature & Jewish Thought* : “The reason we matter is not only that God ultimately matters. We matter for who we are as persons in a world understood as replete with intrinsic value. We matter because we have the potential to advance the good that already resides, from the start, in the manifold of nature. The image of God connotes a likeness based on free, creative action. Our dignity is found in our activity and - even before we are able to act -potential for full personhood. Persons in their moral, epistemic, and creative capacities help the hidden goodness, truth, and significance of life to emerge. We have the dignity of doers, of persons who comet see their peculiarity and calling in a world otherwise composed of things.” (pg. 183)

Chapter Two:

Iluvatar and the Flame Imperishable: Thomism and the Good

The classic exposition of the cardinal and theological virtues resides in Thomas Aquinas's writings. His philosophical and theological crystallization of over a thousand years of Christian understanding informed Tolkien's vision and continues to underpin Catholic grounding on the Virtues. The persistence of that teaching into the public sphere as refracted through *The Lord of the Rings* must begin here.

At the heart of Tolkien's mythological creation which would underlay *The Lord of the Rings* was Iluvatar or Eru, the One, from whence all things came into being. Moreover the physical realization of Iluvatar's visions were implanted with the Flame Imperishable — the living reality of Eru's creative divine presence. Whatever might befall to mar creation there remained the irreducible Good which could not be overcome.⁵⁶ This mythopoetic literary story was an echo of Christian understanding of the universe which Aquinas explored and revealed in his scholarly endeavours. He began the *Summa Theologica* with God and ended with God; the path of humanity was to lead back to the source of creation, the ultimate Good. One moved in that direction in habituation of practices that reinforced living the virtues which drew one toward that great end or telos. Christ as God incarnate showed that Goodness might be embodied on earth and so taught that bodily creatures might aspire to spiritual fulfillment, or specifically, that humans made in the image of God were impressed with the divine image [or Flame

⁵⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) pp. 15, 20.

Imperishable] which explained the yearning to return to source of being.⁵⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien's posthumously published *The Silmarillion* contains the primordial myth presented above. As a sub-creation it reflects Tolkien's roots in Catholicism and his concern for the origin myths of those peoples to whose languages to which he devoted his intellectual life. *The Lord of the Rings* is Thomist in its explication of the Virtues and partially veiled references to the Imago Dei. It is important, therefore, to explore both the virtues and the concept of the Imago Dei in order to fully appreciate the link between Aquinas and Tolkien.

The Gospel of John begins with the great hymn to the Second Person of the Trinity in the divine Logos: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ..." Word and words lead to understanding and potentially to participation in the living Word. The virtues are guides of habituation which train one to that end. By the Scholastic period these virtues were classified as the Four Cardinal Virtues and the Three Theological Virtues. Latterly there has been the trend to group them together as the Seven in contrast to the Seven Deadly Sins.⁵⁸ Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude are linked to Faith (fides), Hope

⁵⁷ Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Texts* (Oxford University Press, 1955): pg. 3: "The human mind can view the whole range of things, and therefore instinctively craves to know their cause, which, ultimately, is God alone. Happiness is not attained until this natural appetite is at rest." (III *Contra Gentes*, 25)

⁵⁸ For a much earlier contrast between the virtues and the vices one is directed to the Christian poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens who at the end of the fourth century wrote *Psychomachia* (Battle of Souls). See also Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd, ed., *Virtues & Their Vices* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

(spes) and Love (caritas).⁵⁹ These virtues are intertwined with the principal characters of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.⁶⁰ For Thomas Aquinas these seven guides mould one for life's pilgrimage toward one's telos, or end, in God. They are expressions of morality and philosophy as should be found in the lives of persons who profess faith in Christ and endeavour to live that conviction day by day. Each constitutes a part of what it means to strive to lead the fullness of life insofar as that can be done in this temporal sphere. Consequently the Virtues are the foundational stones of Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* since each in effect emanates from the revelation of God. The Imago Dei within each one of us shines out through the practice of the Virtues and at the same time allows for the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, or the deification as

⁵⁹ P. T. Geach, *The Virtues* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977): pg. 1; Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006; 1st pub. 1966); Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part Three: Life in Christ: Sections One: Man's Vocation in the Spirit: Chapter One: the Dignity of the Human Person: Article 7: the Virtues [vatican.va]. See also: Richard Hutter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Exploration in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2012): pg. 315 quoting from Benedict XVI's *Spes salvi*: "Saint Thomas Aquinas, using the terminology of the philosophic tradition to which he belonged, explains it as follows: faith is a *habitus*, that is, a stable disposition of the spirit, through which eternal life takes root in us and reason is led to consent to what it does not see..." - *ibid.* pg. 317: "Faith draws the future into the present so that it is no longer simply a 'not yet.'"

⁶⁰ See: David Rozema, "Pre-Christian Infusion: Faith, Hope and Charity in *The Lord of the Rings* : Catholic Distance University: republished on dappledthings.org/1052

taught by the Orthodox church.⁶¹ Aquinas's explication of the cardinal and theological virtues is part of the flow of Thomism which Tolkien received in his Catholic education.

The Virtues have become less well known in the general populace especially outside the Catholic fold. Consequently it is essential to offer commentary in order to clarify meaning. A highly nuanced exploration of each virtue has been the subject matter of many books over time. Each virtue is linked to the other in a supportive web yet is sufficiently distinct in its individual aspects. Faith, Hope and Love are the apex in the same way as theology was considered the queen of the sciences in the medieval period. The Christian context has the nexus of the theological virtues in Christ — faith in Christ, hope in Christ's promises, and the living out Christ's love in this life. Faith implies a concession of humility in human reason before the greater metaphysical mysteries, and acknowledgment of an alternate way of knowing. It is not a blind submission, however, but a reasoned encounter with that which calls one out of oneself. There is a listening to teaching or evangelium, internalization, and response. That process hopes to exclude false premises or values. It is as well an intuiting that one's hope is founded not on what one desires but rather in a willingness to be enveloped in a reality which surpasses one's own expectations of oneself or one's own physical and psychological strength. Love is the

⁶¹ Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics* (New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1962): pp. 9-10: "All the great philosophies whether of the Middle Ages or any other period have that in their substance which to an extent triumphs over time. But Thomism does so more completely than any other since it harmonizes and exceeds them all, in a synthesis which transcends all its components. It is relevant to every epoch. It answers modern problems, both theoretical and practical... In short, we are concerned not with an archaeological but with a living Thomism. It is our duty to grasp the reality and the requirements of such a philosophy." For an extended coverage of the Orthodox understanding of deification or theosis with divergencies from the Catholic perspective see: Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1999)

transformative virtue and understood to be the self-revelation of the Creator. Just as the Trinitarian Godhead is a reciprocity of love so too the creature is moved to reciprocate love or *caritas* toward all other persons.⁶²

Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* expressed the belief that the theological virtues could not be overborne or exaggerated. He stated that, “God Himself is the rule and mode of virtue. Our faith is measured by divine truth, our hope by the greatness of His power and faithful affection, our charity by His goodness. His truth, power and goodness outreach any measure of reason. We can certainly never believe, trust or love God more than, or even as much as, we should. Extravagance is impossible. Here is no virtuous moderation, no measurable mean; the more extreme our activity, the better we are.”⁶³ The author of the *Summa* thus situates the virtues in God as the font of all goodness. Imitation of the virtues leads one to imitate God’s revelation of Himself in these qualities and by means of which we are drawn into God.⁶⁴ Christ was the embodiment of the virtues on earth. The Holy Spirit is the activation of the virtues when we permit ourselves to so respond to the Spirit’s urgings. Aquinas spoke similarly in addressing the nature of the theological virtues: “Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without Divine

⁶² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Volume II - Part II, First Section* (New York: Cosimo, 2007): pg. 851

⁶³ Kreeft, *Summa of the Summa*: pg. 15

⁶⁴ “Ultimately, the function of the theological virtues is to make us “partakers” [*consortes*] in the divine nature, a phrase Aquinas uses to describe our union with God.”: Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey and Christian Van Dyke, *Aquinas’s Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory and Theological Context* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009): pg. 143

assistance. Such like principles are called “theological virtues”: first, because their object is God, inasmuch as they direct us aright to God; secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone; thirdly, because these virtues are not made known to us, save by Divine revelation, contained in Holy Writ.”⁶⁵ The measure of a life moving toward its proper end is one which exhibits a growth in and expression of the cardinal and theological virtues. It is noteworthy that this path is not dependent on one’s economic, political or educational position in life. The virtues are open to and incumbent upon all who are called to follow Christ. Aspects of the virtues are not solely dependent on a specific theistic faith so may be practiced by anyone. The Christian understanding, however, is that the virtues are an integral part of the pilgrim journey. In order not to miss the foundational concept that God is love one finds Aquinas in his discussion of love (caritas) - which he denominated as charity - that love is the apex of all virtues: “But in the order of perfection, charity precedes faith and hope: because both faith and hope are quickened by charity, and receive from charity their full complement as virtues. For thus charity is the mother and the root of all the virtues, inasmuch as it is the form of them all ...”⁶⁶ The well-spring of love is God who is as stated previously the end or telos of humanity. One equates the Good with God who is all good in a measure which surpasses human understanding.

Inherent in the foregoing is the teaching that not only must one pursue practice of the virtues but that these latter are actually attainable. Perfection is not achievable in this life. The habituation of a course of living which leads in that direction, nonetheless, is possible in the here and now. That distinction is important to keep in view. The great telos or end in the Good is

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*: (2007): pg. 851

⁶⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*: (2007): pg. 853

consummated in union with God for which the final action is worked on and in us from an outside reality. On the other hand the cardinal and theological virtues can be consciously imitated, habituated and reflected on with the human intellect in time and space. Simultaneously the virtues are a cord tying one to progression toward a more luminous existence wherein glimpses of metaphysical moments may be infused into mundane reality. These experiences cannot be the subject of scientific measurement yet their existence is more than posited explanations of random chemical responses in the brain, hormonal highs and lows, or phantasm imaginings of the mind — the latter itself the subject of much debate.

St. Thomas carefully unfolded the idea of one finding ultimate happiness in God in his theological tome *Summa Contra Gentiles*. That which at first appears to be most curious is that even the virtues are not to be accorded the means of achieving happiness. Here one must understand that Aquinas is fixed on the immutable since the Godhead is likewise unchangeable, at rest, without passion — God being perfection cannot change further. Humans, on the other hand, will change in the union with their telos or the Good; it is the Perfection of Being that permits attaining happiness in its fullest expression.⁶⁷ The virtues guide and draw but are not in themselves the end. One may carry this reflection into Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* where the virtues do not lead to final rest for the main individuals; Frodo, for example, may abide for a time in the Shire yet he cannot remain. His end lies elsewhere. So too one finds that Sam Gamgee though he may remain longer in his native place ultimately follows Frodo over the sea

⁶⁷ Cf. Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; 1st pub. 1992): pg. 88: "For this reason Aquinas suggests that in seeking (tending to) their good, creatures are manifesting a kind of blueprint in the divine mind, that 'all things are said to be good by divine goodness, which is the pattern, sources and goal of all goodness.'" As he sees it, this means that they are seeking God. For their goal is something that lies in God as their Maker."

to another ending. Transience in this life is a Christian teaching along with the motif of life as a pilgrimage. Aquinas and Tolkien are both rooted in these messages. The virtues are those practices which enrich the experience of life on the road to perfection.

Among the four cardinal virtues it is Justice which is foremost for it echoes the divine image as found in the Old Testament wherein God is described as seated upon the throne of judgement or justice. Giving right judgement is to align one's actions with God. Aquinas wrote of *justicia* as rendering to each person that which is his due — either as recompense or social imposition of penalty. Within the *Summa Theologica* this concept was placed in the context of God's justice and the limits of human ability; that is, God's justice includes forgiveness which we cannot offer as a complimentary gift to God in return. It is therefore incumbent that human justice rendered to fellow humans is the only equivalence which can be performed so it must be the model of our actions. Prudence, fortitude and temperance all play their role in the dispensation of justice in disposition, consideration and judgement. It is through the theological virtues, especially *caritas*, that justice is tempered in reflection of the Biblical image of God rendering justice from his mercy seat. One may say that law establishes the rules of social existence; mercy (ie. *caritas*) ameliorates the letter of the law to reflect the right administration of justice. This is the ideal though in reality the letter of the law can be executed without regard to circumstances either in times past or in the present. It is to be noted as well that where the occasion of justice having to be administered that which must be rendered must include both perpetrator and the person(s) to whom an injustice was done. In essence *justicia* aims at maintaining right balance in society and among individuals. Similarly the exercise of Love

(caritas) moves us toward right balance in life and between persons. A conscientious practice of justice and love brings one in alignment with the Good and draws one toward the Good.

Practice of the virtues does not alone create happiness or fulfillment. The virtues are the elements necessary to create an inherent disposition which guides one along life's pilgrim route toward that which is truly the source of happiness, fulfillment and perfection. These philosophical and metaphysical activities remove one from materiality to the extent that that which is beyond the minimum necessities for existence are external non-essentials from which one may be freed. This is liberation from obsession with material goods, political power or domination. None of the latter may be carried with one into the next life (provided one believes in the latter); any possessions are a means to an end and not an end in themselves.

Faith and hope as part of the theological triad imply the ability to believe in that which is outside oneself and the virtue of not giving up in a false prognostication of seeing all ends which ends in despair. The former gives meaning to one's existence unattached to materialism and secular power structures. Hope is the positive energy to persist in living as an act of courage. The Thomist approach is bound to the Good: faith is in God as a metaphysical ground of being for all that there is in existence both seen and unseen; hope is in believing in divine mercy even if it appears not to come to fruition in this time-space reality; caritas is the divine revelation of relationships — it binds the Trinity, guides the life of the believer and acts of selfless giving. Love crowns the triad of the theological virtues as implied above. It is the inherent impetus to faith and hope. This is the distillation of Aquinas's discourse on these virtues.

In the *Summa Theologica* Aquinas provides detailed guidance in the concepts of the virtues, including Classical precedence, patristic writings, contemporary philosophic categories

and intellectual perceptions. Applicable theology, that is, the impact of virtue teaching on the non-theological specialist, is that which should be drawn out from Thomist writings. This is feasible since Aquinas wrote as a teacher for students. One is left free to delve more deeply into the *Summa*'s scholastic depths, or to derive from its pages the fruits of the author's deliberations on how the virtues are made manifest in our living. This is Thomist engagement with the present.

The habituation of virtue practice forms individual character. That resulting "in process" character embodies the virtues in varying degrees of attainment. Such persons become models of the fulfillment of potentiality as persons on the way to completion in the Good. This creates a matrix of possibilities for poets and prose authors who being grounded in Thomism may be inspired to draw out personages in a vibrant re-presentation of the virtues or lack thereof. Hence one finds that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is in a lineal spiritual and intellectual descent from the *Summa Theologica* and related expositions of Aquinas. Tolkien's sub-creation shows the virtues in growth and maturity as well as in absence and distortion. The virtues are aspects of the rational being; to write of the virtues is to describe human process, desire, psychological disposition and consciousness. Aquinas was as much a keen observer of psychology as he was a master of philosophy and theology. His flashes of illumination on the particular generate touchstones of empathic contact down through the centuries. Comparable to this element in Thomist writings is the Everyman/ Everywoman facet of *The Lord of the Rings* which the reader may identify in various individuals such as Frodo or Sam. In other words abstract theory materializes as human response, the *Summa* as pathway, and the experience as internalized psychological growth.

The four cardinal virtues according to Aquinas are under prudence just as caritas is the greater of the theological virtues. All are linked, nonetheless, which means that though the qualities of each are emphasized for recognition they are facets of the inherent nature of the person. The virtues are habits of being which facilitate the transformation of the individual. Aquinas sets his exploration of the virtues within the metaphysical matrix, hence one must fully appreciate his meaning by keeping that setting in mind. Looking ahead, however, there is the challenge in discussing the virtues vis a vis Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. The latter is set in a pre-Revelation world, one without the Incarnation or the Resurrection. Middle-earth virtues, therefore, are not to be seen as co-equal to Christian understanding insofar as the final Good cannot be achieved in the absence of Christ. Tolkien's sub-creation displays the inherent nature of the thinking being infused with the potentiality of following the cardinal and theological virtues. The metaphysical discourse of Aquinas provides the psychological insight into leading characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, and how that glimpse of extra-reality can in turn allow the reader to shift vision to both the past of Aquinas, the present reality, and the living legacy of Aquinas refracted through Tolkien.

Aquinas commences his in-depth dialogue on the seven virtues with the crown of them all - faith, hope and charity. It is charity (caritas) which has pre-eminence for it is the virtue that leads one into the revealed God. Charity not only leads to God, it begets friendship in God for the creature. The life of the Trinity is an unending reciprocal exchange of love. Similarly we are drawn to the love of God who simultaneously is in love with us. To travel life's journey in charity is to become like God - not that we can ever "be God" - rather we are conformed in our being into the inner nature of the Good. Love of necessity is a sharing, a letting down of barriers

in vulnerability, and an expression of desire for the other in a selfless giving that recognizes that the other is likewise called to fulfillment in the Good. Caritas exists in the temporal sphere yet it is linked to extra-mundane reality outside time; one consequence is that the good one does may ripple back into temporal time in unexpected ways. It does not disappear without effect. Tolkien makes use of this implied Thomist teaching in his periodic references to “providence” or “another power at work” as when he noted that Bilbo took so little harm from the One Ring because he began his possession of it through an act of pity for Gollum. For ourselves the full extent of caritas may not be appreciated in our lifetime but the conformity in a habitus of charity does become self-evident.

One of Aquinas’s favoured theologians, St. Augustine of Hippo, had written that, “For he who loves aright, without doubt believes and hopes aright...”⁶⁸ The orientation within love activates the virtues. As noted above, love makes one recognize that all are called to be on the pilgrimage toward the Good. Aquinas expressed this in his text on charity: “Charity loves God for himself, and our neighbours as oneself - for he also is called to the same happiness. Charity defies the barriers which grave sin would set up to keep us out. Charity, therefore, is a virtue, indeed the most potent of the virtues.”⁶⁹ Lest one miss the point he went on to state, “For thus charity is the mother and the root of all the virtues, inasmuch as it is the form of them all...”⁷⁰

The reciprocal nature of love is not confined in the passing back and forth of this desire; it exists as well as a model or mirror for others if one lives one’s life in a right fashion. Paul Wardell in

⁶⁸ Augustine, *Seventeen Short Treatises of S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1846]: pg. 155.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Theological Texts* (Oxford University Press, 1955): pg. 212

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (2007): pg. 853

The Primacy of Love - devoted to Thomist ethics - states that, “To be someone’s friend is to be ‘another self’ to them, to be so like them not only in taste and interests, but in character, goodness and virtue, that they come to look upon us as a reflection of themselves.”⁷¹ This concern for another is *caritas* as “loving kindness.” A clarification at this moment needs to be made: Aquinas did not eschew erotic love as the desire between the sexes; indeed, he was more forthright on the topic than he is usually credited. It is discussed in the *Summa Theologica* under the virtues with attention to how the latter moderates that love; in other words, reciprocal, without abuse, without objectification, in acknowledgement that the two persons are gift to each other. That is, Aquinas repeatedly relates his dialogue to both metaphysical/ theological discourse and how theology is part of a life well-lived in our mundane (ordinary) existence. We aspire to our telos in the Good yet the journey passes through the material world and in our interpersonal relationships.

The grounding of Aquinas’s teaching, once one gets past his conventional scholastic medieval language, is what keeps his insights vital. As a teacher he meant to assist students to learn and to lay out in his writings the richness of a life directed toward our ultimate end. Wardell noted: “We cannot study Aquinas and remain untouched. His schema of the moral life will grab us, it will make demands on us, and the longer we travel with him the more we will notice we are not where we were when we began.”⁷² Our personal peregrinations in life will not be without temptations, failings or set-backs. It is the virtues, especially the theological virtues, which are

⁷¹ Paul J. Wardell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992): pg. 75.

⁷² Wardell, *Primacy of Love*: pg. 2

the resources to draw on; faith and hope propel the continuance of the pilgrimage whenever we rise up, dust ourselves off, and take to the road once more.

Faith and hope - both are words which one needs to be familiarized with in the Thomist understanding rather than their vague popular connotations. The latter as applied to faith is commonly understood as belief in some thing, cause or person. Aquinas goes deeper citing the Letter to the Hebrews: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."⁷³ Grounding that discourse in scripture, Aquinas draws on St. Paul to set out a three-fold definition: "... the material of faith - the things which appear not, the act of faith - the evidence of conviction, and the purpose of faith - the substance of things hoped for." Faith exists because we have had a glimpse, an intimation, a moving in the soul of what our end is to be - to be wrapped up in God. It sees beyond the evidence of power, wealth and the damage that can be inflicted by evil purpose. It differentiates between substance and emptiness. Faith enables one to raise one's eyes to see past that which appears to oppress or threatens. It enables us to keep walking through life's vicissitudes.

Hope is that quality which repels despair or the paralyzing inertia the medieval scholastics knew as *acedia*, a life-robbing sadness.⁷⁴ Aquinas teaches us that hope is propelled by faith and kept burning by love. We are to look to each other for encouragement just as charity can be mutually supportive between persons: "Although our hope rests on divine help, be mindful how we should lean on one another in order to gain the more readily what we seek..."⁷⁵

⁷³ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 192

⁷⁴ Wardell, *Primacy of Love*: pg. 104

⁷⁵ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 204

In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* it is the indefatigable Sam who harbours a residue of hope that in the end enables both himself and Frodo to complete the journey to Mount Doom, and Gandalf's hope beyond seeing before the gates of the Morannon that held the free people's forces together at the last battle. Aquinas succinctly notes that a loss of hope can result in a great crisis: "... but as regards their effect on us sins against hope are more dangerous than sins against faith or charity, for when hope dies we lose heart and flounder in wickedness..."⁷⁶ We also sink into the abyss of despair which can separate us from God, our friends and even ourselves. The loss of hope can affect one at all levels of activity even if not recognized; the too often heard refrain "why bother" in the face of cultural, social, economic or political affairs is a form of hopelessness. Hope is a persistent voice which says that there is another way to proceed for there is a greater end meant for all of us.⁷⁷ If change is not for the good of society or one's soul, or eclipses the vision of the Good, then it is to be resisted. Tyrants will fall, oppression can be outlived and even attempts to chain thought itself overcome - be it state propaganda or "political correctness." None of these are higher than the ultimate repository of hope. The evidence of hope may be obscured yet if planted deep it can resurface to bolster a positive way forward. It is the complexity of hope's ramifications which Tolkien uses to great effect in his work. This is a lesson which we need to realize in a conscious way whether in reference to faith or to how we live the virtue in life.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 203

⁷⁷ Cf. Stephen J. Pope, "Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas" in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002): pg. 38: "Hope gives the believer a confident movement toward the future that enables him or her to overcome everything that restricts this movement to God. Hope moves the believer from the desire to avoid punishment that characterizes "servile fear" (*timor servilis*) to the love of God that marks "filial fear" (*timor filialis*)..."

Among the four cardinal virtues which Aquinas discusses as powers latent within each of us the leading one is prudence. The mind which weighs evidence and looks to the varied avenues of response in going forward in action or words is one governed by prudent foresight. This virtue implies a maturity of deliberation - not necessarily confined to maturity in years - which may be nurtured and allowed to grow throughout the course of one's existence. It avoids rash judgment, and is wary of leaping to conclusions in the heat of passion. Nor does it admit of immediately following a course of action solely on the basis of popular sentiment. Indeed, the prudent person may well decide to take a stand on an issue which is against majority opinion. If that is the case then courage must be the adjunct to any prudent undertaking. Nor is prudence equal to self-preservation; that is, inaction is not prudence but action may necessitate undertaking a perilous venture.

Aquinas in his work *de Virtutibus Cardinalibus* defined the virtuous act, then brought these thoughts to bear on prudence: "The practical knowledge requisite for virtue goes through three phases, namely, taking counsel, forming a judgement, and making a choice... Prudence, then, plays the principal part in the knowledge directing moral activity, and so is set up as a cardinal virtue."⁷⁸ The failure of imprudence includes, "inconsiderate haste, shilly-shallying [equivocating], negligence"; the more severe failings become vices (slyness, guile, fraud).⁷⁹ Having one's eye fixed on the final end - the Good - creates a focus for prudence. This allows the other cardinal virtues to act in concert with each other; drawing on Augustine and Gregory, then, Aquinas observed that, "Some authors treat the cardinal virtues as general characteristics of

⁷⁸ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 219

⁷⁹ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 233

every virtue - all directing knowledge is prudence, all balanced fairness is justice, all firmness of soul in misfortune is fortitude, all moderation about earthly virtues is temperance.”⁸⁰ Moreover, Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* reached into discussion of the Divinity’s being as source of the virtues albeit in perfection such that, “Prudence is his providence, justice his observance of eternal law, fortitude by his immutability, temperance his agreement of love with mind.”⁸¹

We as created beings are mutable, which is to say, we change, grow or decay. The body grows, transforms and wears out; by contrast the animating spirit with mind learns, grows and continues to journey so that a life guided by the virtues is dynamic, expansive and steady. In moving from Prudence to Justice, consequently, one finds that this virtue spirals outward from the self toward other persons, to society or community, and may reach further into government itself. Aquinas took the opportunity to view all three levels of *justicia* so as not to lose the chance to instruct leaders in medieval society (princes/monarchs, counsellors, governmental assemblies and judges) as well as individual Christians. Such a broad sweep may have reflected his readings of Plato and Aristotle (eg. *The Republic*) just as the latter inspired the writing a few centuries later of *Utopia* by St. Thomas More. One may see the lineage of thought in Tolkien’s treatment of Aragorn, Denethor and Theoden in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Justice in its basic form, as derived from the *Summa Theologica*, is rendering that which is a person’s due in law, in ethical treatment, and social equity.⁸² This is in contrast to the often held view that God’s justice is to be equated with varying degrees of divine punishment. To the

⁸⁰ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 229

⁸¹ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 221

⁸² Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 44

contrary, God as meting out justice is the arbitrator, looking at persons wronged, persons who inflict the wrong, and the re-setting of balance. That there may be punishment or the imposition of penance cannot be seen apart from the broader setting, and the bringing to bear of all the virtues on a situation. Human administration of justice is always flawed for it depends on judgement which is not all-encompassing as is Divine justice. This is not to say that one cannot strive to practice the virtue of justice; its exercise is one of striving toward its perfect model in the Divine mind. Similarly there is no excuse for persons in government to not exert themselves in the cause of just administration of power (contrary, for example, to the Renaissance example of power in Machiavelli's *The Prince*.) Aquinas went so far as to say that, "equity then exceeds and overrides legalistic justice, and may be pitted against it."⁸³

The author of the *Summa Theologica* was not reserved in his opinion of the value to be treasured in the practice of justitia: "Simply speaking, a moral virtue is the nobler for the amount of reasonable goodness suffusing it. Accordingly justice, as such, excels among the moral virtues and is called the brightest, outshining morning and evening star."⁸⁴ The Thomist teaching is paraphrased in Pieper when he observed: "Justice says 'This is another person who is other than I and who nevertheless has his own peculiar due. A just man is just, therefore, because he sanctions another person in his very separateness and helps him to receive his due.'"⁸⁵ Justice as a virtue is a means of one growing and journeying toward the Good. It benefits society as a whole where collectively justice is held up as a desirable *modus operandi*. To cite Pieper once

⁸³ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 238

⁸⁴ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 233

⁸⁵ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg, 54

more in his selection from the *Summa Theologica*: “The act of justice which orders the association of individuals with one another is restitutio, recompense restoration.”⁸⁶ Legalism is tempered by true justice which is justice in action beyond text; it is that which looks to the value of humanity on all sides.

Aquinas in discussing the remaining two virtues, Fortitude and Temperance, returns to the more personalized realm. These, though linked to justice, flow from the strengths and exercise of the will within the person. Fortitude in particular is that virtue which is demonstrated in the spirit or conscious effort of the individual in the face of external trials and stresses. The *Summa Theologica* sums up its two aspects: “First, as employing a certain firmness of mind... Secondly, as implying firmness in enduring and attacking under specially difficult circumstances of grave danger, when we must not run away...”⁸⁷ The phrase “enduring and attacking” indicates resolve in opposing that which threatens us whether in case of physical challenge, or other forms of trial including the spiritual. Fortitude when exercised supposes one to be in a state of vulnerability, even that of death (to paraphrase Pieper.)⁸⁸ It is that which gives courage for one to carry on, or as St. Paul wrote, “to fight the good fight,” a theme picked up by Aquinas when he said of fortitude, “It is for the sake of the good that the brave man exposes himself to the danger of death.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 78

⁸⁷ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 247

⁸⁸ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg 117

⁸⁹ 2 Timothy 4:7: *I have fought the good fight, I finished my course, I have kept the faith.* Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 122: Aquinas - *Virtutibus Cardinalibus* 4 and 5

Joseph Pieper elaborated on Aquinas's discourse on fortitude in a way which resonates with Tolkien's use of potential personal sacrifice. Having lived through the years of the Second World War in Europe Pieper well understood that power opposed to the Good may seem to be all-dominating and victorious: "It is of course an integral part of St. Thomas's conception of the world, of the Christian conception of the world, that man may be placed in a position to be injured or killed for the realization of the good and that evil considered in terms of this world, may appear as an overwhelming power."⁹⁰ One cannot resist quoting Aquinas through Pieper on the core issue: "Enduring comprises a strong activity of the soul, namely, a vigorous grasping of and clinging to the good; and only from that stout-hearted activity can the strength to support the physical and spiritual suffering of injury and death be nourished."⁹¹ The image of clinging to the good in the face of death is a powerful one. It is the forge in which fortitude receives its ultimate completion. That is the ideal; it does not discount the will collapsing in the face of pain (few of us are put to that test); rather it expresses through the virtue of Fortitude that while evil may appear to triumph it is an illusion for the Good remains in spite of the death of the just.

Temperance, the fourth cardinal virtue, holds the complex of virtues together in a unity of co-ordination while maintaining a spiritual centre for balance and mindful deliberation. It is what Aquinas called *quies anima* - "serenity of the spirit."⁹² This is the habitual use of reason (rationality).⁹³ There are certain affinities with the meditative art of Mindfulness. The latter seeks

⁹⁰ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: 128

⁹¹ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: 128

⁹² Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 147

⁹³ Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas*: pg. 247: "... a tempering or moderating of human activities and emotions by the reason which is present in all virtue."

to quiet the person (whether from stress, anxiety, depression) by achieving a degree of detachment - from negative images and memories, the inherent trap of rumination (constantly replaying past memories, or projecting possible scenarios into the future), and deflecting emotional injuries in daily encounters. Following Zen influence practitioners emphasize breathing control (not just breath) and awareness of the self in the now. Being centred and calmed one can then engage with the world with a resilience that had been lacking.⁹⁴

Temperance, from a Thomist perspective, is being capable of dispassionate appraisal, judgement, conviction, belief, hope and loving-kindness.

Temperance has come to mean in common vocabulary either moderation or abstinence. There is the implied sense that it may stifle unrestricted activity, especially pleasure. Liberal society with the cause of “freedom of expression,” “rights,” “finding oneself,” and “individualism” is wary of anything which imposes boundaries. The lack of boundaries however can be far more debilitating. Respect, dignity and the social good can be trampled in the open field of unrelenting egoism. Aquinas in discussing temperance reminds us that actual fulfilment lies in our journey toward Perfection. A diffuse life, without a centre, is constantly failing in its desires, or turns to excessive indulgence to obliterate lost hope.⁹⁵ Pieper crystallizes this teaching in Aquinas: “If he loves nothing so much as himself, man misses and perverts, with inner necessity, the purpose inherent in self-love as in all love: to preserve, to make real, to fulfill. This

⁹⁴ A leading American exponent on Mindfulness is Jon Kabat-Zinn: *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2009; 1st pub. 1990. See also: Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn, *The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness* (New York: Guildford Press, 2007)

⁹⁵ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 204; Zagan, *Acting on Principles*: pg, 213

purpose is given only to self-less love, which seeks not itself blindly but with open eyes endeavours to correspond to the true reality of God, the self, and the world.”⁹⁶ This passage emerges from commentary on Aquinas’s references to chastity in relation to temperance.⁹⁷ Chastity, or being chaste, in this sense is being true to oneself in the exercise of temperance. It is not to be confused with the modern day usage for sexual abstinence. To be chaste of purpose of course can mean faithfulness to one’s chosen life-partner. It means as well being chaste in the administration of justice (no bribes), chaste in prudence (not dissuaded by volatile public opinion), chaste in fortitude (not persuaded by offers of compromise), chaste in faith (an eye to the end of the pilgrim way), chaste in hope (not distracted by materialism) and chaste in love (not condemning the poor because they are poor). In other words consciousness of temptation provides a shining affirmative of the virtue with which to complete these observations on all the virtues: “To the virtue of temperance as the preserving and defending realization of man’s inner order, the gift of beauty is particularly co-ordinated. Not only is temperance beautiful in itself, it also renders men beautiful.”⁹⁸ The inner light, not one of fanciful imagination, which truly derives from following the path toward the Good, is glimpsed in unexpected people at unexpected times. In others it is the something one senses which is the presence of a constant activity in relation to the Good. And should we look into the mirror of our souls it can be there to

⁹⁶ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 149

⁹⁷ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 151

⁹⁸ Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*: pg. 203

be seen and felt if we choose to live in the habitual awareness of the virtues.⁹⁹ Aquinas's voice on the virtues is clear and consistent.

⁹⁹ The coming together of Aquinas, Tolkien and the Virtues took an academic "workshop" approach in a course offered at Baylor University, Waco, Texas in 2004 under Ralph C. Wood: "Reading Tolkien and Living the Virtues" : re Tolkien: "His work - especially *The Lord of the Rings* - is imbued with profound moral and religious concerns. We will discover that it gives convincing imaginative life to the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, courage, temperance) as well as the three theological ones (faith, hope, charity)."

Chapter Three:

Faery, Myth and Eucatastrophe - Tolkien's Vision

The complexity of *The Lord of the Rings* reflects Tolkien's mastery of philology, knowledge of Northern mythology and his rootedness in Catholic theology and philosophy. Just as the virtues and the Good cannot be properly grasped without delving into Aquinas's commentary, moreover, these cannot be appreciated as they appear in *The Lord of the Rings* without an awareness of Tolkien's position as a lay theologian and scholar who likewise looks to persistent motifs in cultural memory.

"In the deeps of time ..." is a phrase rich in meaning for Tolkien. It speaks of memory both collective and personal, mythic and vestigial. Time gives verisimilitude to literature for the more remote an event has occurred the more plausible it is for the imagination to be suspended and for one to believe in its veracity. Tolkien favoured history as a medium for constructing his fantasy worlds for it is something which all students have been exposed to in their education, however minimal, and brings us into acknowledgement of the mystery which is time itself.¹⁰⁰

Myth arises out of the remote, often fathomless, past. Nonetheless mythic stories can suggest former ways of seeing and acting.¹⁰¹ The narrative is the means of making real in the re-telling

¹⁰⁰ See: Jared Lobdell, "J. R. R. Tolkien: Words That Sound Like Castles" in *Rally* 1, no. 3 (August 1966): pp. 24-26: [quoting Tolkien]: "I am ... one who has always felt the attraction of the ancient history and pre-history of these islands [British Isles], and most particularly the attraction of the Welsh language in itself."

¹⁰¹ "Myth is the name of a way of seeing, a way of knowing in depth, a way of experiencing a way that in being distrusted contains the freedom of unending and vital interest." : Rolland Hein, *Christian Mythmakers: C. S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, J. R. R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, Dante Alighieri, John Bunyan, Walter Wangerin, Robert Siegel, and Hannan Hurnard* 2nd ed. (Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 2002; 1st pub. 1998): pg. xii

and re-listening of that which has been handed down from now nameless ancestors.¹⁰² Both time and story are important in J. R. R. Tolkien's own theological insights concerning the Gospel and humanity's relationship with the Creator. Out of the former he developed his unique concept of the unexpected "happy ending" or unexpected turn of events, which he christened "Eucatastrophe." Sub-creation becomes the exposition of archetypes which Tolkien recognized as imitation of the creative beingness of God which is carried into reality as memory, myth and revelation. It provided the fertile ground for his academic, fantasy and metaphysical writings. This is the locus of Tolkien's vision.¹⁰³

For the fortunate among us childhood is the time when make-believe and reality blend together. Fairy stories are accepted as alternate narratives which entertain, instruct and stimulate images of creativity even when supplemented with illustrations in books. The happy faculty of telling stories speaks of an active mind capable of transforming the individual during adulthood into one who may more readily grasp scientific innovation or artistic expression. It remains the matrix for myth in the broadest sense. It allows for the suspension of "reality" when reading fiction though one may as easily say that it permits entrance into another reality or the realm of Faery. These aspects of imagination were the avenues used by Tolkien to enter into his discussions of myth, sub-creation and universal archetypes. Any product of humanity in myth

¹⁰² Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2005): Chap. 1: "What is Myth?": "Mythology is usually inseparable from ritual. Many myths make no sense outside a liturgical drama that brings them to life, and are incomprehensible in a profane setting. ... myth is not a story told for its own sake. It shows us how we should behave." [The foregoing told a five part commentary on Neanderthal burials.]

¹⁰³ The key document remains Tolkien's contribution to a volume honouring fellow Inklings Charles Williams: *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* ed. C. S. Lewis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1981; 1st pub. 1947): J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories": pp. 38-89: pg. 81 introduces the term Eucatastrophe.

and story was an act of sub-creation, that imitation in some capacity of the creativity of the Creator. Hence it readily gives rise to the idea of splintered light from the originating one Light with the consequence that there exists some form of ultimate Truth in each narrative whether pre- or post-Christian, or in other religious expressions.¹⁰⁴ This matrix has a fluidity which permitted Tolkien to blend Northern sagas, literary heritage and medieval Christian tradition or interpretations of the Virtues. Moreover Tolkien often displayed in his academic writing an undisguised joy in communing with creative minds of the past as well as of the present. The anonymous tellers of the earliest forms of Beowulf who breathed vitality into a heroic world panorama coalesced in the one surviving manuscript of the poem. Tolkien devoted much labour to exploring its creation and conceptions of Northern cultural virtues. His philological analysis opened worlds behind words and word play. The richness of that understanding shines out in his commentaries on the poem as well as in his great recension into modern English.¹⁰⁵

Understanding his working with Beowulf adds necessary depth to appreciation of *The Lord of the Rings* and to his finding applicability of parallels between pagan virtues and the combined cardinal-theological virtues. It is crucial in seeing how Tolkien also realized the differences

¹⁰⁴ It was the inspiration for the title of Verlyn Flieger's book *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983)

¹⁰⁵ John R. Clark, ed. *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment* rev. ed. C. L. Wrenn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954; 1st publ. 1911: [1940 ed.]: J. R. R. Tolkien, "Prefatory Remarks on Prose Translation of 'Beowulf'": pp. ix-19; J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2014); cf. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936; repub. 1960). One may wish to compare Tolkien's studies with the translation by Irish literary scholar Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* bilingual edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

between the two which accounts for significant divergencies in the spirits of Beowulf and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Virtues as subject of discourse in the *Summa Theologica* when rendered into the foundation of *The Lord of the Rings* links the Western Canon of great literature together in the idea of Eucatastrophe. Thus Tolkien's fantasy *Summa* though suffused with Northern myth and nomenclature has its main relationship with Dante, Chaucer and Dickens.¹⁰⁶ (Certainly the spiritual redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge is an explicit example of eucatastrophe unforeseen at the outset of Charles Dickens's seeming bleak telling of a soul's journey down into the antithesis of the virtues.) Chaucer's poems of love and religious faith bear comparison to Dante as well as to certain shorter refrains of Shakespeare. In all of these despair is linked to the failure to understand the ultimate promises of Christian revelation. Happy denouements are the consequence of the fulfilment hope in the unexpected turn of events. There is no room for nihilism in such narratives.

Distinction is to be made between Northern myth and those tales infused with Medieval Christianity as the emphasis on heroic virtues do differ. Fate and one's resignation to destiny in the former are bound up with infusing one's calling with wholeheartedness of purpose. The

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Merlin De Tardo, "Dante" in *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (New York: Rutledge, 2007) ed. Michael D. C. Drout; see also comment by reviewer of *Fellowship of the Ring* as noted in Jane Chance, *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* rev. ed. (University of Kentucky Press, 2001): pg. 9: "It is worth noting, however, that Chaucer critic Edward Wagenknecht perhaps sensed *Fellowship's* future importance and termed it "a great work of the imagination ... wonderful as story alone and the prose a consistent glory" and in a second review praised this "prose romance" and also its author for creating, Blake-like, his own mythology." For a commentary on Dante's influence on the English poets (and so indirectly as well on Tolkien) see C. P. Brand, "Dante and the English Poets" in U. Limentani, ed., *The Mind of Dante* (Cambridge at the University Press, 1965): pp. 163-200

warrior delights in combat for personal prowess yet does not neglect the communal role of loyalty to one's leader, chieftain or king. Hence Beowulf as the embodiment of the essential qualities of a warrior and unswerving allegiance to an honoured king before he in turn becomes a king who then carries on these roles in altered status. His death in battle with the dragon was not a failure but the consequence of fulfilling his destiny or calling. Therein lies his nobility and the appeal for the poem to its original audiences. These aspects were delineated in Tolkien's examination of Beowulf and related Northern poems and myths for he was at pains to alert the modern reader to the different mind-set of the medieval society in which the poets created their sagas and great tales. One finds such virtues reflected in the pages of *The Lord of the Rings* as witness, for example, the ride of King Theoden out of the Hornburg to what may have well been a final and fatal sally with his faithful mounted troops. Again, the ride onto the Pelennor Fields before Minas Tirith showed an aged warrior leader going to possible death undaunted by what lies before him. The latter was the fulfillment of oaths which he took as a sacred trust no matter what the outcome. Hence either death or life in the aftermath would be honourable.

Similarly one finds that Boromir at the command of his leader Aragorn went to the rescue of Pippin and Merry at Parth Galen. His end was both a redemption and honourable in his fight to the death with the orcs who abducted the two young hobbits. Tolkien in this dramatic scene finds links between the pre-Christian heroic and post-Incarnation reality in Boromir's laying down of his own life for his friends. Hence glory is paired with sacrifice for the other. This was a recognition by Tolkien of the means of reaching a warrior society with the Christian message by highlighting parallels and expanded virtuous causes. The extant redaction of Beowulf though arising from the northern Germanic oral poetic tradition had its completion by someone familiar

with both the pagan and Christian worlds. Allusion to Grendel's mother's origins in legendary accounts of the fall of Satan created the pivot of agents of evil with a champion for the good, that is, Beowulf. This interjection does not overwhelm the Germanic spirit of the poem; it does offer moral support for its preservation. Tolkien's genius was to write without overt allusion to Catholic Christianity and to infuse *The Lord of the Rings* with the energy and robust linguistic heritage of the North. Hence an air of familiarity pervades Tolkien's Middle-Earth legendarium which makes it both strange and hauntingly connected to the present.

That use of the known yet unknown has been used before in European literary creations. Dante's *Divine Comedy* invokes classical figures - philosophers and heroic persons - in giving antiquity a voice which then blends into the passage of time into the Christian reality.¹⁰⁷ Value is shown to exist in the knowledge of the ancients yet the limitations are defined when Dante's guide cannot ascend further in Dante's pilgrimage into the realm of New Testament enlightenment.¹⁰⁸ It heightens the contrast to the visions in the *Inferno* where persons who were given the gift to live in the post-Incarnation era have nonetheless fallen far short of the glory of God through succumbing to the various Seven Deadly Sins whether commoners or bishops and kings. This study of the inverted world of the Sins contrasted with the ascension mountain of the

¹⁰⁷ Limentani, *Mind of Dante*: Philip McNair, "The Poetry of the 'Comedy'": pp. 17-46; Dante Alighieri, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri The Florentine: Cantica III Paradise (Il Paradiso)* trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 1982; 1st pub. 1962): cf commentary "The Allegory of Paradise" pp. 44-49

¹⁰⁸ It was in Paradise that Dante described his encounter with two great medieval philosophers and theologians - Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus: Canto X:91-97: "You wish to know with what flowers this garland is decorated that circles the lovely lady who strengthens your resolve for Heaven. I was one of the lambs of the sacred flock that Dominic leads on the path where there is good pasture if we do not stray. He who is nearest me on the right was my master and my brother: he was Albert of Cologne, and I, Thomas Aquinas." - for an alternate translation see *Comedy of Dante Alighieri* trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds: pg. 137-38

way of the Virtues in the Divine Comedy and is therefore akin to J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* where the predominant role of the Seven Virtues has as its foil the Seven Deadly Sins. No vision of Beatrice or the Trinity await Frodo and Samwise for the Incarnational present has not yet occurred. A shimmering glimpse barely realized in the Tolkien text as parallel to the Beatrice-Trinity event of Dante's poem's apogee is the arrival of the great elven-ship near to Tol Eressa with the ring-bearers.

Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* at first glance may appear to be a literary matter of a far different order from Dante's Divine Comedy or the Beowulf saga. One needs to remember that despite the cultural secularization cast over re-presentations of *A Christmas Carol* that at its heart it is a Christian story of redemption.¹⁰⁹ Dickens used the idea of time-travel to visit Ebenezer Scrooge's personal "deeps of time" from childhood, young adult and turn to avaricious, uncharitable capitalist. The latter half of the book is as if one has passed through the narrows of the hour-glass where the reverse occurs - recognition of failings, concern for others, repentance and rebirth. In old age Scrooge becomes what he might have been had he taken the right path. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are vivified in what had been formerly an atrophied personality. One is left with the conviction that Scrooge will in time come to a "good end" - his personal telos ending in the Good free of the chains that fettered his former partner Jacob Marley. Dickens in his enduring story from its outset reached a wide reading public much as J. R. R. Tolkien did with the modern publishing world of book distribution. Both authors' creative images have infiltrated popular culture with themes and expressions. The reader is led to

¹⁰⁹ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, ed., *A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens and Other Victorian Fairy Tales...* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1983): Dickens's *Christmas Carol* was published in 1843.

reflect on his personal past, present and future, and to what end choice (free will) may lead one. The Spirit of Christmas Past used the phrase, “your reclamation then” of Scrooge for which one may read “your redemption.”¹¹⁰ These were key words which had immediate meaning for the reading populace of nineteenth century Britain and wherever the English-speaking diaspora had settled around the globe. Diminishment of Christian knowledge may account in part for the secularization of *A Christmas Carol* in a world not as conversant in the language of the King James Bible.

Smeagol in *The Lord of the Rings* can be compared to an unrepentant Scrooge. The personal choices in his case led to the sins of covetousness and murder. Family and the community are foregone for possession and absorption into the self. Bilbo’s encounter with Smeagol or Gollum approximates the Spirit of Christmas Past - his (Bilbo’s) voice evokes memories nearly obliterated within Gollum, echoes of the past in his grandmother’s matriarchal clan. Unlike Scrooge this encounter does not begin to open the door wider to the light; rather, Gollum continues to be consumed with his Precious, its retrieval from Bilbo and indeed to exact revenge for its “theft.” The meeting years later with Frodo and Sam is the “Ghost of Christmas Present” sequence. This time one gleans more about Gollum-Smeagol’s early life prior to the coming of the Ring. There are momentary cracks in his isolationism which almost restore him to hobbit-like sympathies. Truth and lies are so conflated in his being, however, that the goal of regaining the Ring supplants the sense of loss. Frodo becomes in part the “Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come” when he warns Smeagol that the Ring’s potency will corrupt his promises by it, and that in the end it will betray him utterly. Smeagol-Gollum’s failing lay in his believing that

¹¹⁰ *A Christmas Carol*: pg. 25

he was the true master of the Ring whereas he was actually its slave. He was not the master of his own fate for that lies with Providence; it is the same hubris that deceives one who likewise is convinced that his or her own agenda is without reference to others or a spiritual dimension. Tolkien's cosmogony of course posits Eru as the originator of all things, and whom Gandalf in elliptic phrasing refers to as Providence. Beyond Sauron, or his fallen master Melkor/Morgoth, and over Elves, Men and all other peoples, Eru is the determinate of Middle-Earth's fate. This is Tolkien's basic Catholicism and reflects Dickens's Christian underpinning for the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge's reclamation.

Tolkien's devotion to the exploration of myth and fairy stories can be readily misunderstood for the general response to these two words is that it deals in fantasy, the unreal, irrelevancy and that which is without value, nor true. Myth and fairy once had great potency while today even the prevailing ideas as noted do not fully empty all power from the myriad of stories which fall under either word. Tolkien would have explained this in the simple fact that truth lies hidden in each story or formed the original germ of the narrative that grew over the generations. Splintered light or truth reflects the idea inherent in sub-creation that each time one creates a narrative or poem it is in imitation of the mind of the Creator by the creature. God being

Truth thereby imparts something of that reality into humanity's myths and imaginings.¹¹¹ This is akin to Plato's concept of the Real and the Ideal; there exists in the Ideal that which possesses all the attributes of "treeness"; in the world of our senses "tree" is applied to those objects which display aspects of that Ideal "treeness." The object and the Ideal are expressed by us with elected words which are both specific and general - that is, in each language a word describes a type to distinguish it from another type [eg. rock is not deer] but variety is extensive [rock is suggested by pebble, chip, stone, rubble]. To carry the idea forward, C. S. Lewis's encounter with the myth of Baldar as recounted in *Surprised by Joy* (1947) was his being made aware of the dying god; other myths spoke of dying gods who were then reborn - a mythic representation of Tolkien's True Myth with Christ as the dying god who is resurrected [ie reborn].¹¹² Hence splinters of the Ideal truth are scattered as splintered light in many myths around the world. One may speak of

¹¹¹ The idea of splintered light and divine spark or "flame imperishable" as Tolkien wrote in *The Silmarillion* is not restricted to Christian writings. The Kabbalah likewise has certain images akin to the former, as noted in Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's *Opening the Tanya: Discovering the Moral & Mystical Teachings of a Classic Work of Kabbalah* (San Francisco, CA: Arthur Kurzweil, 2003): pg. "It is in the Godly soul, in its aspiration to the divine, that man's uniqueness lies. The Godly soul yearns to cleave to and be absorbed by the divine, and only by this aspiration, by the constant struggle of the Godly soul to transcend its needs and its very self in order to attain identification with the divine light, does one achieve a true identity as a human being." Cf with poem of Ibn Gebriol (Sephardic Jewish writer) called *Kether Malkuth* (Royal Crown): "Beyond conception great, Thy power is, where with Thou didst create, From out Thy glory's depths a radiant flame, Hewn from the rock of rocks and wrought, Out of eternity, with wisdom of aught. The soul, the living soul - thus didst Thou call its name. By Thee Omnipotent, Formed of the spirit's fire, and sent, To guard and keeping serve awhile this earthly frame." : W. O. Oesterley and G. H. Box, *A Short Survey of the Literature of Rabbinical and Mediaeval Judaism* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920): pg. 280 - Solomon ibn Gebirol (1021-1058/70?)

¹¹² Mark Edwards Freshwater, *C. S. Lewis and the Truth of Myth* (University Press of America, 1988): pg. 34; cf Allen B. Robertson, "Two Paths to Joy: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe" in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe; C. S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship* ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015): pg. 23

Tolkien's regard for myth and fairy-story as recognition of this universal reality as expressed in cultural narratives or as the products of individual imaginings.¹¹³

This background in myth and fairy-story led Tolkien to wrestle with the idea of the unexpected or happy ending for fairy-stories and myths [even though not all stories result in what one may call a happy ending]. The twin pivots of history - the Incarnation and the Resurrection - existed in the mind of God from which flowed the truth into mankind's sub-creations. Eucatastrophe was the term coined by Tolkien (and alluded to in C. S. Lewis's *Surprised by Joy*) for this hope beyond despair.¹¹⁴ It is the element in *The Lord of the Rings* which differentiates those who have fallen before the darkness of despair from those who look to that which lies outside themselves. That unlooked for ending is not necessarily what one might consider to be the perfect turn for often events occur which must be viewed from another perspective to be recognized as of greater depth and significance than an obvious "happy ending." In *The Lord of the Rings* while Frodo and Sam carry the Ring to its final destination on Mount Doom leading to the Ring's unmaking and the downfall of Sauron yet the maiming of Frodo and his eventual displacement from the Shire are not the signs of an unmarred denouement. Frodo carries the sign of sacrifice and wounding. One may refer to Tolkien's own experiences in the First World War in the recognition that while soldiers did live to return home they were forever marked either physically or psychologically by the trauma of battle and

¹¹³ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and their friends* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981; 1st pub. 1978): pg. 46 : "[man] comes from God, and it is from God that he draws his ultimate ideals... Therefore, Tolkien continued, not merely the abstract thoughts of man *but also his imaginative inventions* must originate with God, and must in consequence reflect something of eternal truth."

¹¹⁴ Robertson, "Two Paths to Joy": pg. 22

death.¹¹⁵ They like Frodo do not truly return home but only tarry a while here. The sacrifice was made for others at home or for the generations to come after. That is what Frodo spoke of to Sam concerning Rose and the children they would have together; even Sam, though, is not entirely unscathed for Frodo spoke of his being “whole for a while” with the implied message that in time he would join in Frodo’s own fate. How then does one apply eucatastrophe under these circumstance? The destruction of the Ring and downfall of Sauron restored the fullness of light over a spreading darkness. This opened up new possible futures for many peoples who beforehand had foreseen only struggle and a slow defeat. Individuals who survived but left Middle-Earth such as Galadriel and Frodo participated in the possibility of those paths; Galadriel returning home from exile while Frodo would receive healing in a place set-apart. The reader needs to remember as well that Frodo would like Bilbo and later Sam be freed from the circles of the world in the gift of death with the promise of uniting with the greater light. That ending, that telos, was to rest in the Good which is the fountain of the virtues which had guided the three hobbits during their mortal lives.

Current literary expression delves into the concept of dystopia as in the trilogy of Canadian author Margaret Atwood (*Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, *Maddaddam*) or impending ecological disaster without hope.¹¹⁶ Even where there is an exploration of solutions to climate change, carbon footprints and alternate energy proposals there remains the sense of pessimism and disaster. There is the automatic projection of the source of these evils onto

¹¹⁵ For this period in Tolkien’s life see: John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2003)

¹¹⁶ All three volumes published by Toronto based McClelland and Stewart - 2003, 2009 and 2013. For an earlier dystopian vision contemporary with Tolkien see Aldous L. Huxley’s *Brave New World* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932)

national governments whether or not that is a legitimate response. Foisting the shadow of a modern day Sauron spreading darkness across the globe on institutions detracts from individual responsibility to do one's part for change. There is as well the convenient propagandistic linking of specific political bodies versus the "other" political parties where the latter are frequently demonized to distinguish them from the eco-socialist parties in Europe or North America. The government of orcs under multiple manifestations of Sauron or Saruman is a plausible comparison to this configuration. True reason is severely bent to serve the neo-orthodoxy of correctness. Particularly disturbing is its infiltration into religious bodies which have adopted and absorbed this movement as part of its re-interpretation of Green Christianity. The union of faith and reason as the hallmarks of determining orthodoxy in opposition to deviations from reason or the core of faith is being unravelled. Traditional understanding of the virtues and the end of humanity in the Good are being compromised by the substitution of alternate meanings for the former. Justice becomes that which is the neo-ecological stance rather than hearing in impartiality all arguments on a particular issue in order that, as Aquinas would have contended, led to rendering to each person what is their just due. Temperance is pushed to the side in favour of the drowning out of other voices. Fortitude fades away in the face of seeking to take part to the popular Zeit Geist. The theological virtues cannot be allowed to enter into the matter for this would compel persons to consider that the spiritual dimension is not confined to humanity while it is also made known through human agency. Faith, hope and charity flow out of the Other but the neo-ecological manifestos look only to humanity for solutions. Hence pessimism over visionary hope. Tolkien's eucatastrophe comes in origin from outside yet it also involves the

actions and cooperation of people in harmony with the virtues under the overarching belief in hope beyond mortal vision.

Time and history, order and meaning - these have become the way in which Western society perceives its world. During the age of myth, however, it was narrative which repeated itself in unending cycles that gave coherency to the universe. Myth was the template for coming to terms with human consciousness of mortality. So far as we know humans are the only creatures on earth aware that we will die which has given the rise to the search for meaning, order in what appears to be the swirling chaos of existence, and how society can exist in some form of balance and web of relationships.¹¹⁷ Myth engendered the perception that life and death were likewise cyclical; death was part of a process beyond which there was life again. One sees this in prehistoric burial rituals where flowers, tools and personal items are buried with the dead for use in the afterlife. The exact understanding of what that afterlife entailed impinged on the degree of hope in the face of death whether in the ordinary course of life or in battle or natural catastrophe. From the ancient Near East come accounts of annual ritual recitations of narratives such as the Enuma Elish [“When on High”] which told of the creation myths and struggles of the gods (notably Marduk) over chaos and Tiamat (associated with the primordial dragon.)¹¹⁸ The Egyptian Osiris myth likewise told of death and rebirth through the story of Osiris’s murder by

¹¹⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, ed. *Myth, Allegory and Gospel* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1974): pg. 121 “All statements, including the ones I am now making, are unsatisfying because man is fundamentally mythic. His real health depends upon his knowing and affirming his metaphysical totality. In myth man discovers and affirms not his disparate nature but his mythic, his archetypal and cosmic nature.” - Clyde S. Kilby, “Mythic and Christian Elements in Tolkien”

¹¹⁸ S. H. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology* (London: Penguin Books, 1988; 1 pub. 1963): pp. 41-46; James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1955): Vol. 4: *The Dying God*: pp. 109-111

Seth and the search by Isis of the hidden body parts which were reassembled for Osiris's resurrection/rebirth.¹¹⁹ In Northern Europe one finds that Ragnarok [Twilight of the Gods] is followed by a new earth and new gods.¹²⁰ Missing from these tales is any certainty that beyond the kings of peoples whether there was any life for everyone else except a shadowy suspended existence. Egyptian archaeology does show that the idea of an afterlife did eventually permeate all levels of society though always contingent on the survival of the physical remains (hence the high esteem given to mummification.)

Tolkien would have seen the foregoing as imperfect fragments of revelation with the resulting uncertainties and anxieties. His cosmogony as more fully laid out in *The Silmarillion* presented Death as the gift of Eru to Men (humanity) as final release from the turmoils of this world. Eternal Elves were bound to return to Middle-Earth in rebirth if they should be killed. The tension within Middle-Earth was the longing for release from extended life by the Elves while humanity envied the former's freedom from death. Ideally the Elves were given immortality by Eru as much as a gift as death was given to humanity. Corruption of the world by the intrigues of Melkor and his followers obscured the original meaning of these divine gifts. This is reminiscent in part of the epic Gilgamesh wherein the demigod king sought immortality, loses the gift and

¹¹⁹ Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*: pp. 67-70

¹²⁰ Donald A. MacKenzie, *Teutonic Myth and Legend* (London: Gresham Publishing,): pp. xxvii-xxviii, 177-86. "Twilight of the Gods" owes more to Richard Wagner's *Gotterdammerung* (1876) than as a strick translation of Ragnarok; there has been debate over the right translation owing in part to two terms - Ragnarok and Ragnarokkr: Haraldur Bernhardsson in a 2004 paper suggested that "rskr" meaning "twilight" from Proto-Germanic work "rekwa" may have been the original meaning rather than the alternate "Doom of the Gods": see - Alan J. Nussbaum, ed. *Vera Docenti: Studies in Historical and Indo-European Linguistics Presented to Jay H. Jasanoff by Students, Colleagues, and Friends* (Ann Arbor, MI: Beech Stave Press, 2007): Haraldur Bernhardsson, "Old Icelandic ragnarok and ragnarokkr" pg. 25ff.

must content himself with becoming as fully a king as he could in this existence. Similarly in *The Lord of the Rings* one is shown that the King Aragorn embraces his mortality and freely leaves this world. It is indeed a final renunciation of “possession” leaving the soul to fulfill its destiny. This radical freedom leaves the space for Faith, Hope and Charity to be realized so leading to that destiny, fate or the Good.

The distinguishing fact in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* is that he is engaged in sub-creation in the after-time of the Eucatastrophe of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. His suffused narrative does offer splinters of the light or truth as did the earlier myths yet the difference is that Tolkien does so selectively being aware of the True Myth which is the Gospel. Being aware of our telos in the Good he is able to craft a tale in which the virtues are played out in embodied characters. He does not need to project Sauron onto contemporary governments or corporations. Sauron as the successor to Melkor/Morgoth is wrongful disposition toward the Creator and the Creator’s intended gifts. His being in darkness is the risk we all face in turning away our faces from the Light. *The Lord of the Rings* as an epic recapitulates these themes such that the text can be continually re-read as a cyclical revelation. Christianity in its narrative of the Gospel continues to be a cyclical story reminding us of failings, despair, hope, renewal and fulfilled promise. The liturgical year —at least in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions- begins with Advent as preparation for the Incarnation (birth of God in Christ), follows the life of Jesus’s teachings, his Passion at Easter and Resurrection, and the remembrance of the birth of the Church in Pentecost. There are some readers of Tolkien who turn to *The Lord of the Rings* pages each September as Bilbo’s and Frodo’s joint birthday approaches in an equally cyclical re-reading.

Fraser's *Golden Bough*, that multivolume study of comparative religion and myth based on the theme of the dying god, was a major work of which Tolkien would have been well aware in his formative years and scholarly career.¹²¹ Fraser undertook to analyze motifs in religious accounts and folklore from many societies from a global perspective. This classic study, although now surpassed by later interpretations, was an excellent means of viewing those widely scattered splintered rays of light to be found among all peoples in their traditional narratives of faith. Here one finds a valuable source on which Tolkien could develop his concept of sub-creation as the reflection and imitation by the creature of the mind of the Creator. Fraser mined the Germanic and Norse myths which so influenced both Tolkien and Lewis. Baldar as the dying god of the Germanic tradition, a form of nature god, had had a deep impress on the young C. S. Lewis as he wrote in his biographical sketch *Surprised by Joy* (as noted previously).¹²² It became a lingering motif which drew him back toward the Christian Christ of rebirth. Tolkien would have seen the story as an analogue to the Gospel revelation just as the early Church Fathers considered the Old Testament as foretelling the coming of the Messiah. Canadian literary critique Northrop Frye in *The Great Code* saw the two Testaments as mirrors of each other although he did not reach the stage of Tolkien's eucatastrophe and sub-creation.¹²³ Frye was prone to place the scriptures

¹²¹ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1955; 1st pub. 1911): Part III: The Dying God

¹²² C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1966; 1st pub. 1955): pg. 62

¹²³ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (University of California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983). Cf. Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (University of Toronto Press, 1991)

within a hermetically sealed codex; Tolkien was more universal in his scope of linking human narrative creativity in general just as Fraser linked surviving mythologies.

Tolkien's acute awareness of words was a constant inspiration for his fertile imaginings. He could situate words with their origins in their earliest contexts and infer application to contemporary understanding. Mind and meaning were the ground for rumination on eucatastrophe and sub-creation. In *The Lord of the Rings* there is the long poem in praise of Earendil the Mariner. The name in Tolkien's invented High Elven tongue (Quenya) meant "lover of the sea" but in Old English literature the word refers to the morning star (earendel) as found in Cynewulf's poem *Crist*. The significant section is as follows: "Eala earendel, engla beorhtast ofer middangeard monnum sended: O Earendel, brightest of angels, sent to mankind over middle-earth."¹²⁴ Juxtaposing both meanings Tolkien wrote in 1914 a precursor poem titled "The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star"; this resurfaced in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* as Earendil the Mariner who by decree of the Valar was to sail the skies bearing one of the great jewels known as a silmaril becoming in fact the evening star. That star was to be a sign to those on Middle-Earth that above darkness and despair there was a hope beyond the reach of evil. Christian liturgical hymns and other writings refer to Christ as the Day Star that outshines all else. The Virgin Mary is memorialized in one hymn as the Ocean Star "guide of the wanderer

¹²⁴ See: A Clerk of Oxford blog, "The Anglo-Saxon O Antiphons: O Oriens, O Earendel" (2013): aclerkoxford.blogspot.ca .

here below.”¹²⁵ It is on several levels of meaning, then, that the reader finds elements of the familiar based in words, mythic narrative and splinters of light.

Other scholars have noted the significance of myth in Tolkien’s fantasy writing and in his theological understanding. Rolland Hein in *Christian Mythmakers* (1998) was at pains to show that imagination was a way of perceiving which broke out of the bounds of logic and rigid intellectualizing: “Man finds in himself a third characteristic called imagination, by which he can transcend statements and systems. By some magic, imagination is able to disengage our habitual discursive and system-making and send us on a journey toward gestures, pictures, images, rhythms, metaphor, symbol, and at the peak of all, myth.”¹²⁶ The narrative of myth re-engages us with our ancestors and can enable one to comprehend the nature of liturgical practice. Continuity is something which Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* realizes connects his quest with Frodo to the great stories and personages of the past. Katharyn Crabbe refers to Sam’s awareness in her own study of Tolkien’s life and work: “For Sam as for all of us, myths exist as myths because they say something to the human spirit, something that remains worth saying even though the meaning, not just the story, is ages old. And therein lies the connection between the theme of the nature of good and evil and the uses of language in *The Lord of the Rings*.”¹²⁷ Narrative, action and ritual

¹²⁵ *Maria Maris Stella* is an ancient title dating to St. Jerome at the latter part of the 5th century A.D. Prior to the changes of Vatican II the prayers for Saturday after Ascension in honour of Our Lady, Queen of Apostles contained the line: “Thou, virgin Mary, art the gate of heaven and star of the sea, mother of the eternal King, our Queen.” : *The Missal in Latin and English* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1957): pg. 468. “Hail, Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star” was written by Father John Lingard (1771-1851) - Catholic priest and historian; interestingly he was the author of *The Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (1806) : *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* on-line edition [oxforddnb.com]

¹²⁶ Hein, *Christian Mythmakers*: pg. x

¹²⁷ Crabbe, *J. R. R. Tolkien*: pg. 97

together with symbol have archaic roots. Armstrong's reference to five observations based on Neanderthal burial customs is a case in point, perhaps more pertinent today now that genetic researchers have confirmed that modern humanity (in Europe at least) has a residual of Neanderthal DNA which raises the question of whether ritual and actions were passed on as well.¹²⁸ Though the stories are gone Europe is littered with remnants of palaeolithic, mesolithic and neolithic monuments, graves and mysterious burial customs. That is to say, myth has been a powerful social and cultural motivator over countless generations beyond living memory. Tolkien's mythological world that underlays *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion* and even *The Hobbit* intrigues and carries the reader along because it harkens to a collective impress of archetypes. Robertson Davies, mentioned earlier, was profoundly influenced by Jungian archetypal theories in his later novels; to fully appreciate the latter one is led to the necessity of reading about the life and psychoanalytical writings of Carl Gustaf Jung.¹²⁹ Atwood's dystopian trilogy is similarly a blend of Jungian archetypes, Biblical imagery and mythic fragments. The fantasy genre which Tolkien chose to use as his vehicle for his imaginative vision though different from Robertson Davies or Atwood nonetheless brings us to see ourselves in his creation, hearing the echoes of mythic language and pondering the sense of existence itself.

Tolkien brought to his writing his theological understanding of sub-creation and eucatastrophe. Both have been repeatedly noted with regard to his Catholicism and Thomist connections. The idea of sub-creation goes further than explanation for his interest in Northern

¹²⁸ Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2005): pp. 3-4

¹²⁹ Robertson Davies's first set of books to come fully under Jungian influence constituted the so-called Deptford Trilogy: *Fifth Business* (1970), *Manticore* (1972) and *World of Wonders* (1975) - published by Macmillan of Canada.

mythology - and other myths from around the globe - as containing some elements of metaphysical truth. His choice of fantasy as a medium did not alter the fact that he was therefore engaged in utilizing the gift of creativity from the Divine Mind. This is important to understand as it clarifies his departure from strictly academic literature or strictly theological articles.

Tolkien was living out his faith in the act of creativity. Moreover, his Catholicism overflowed into his work without his having to overtly make reference to it. He allowed the reality of the Incarnation and Resurrection to shed light on eucatastrophe such that it accorded with the virtues embodied in his fantasy characters and their own personal growth toward the Good. One may posit that besides being pilgrimage and quest that *The Lord of the Rings* is a great cyclical drama that invites one to keep re-reading it to re-awaken the power of myth which permits one to enter a world apart yet familiar. One does not only read about the Hobbits, Gandalf and Aragorn; one walks with them, sees the landscape, participates in the challenges and comes through to the victory. The reader is prepared by the end to appreciate mortality and the passage of time which is one's own confrontation with death. Eucatastrophe as expounded by Tolkien does not end in despair - the antithesis of hope - but in the promise of a continued fulfilment in our final end.

Author Bradley Birzer wrote that, "Tolkien believed that the true Christian should be an artist, not a propagandist. In other words, Tolkien rather strongly argued in his academic as well as mythological works that one should use what T. S. Eliot called the "moral imagination." He

should seek the higher, timeless truths, but put them in a new light.”¹³⁰ The relevance of Christian fantasy is given serious thought in Kristin Kay Johnston’s “Christian Theology as Depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter Books*” (2005). She observed that, “In order for theology to be meaningful, it must be relevant; and one important way for theologians to make the Christian faith both meaningful and relevant is to use symbols and language of contemporary culture to illustrate such theological concepts as salvation, justice, evil, grace, and forgiveness.” Her ensuing discourse on the depiction of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* highlights the foregoing importance and appeal of Tolkien’s fantasy literary offspring.¹³¹ In 1936 Tolkien contributed a poem to *The Annual* a journal published by Our Lady’s School in Abingdon (England). It was a five stanza poem celebrating Christmas as the time of the Incarnation. There is the sense of myth, Anglo-Saxon imagery and Marian devotion, even suggestions of borrowings from the as yet unpublished *Silmarillion* stories. One is reminded of Earendil both the Anglo-Saxon version and Tolkien’s own bearer of the *silmaril* in the heavens:

“The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.
In the dale of dark in that hour of birth

¹³⁰ Interview for *Zenit* with Bradley Birzer : “J. R. R. Tolkien’s Sanctifying Myth: Bradley Birzer on the Religious Symbolism Behind “*Lord of the Rings*”” 2003 [zenit.org] Some Protestant reviewers of Tolkien and of his interpreters have had difficulty in wrestling with Tolkien’s Thomism and have issued caveats regarding the presence of “magic” “wizards” et al, yet cannot escape the significance of sub-creation and eucatastrophe: see: Robert C. Koons, “A Baptist Perspective on Tolkien’s Catholic Evangelism” - a review of Ralph C. Wood’s *The Gospel According to Tolkien* in *University Bookman* 44, No. 1 (Fall 2005) [kirkcenter.org] A more sympathetic review of Wood though respectfully critical certain conclusions is that by Anne Mathie in *First Things* (January 2004) [firstthings.com]

¹³¹ Kristin Kay Johnston, “Christian Theology as Depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter Books*” in *Journal of Religion & Society* 7 (2005): 1-9

One voice on a sudden sang:
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth
Together at midnight rang.

Mary sang in this world below:
They heard her song arise
O'er mist and over mountain snow
To the walls of Paradise,
And the tongue of many bells was stirred
In Heaven's towers to ring
When the voice of mortal maid was heard,
That was mother of Heaven's King."¹³²

Tolkien's synthesis of theology and mythology generated in his fertile imagination a sub-creation with echoes of both fields in rich depth, colouring and vitality. It is time to turn attention to how this was realized in *The Lord of the Rings* both in prose and poetic vision.

¹³² *Annual of Our Lady's School* (Abingdon, England: Our Lady's School, 1936): "Noel"

Chapter Four:

***The Lord of the Rings* and Related Writings: Words, Themes and the “King’s Laws”**

The impact of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* arises from two foundations - its underlying Catholic theology, and secondly, the touchstone of the familiar in the language of mythology and history. There is as well the message that no person is too small, too removed from the powers that govern the world to be unable to accomplish great things.¹³³ Frodo Baggins is depicted as the model of what Every Person may achieve and Samwise Gamgee is the unsophisticated but no less vital person who is Every Person called to serve. Catholicity informs the sub-creation which is Middle-Earth as has been said previously through the Thomist discourse on the seven virtues and the Good. The reader is keenly aware of those persons who exhibit the positive virtues and those in whom it is lacking. Most people will identify with the portrayal of the former personages who like us are not perfect yet show that one can grow in maturity and understanding. Tolkien’s great literary drama enfolds the reader in these changes and raises questions about our own potential. That is what Aquinas taught - that habituation in the virtues enhances one’s living them more fully with the consequence that one moves forward

¹³³ The texts chosen for this chapter for reference purposes is *Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968 - authorized to be sold in Canada by Thomas Nelson and Son (Canada) Ltd.) - a one volume paperback edition minus the appendices; *The Hobbit* paperback edition is London: Unwin Books, 1973 impress based on 3rd edition 1965; *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) - hardcopy edition.

in actualizing individual potential. Like the great Bayeux Tapestry there is more to the story than surface images.¹³⁴

The great unifying motif in *The Lord of the Rings* is the Ring of Power. Its dark origins, the threat posed should its maker - Sauron - regain it, and how to overcome that danger ties all actions and personages together. Readers are given occasional glimpses of the “ancient history” and prophecies during the course of the narrative. It would be over twenty years later before the public could follow Tolkien’s earlier mythological matter as he had devised it under the collective title of *The Silmarillion* (1977). While the latter permits one to better appreciate the author’s imaginative scope it may still be argued that *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) stands on its own merits. In place of Bilbo who was the great hero of *The Hobbit* (1937) one has his nephew taking up the role of lead figure only this time raised to a higher literary level. The *Hobbit*, of course, had been written for children. Yet as Tolkien himself confessed some of the other matter made appearances.¹³⁵ It was this other matter which enabled him to make the link to *The Lord of the Rings* with the “magic ring” of Gollum as the leitmotif for the greater story. In keeping with the Tolkien tradition one might say that *The Hobbit* was the rustic folk telling of a treasure hunt adventure. The situation changed with the *The Lord of the Rings* where now the Catholicity of Tolkien seeped into the fantasy epic; Aquinas and the virtues flowed into depiction

¹³⁴ See the revisionist interpretation by Andrew Bridgeford, *1066: The Hidden History of the Bayeux Tapestry* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004)

¹³⁵*Lord of the Rings* : pg. 7: “But the story was drawn irresistibly towards the older world, and became an account, as it were, of its end and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told. The process had begun in the writing of *The Hobbit*, in which there were already some references to the older matter: Elrond, Gondolin, the High-elves, and the orcs, as well as glimpses that had arisen unbidden of things higher or deep or darker than its surface: Durin, Moria, Gandalf, the Necromancer, the Ring.”

of its characters and plot while Bilbo's nephew undertakes not the finding of treasure but the quest to destroy a Ring more perilous than any dragon's lair venture. It echoed the doom surrounding the golden ring of the Nibelungen as more widely known from Richard Wagner's opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.¹³⁶ (The possessor of a ring would become ruler of the world but had to renounce love in order to do so. This is a fitting reflection of Sauron and Gollum who lose love in relationships and in God the font of love.) Instead, it is Frodo who becomes a living treasure as well as his companion Sam.

In brief, then, Frodo undergoes a journey during which he is gradually refined in nature and allied ever closer with the Good. His seeming failure at the Cracks of Doom is redeemed in the practice of mercy and stern warning toward the ill-fated Gollum. The third person of this denouement is Sam. He is not become a Middle-Earth saint nor an intrepid warrior. He none the less achieves what he set out to do in unswerving loyalty to the embodiment of the Good in Frodo. This is the Every Man and Every Woman who not achieving perfection does not despair; he or she moves instead to be in service of the activated Good which is Christ. That devotion becomes the means of Redemption. Sam is certainly redeemed with Frodo. One can see that Sam in his own struggle in the Quest unknowingly at times permits his emotions and intellect to become as if he were Frodo. It is Sam's variation of Frodo's merciful acts that stayed his hand when on Mount Doom he could have slain Gollum. This act permitted the final scenario to unfold in Frodo's and Gollum's desperate fight for the Ring which ended in the death of Gollum and the dramatic overthrow of Sauron.

¹³⁶ Donald A. MacKenzie, *Teutonic Myth and Legend* (London: Gresham Publishing, 1912): pp. 854ff; Milton Cross, *Milton Cross' Complete Stories of the Great Operas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957): pp. 449-76 - 1st full performance of the opera cycle 1876.

It is the radical nature of Christianity that it exalts that which is rejected by the mundane world. The latter holds as primary importance political power, military might, high social status, conspicuous possessions and perpetual ambition for the self. Tolkien fashioned the Hobbit world in such a way as to show that even in the Shire elements of the latter could be found; it was not the completely idyllic world some reviewers and writers have described.¹³⁷ This is our world in microcosm. We are shown in *The Lord of the Rings* how a quest and pilgrimage can transform our lives. That call toward the Good is not beyond the ability of each one of us in our daily lives. Frodo and Sam become stripped of personal possessions, thereby becoming unfettered in

¹³⁷ A more recent examination of *The Hobbit* makes similar observations of both *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*: See Adam Schwartz's review of Devon Brown's *The Christian World of the 'Hobbit'* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2012) under "Tolkien and the Great Tale" in *The University Bookman* (2013 Feb . 24): "At the outset of *The Hobbit*, for example, Bilbo is depicted as idolizing comfort and respectability. Tolkien's portrait rebukes a bourgeois complacency that allows material ease and reputation to desensitize one to suffering and evil beyond the domestic sphere. Only once Bilbo has experienced pain and malevolence on his journey with the dwarves is his enslavement to the genuine joys of Bag-End broken, enabling him to resume them later with a newfound compassionate generosity." Cf. Kathryn F. Crabbe, *J. R. R. Tolkien* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981) - Crabbe discusses the Christian themes in *The Hobbit* and the concepts of hero, quest and sacrifice.

preparation for the great challenge which is Death.¹³⁸ They are brought back to life for a little while to be re-inserted into the society of the Shire. Both Frodo and Sam are so touched by the effusion of the divine that they in time leave Middle-Earth having done what they can for their time and the Age of the World. Their quest, sacrifice and salvation have a ripple effect in that small corner of the earth for the future. A way is shown that echoes Bilbo's once light-hearted verse on paths from one's own front door. Time passing is each individual's receding as the on-going of the age offers the challenge anew to succeeding generations.

Consideration of the Good as a virtue in *The Lord of the Rings* is recognition as well as a moral centre out of which one can nurture the Good within oneself and in community. It is likewise the foil against which one can perceive the injury to soul and reality through corruption and wrongful motive - one is tempted here to state that it is willful motive, that fixation on the self, which excludes any other or the Good. St. Thomas Aquinas employing the scholastic language of his day recognized that the Good originates in God. That conception is very much a part of Tolkien's sub-creation in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien spoke of the same in

¹³⁸ Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth: A Literary Life* (London: HarperCollins, 1999): pg. 111: "In general terms the religious element falls into three distinct but inter-related areas: the sacrifice which accompanies the selfless exercise of free will; the intrinsic conflict between good and evil; and the perennial question of time and eternity, particularly in relation to life and death." Cf. Lucy Bregman, *Death and Dying, Spirituality and Religion: A Study of the Death Awareness Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003). Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981): Letter to Michael Straight [drafts] January or February 1956: pg. 236: "Of course, in fact exterior to my story, Elves and Men are just different aspects of the Humane, and represent the problems of Death as seen by a finite but willing and self-conscious person." See also: J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics* (Sir Israel Gallant Memorial Lecture British Academy 1936 (London: Amen House, 1960; 1st pub. 1958 Amen House): pg. 35: "It is just because the main foes in *Beowulf* are inhuman that the story is larger and more significant than this imaginary poem of a great king's fall. It glimpsed the cosmic and moves with the thought of all men concerning the fate of human life and efforts..."

conversation with C. S. Lewis in regard to mythology: "... man is not ultimately a liar. He may pervert his thoughts into lies, but he comes from God, and it is from God that he draws his ultimate ideals."¹³⁹ Hobbits recognize a set of values which bind their society together and permit it to function in a way which supersedes individual weaknesses. They follow The Rules such as Free Will, do not kill, participate in redistribution of symbolic possessions, and observe the sanctity of oaths; there is also the honouring of acts of aid in life, and hospitality to guests known and to strangers.¹⁴⁰ These positive values which are linked to the Thomist conception of the Good are scattered throughout the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*.¹⁴¹

There is a Good higher than the hobbit Rules and those of Middle-Earth inhabitants who regulated their own societies in fashion akin to that of hobbits.¹⁴² The people of Gondor bowed in reverence to the West beyond the Sea - to Numenor that was, and to Valinor with its gods or

¹³⁹ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981; 1st pub. 1978): pg. 46.

¹⁴⁰ Schwartz, "Tolkien and the Great Tale": "The hobbits' esteem for the distinctively cooperative, charitable, and organic culture of the Shire strengthens them to sacrifice themselves and to renounce the Ring." *LOTR*: Prologue: pp. 21-22: "Yet the Hobbits still said of wild folk and wicked things (such as trolls) that they had not heard of the king. For they attributed to the king of old all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules (as they said), both ancient and just."

¹⁴¹ "J. R. R. Tolkien's Take on the Truth": Interview with Author Joseph Pearce on "The Lord of the Rings" *Zenti* (zenit.org) : "Pearce: Tolkien spoke of myths and fairy stories, rather than "fantasy." He was a lifelong practicing, and very devout, Catholic who believed that mythology was a means of conveying certain transcendent truths which are almost inexpressible within the factual confines of a "realistic" novel."

¹⁴² This is alluded to in a fashion which designates "Providence" or the overarching concern of God. Gandalf as noted referred to it when he told Frodo that he, like Bilbo, had been meant to have the Ring of Power: *LOTR* : pg. 69: "“Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and *not* by it maker. In which case you also were *meant* to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought.”"

archangels. Among the Elves it is known that the High Elves had dwelt once in Eressa and Valinor (Aman the Blessed Realm) - those who had returned to Middle-Earth imparting what they knew of Eru's manifestation in the Ainur. The Good, however, was confronted with a great absence, in the avatar of evil called Melkor or Morgoth, as well as in Ungoliant and her offspring Shelob. Morgoth enveloped the great fortress Angband in darkness just as his apprentice Sauron re-created it in Baradur, and earlier in Mirkwood at his fastness called Dol Guldur under the title of the Necromancer.¹⁴³ Tolkien has left the reader in no doubt concerning the malignancy of Evil. It is dangerous to even hold or use artefacts of these agents. The One Ring, the great Ring of Power, brought Isildur to his death in betrayal; it had worked in him immediately as was shown in his defiance of Elrond's pleas to cast it into the Cracks of Doom. Bilbo escaped great harm through mercy though even he had weakened under its influence as witnessed in *The Lord of the Rings* in his confrontation with Gandalf on the night of the Party at Bag End. Frodo, who bore it in trepidation, wrestled over the course of his pilgrimage with the Ring's increasing openness to Sauron's call. Even the stout-hearted Samwise Gamgee narrowly avoided its promise of power and domination. He had been aided as was Frodo by divine gift - in his case the Phial of Galadriel - Holy Water that held the Light of the Good. It would be in Gollum that the portrait of corruption, sin, murder, lust - a compounding of the Seven Deadly Sins - exhibited the grievous risks of the lure or glamour of Sin. Gandalf's story of the Ring and Gollum's

¹⁴³ For ready reference see one of several guides: David Day, *A Guide to Tolkien* (London: Chancellor Press, 2001; 1st pub. 1993); J. E. A. Taylor, *The Tolkien Companion* (London: Picador, 1977; 1st pub. 1976); Robert Foster, *A Guide to Middle Earth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974); David Day, *Guide to Tolkien's World: A Bestiary* (London: Bounty Books, 2012). Day has written on Tolkien's play on word origins and meanings in *The Hobbit Companion* (London: Pavilion, 2012; 1st pub. 1997)

coming into possession of it showed how readily Sauron's One Ring brought one to sightless nothingness.¹⁴⁴ Gollum found no great secrets at the mountains' roots, only darkness, solitude and unassuaged hunger. Rejection of sun and moon further alienated him from potential for redemption. Light uncovers the darkness forcing one to confront oneself.¹⁴⁵ That higher power to which Gandalf alluded to more than once in *The Lord of the Rings* perceives all that occurs in Light and the Dark - visual, external and internal.

Gollum is seen to have deep within himself some fleeting remembrance of light, kindred and even love. His inner darkness, however, clouded his mind until all that Gollum did he believed that he alone was privy to in his inmost thoughts. That darkness, a delusion which many share in, is the fond belief that our thoughts remain wholly our own. It is this interior obscurity from which comes susceptibility to ever greater folly and nurture of evil. None can see, none can hear, none can know — this mantra is that malignancy from which Tolkien's Ring draws its

¹⁴⁴ Cf. John Seland, "Dante and Tolkien: Their Ideas about Evil" *Inklings Forever* 5 (2006) [taylor.edu/cslewis]: [re: influence of Aquinas and Augustine on Tolkien]: "Another Augustinian idea, that evil needs good to exist, is illustrated in the story of the Ring. Lying on the ground in Gollum's tunnel, it can do nothing of itself, but once someone begins to wear it, it begins to control the bearer's will. . . . It makes the wearer less an individual, which is to say, the individual begins to lose his identity and turn more and more, as is the case with the Black Riders, into a shade or shadow." See also Daniel Timmons, "Introduction" to *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: View of Middle Earth* ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000): pg. 7: "Shippey also argues that far from being escapist, self-indulgent, or irrelevant, as many more sheltered critics have claimed, Tolkien's images of evil arise out of and respond to the twentieth century's most serious issues, which modernist writers have consistently ignored."

¹⁴⁵ Cf. John 3:20: "For every one who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

strength and binds those under its domination to the habituation of sin, cruelty and hydra-headed lust for power.¹⁴⁶

Each of the Nine Companions was put to the test by the Ring and Sauron's persuasive seductions wound up in it. Gandalf as Sauron's counterpart and opposite for the Good knew how thoroughly one of the lesser angelic beings could become imitations of Melkor/ Morgoth. It was Saruman, one of Gandalf's fellow Istari, who was brought to ruin in the quest for knowledge and power. In the end Saruman's death would be even less than that of the least servants of Valinor. Gandalf rejected the opportunity to take the Ring from Bilbo by force and in so doing divorced himself completely from becoming another Saruman or Sauron.

Mortal men of the Companions — Aragorn and Boromir — were contrasts in the choices they made. Aragorn the king-in-waiting could well have laid claim to the Ring as the kinsman of Isildur. It was the fatal example of Isildur which forearmed Aragorn, together with his upbringing in the lore of the Ring, life among the Elves and his own mixed heritage of mortals, immortal Elves and a spark of Aman from his Maiar ancestress from which he had a formidable preparation for life's challenges well beyond the coming back into history of the Ring. The temptation to seize power through the One Ring in one sense hung above him like the sword of Damocles. Aragorn's use of the Palantir to confront Sauron and wrest control from the Dark Lord revealed the strength that was inherent in him. The refusal to take the Ring from Frodo spared

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Summit considered that the *Lord of the Rings* was a form of allegory concerning the Will and Domination: "I read *The Lord of the Rings*, as a spiritual allegory, an allegory of the will, like this: Frodo is a type of Everyman, and Ring represents the will to dominate others. The companions who travel with him, and the characters he meets on the journey, all have various reactions to the Ring according to the strength of their desire to dominate.": *Catholic Literature: An Introduction* (Arcadia, CA: Tumbler House, 2005): pg. 74

him from susceptibility to its influence, just as mercy and surrender to service preserved Bilbo and Frodo.

Boromir was under a triple burden when he learned of the Ring — the dutiful son who shared in his father’s dedication in fighting Mordor’s hordes; the great need for Gondor’s people to be given renewed hope; and Boromir’s own inner drive to be pre-eminent among men in imitation of his own father Denethor the Steward.¹⁴⁷ It was observed more than once by the hobbits that the man of Gondor gnawed over what could be done with the One Ring. Boromir’s fateful attempt to take the Ring from Frodo on Amon Hen, nonetheless, was not irreparable corruption of his soul. He was spared that wound partly in his need to protect others (the people of Gondor) and filial duty to Denethor. Frodo’s escape and Boromir’s literal fall to the ground displayed the removal of temptation and his return to real seeing in the light.¹⁴⁸ His martyr’s redemption drew out Boromir’s true inner strength. Here the Warrior figure surrendered his own life for the hobbits Pippin and Merry. The grasp for power had been cast aside in his answering to the light within. Tolkien’s description of Boromir’s appearance in the Elven boat and the seeing vision of his brother Faramir shows this to be so in reference to peace and light as it was seen in this man of Gondor.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Ralph C. Wood, *Literature and Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008): “The Call to Companionship in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*”: pg. 33: “What Boromir fails to understand is that his one ruling virtue, courage, cannot stand alone and apart from the other virtues. Since he lacks prudence and justice and temperance - the remaining classical virtues - Boromir’s very strength would undo him.”

¹⁴⁸ Amon Hen was significantly the Seat of Seeing.

¹⁴⁹ *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*: “The Window on the West”: pg. 692

One must carefully search for any untoward susceptibility to the One Ring or other potential snares of Sauron and his minions. The most obvious failing on Pippin's part was his removal of the Palantir seeing stone of Orthanc from the sleeping Gandalf. It was through the stone that Saruman became linked to the mind of the Dark Lord of Barad-dur. This medium of Sauron's sent out his constant desires and in particular for news of hobbits. Pippin's brief glance into the Palantir before Gandalf retrieved it and revived him was sufficient to create a desire to look into it again or to be vulnerable to the call to do so.¹⁵⁰ The youthfulness of Pippin and Merry was the source of their innate curiosity, lack of fully formed gravitas and the continued hold of adolescence (which hobbits considered that stage of life to be till the coming of age at thirty-three years.) Pippin Took's draw to the stone was not a direct result of the Ring in the way Gandalf, Aragorn and Boromir were tested. Rather it was the urgent desire by the Ring's maker and source of its strength that reached out to Pippin. This fall on Pippin's part was redressed in his own coming of age trial as one admitted to the Tower of Guard under Denethor, his heroic rescue of Faramir and participation in the great battle before the gates of Mordor. He was tested in fidelity to oath, discipline of service and willingness to surrender his own life for the sake of others. This was the great antidote to the poison of Sauron. To these three trials for Pippin was added that of moral judgment. The Good demanded rejection of commands which contravened the innate moral order - Denethor's attempt to burn his own son Faramir alive along with himself in Rath Dinen's Hall of the Stewards. This intervention by Pippin draws in the thread of Gandalf in discussion with Frodo in Bag End - that one can neither choose who will have life nor who shall lose it without reference to the overarching Good which alone sets out life and death.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 614-17

Suicide was an attempt to wrest away the Will or Providence of the Good. In the history of Middle-Earth it was held as a pagan act (that is, malign belief) to so commit self-murder.

Meriadoc Brandybuck alias Merry was somewhat removed from direct confrontation. He encountered individuals adversely bound to Sauron, the One Ring and Saruman while himself showing more maturity than Pippin. The offer of service to King Theoden of Rohan transformed him into a royal esquire albeit one whom the King thought too little in physical stature to join in the great muster of the Rhohirrim and the journey to aid Mundburg (Minas Tirith). Consequently Merry suspended his sworn fealty in order to join with Dernhelm in the riding of Rohan and its King. This weakened Merry's moral position for among hobbits and other peoples, as noted already, oaths were held to be sacred trusts. At the same time it was done by Merry to enable him to move beyond his perceived limitations to actively join the striving of Light versus Darkness. Therefore, on the Pelenor Fields, Dernhelm, who was in fact the King's niece Eowyn, and Merry both contravened orders yet offered personal sacrifice in the slaying of the winged steed and confrontation with the power of the Lord of the Nazgul. Those who had been considered as weak - woman in battle and diminutive hobbit - were transformed into golden light in their victory. In this act Merry approximated Pippin's saving of Faramir with the aid of his companion Gandalf.

This is now the place to consider how Legolas and Gimli were caught up in the battle with the Dark Lord and the Ring. The history of Elves, whether those who had dwelt once in the Blessed Realm or those who like Celeborn of Lothlorien, were intimately bound with the story of Sauron. Morgoth's servant and successor fell at the overthrow of Numenor, reincarnated his spirit in Middle-Earth and in time forged the One Ring. Elves brought their skills to the creation of the three Elven rings which eventually were held by Cirdan the Shipwright, Elrond Half-Elven

and Galadriel. Unlike Sauron the Elves did not create rings to dominate others - these were for inner strength, wisdom and preservation which being so infused escaped the corruption of Sauron's tutelage in ring making.

Legolas came from the House of Thranduil, King of the Elves in Mirkwood. It had been in the southern fastness of Dol Guldur in Mirkwood that the Necromancer appeared; later exploration by Gandalf and a siege revealed him to be Sauron returned from the fall of the long ago Battle of Dagorlad before Gil-galad and Elendil when he lost the One Ring to Isildur. Legolas was sent to seek the advice of Elrond and by so meeting him at Rivendell (Imladris) became a participant in the Council. It has been frequently referenced in Lord of the Rings that Elves in general gave little heed to other peoples of Earth for most were of such short lifespan that they became peripheral actors in Eleven life and history. The moving of forces by Sauron, however, gave all free peoples common cause. Now the Elves had to pay heed to men and to those most unlikely heroes, the hobbits. Elves and Men had at various times acted in accord to do battle with Morgoth and Sauron. That union succeeded in the overthrowing of Sauron and taking of the Ring by Isildur. Elrond was the living witness to the siege and victory albeit a triumph flawed in the failure of Isildur to destroy the Ring and with it the greater part of Sauron's own nature or power. It was natural for Elves and Men to hold conference with one another again with the return of the Great Enemy. The presence of Dwarves at the Council of Elrond was diplomatic for they and Elves had a mixed history of hostility and alliance. Hobbits were out of their reckoning in this Council yet strangely enough so were the Elves. It was the challenge of humility which Legolas and the other Elves had to confront. Though holders of the Three Rings the Elves did not have the wherewithal alone to confront Sauron.

Gimli as a representative of the Dwarves' concerns about the agent of Mordor who had visited their kingdom under the Mountain carried as well the burden of Rings lost or taken. The "Seven rings for the Dwarf Lords in the their Halls of Stone" had been lost to dragons or wrested away by Sauron's agents. It was Gandalf who reminded the Council that Thrain had died imprisoned once the ring he held was taken from him in Moria. The ancient carven city and kingdom of Moria would figure prominently in the Companions' journey. In times past it had been a place of mutual friendship between the Elves of Hollin and the Mountain Dwarves. Gimli had in part been sent to seek out Elrond's advice before travelling to Moria itself to see if the attempt by Balin and his followers to reclaim the realm from the Orcs had succeeded. It is a curious turn of events that Moria became for Gimli his dark night of the soul. Here possessions and deep delving for mithril - true silver - had led to the unleashing of a balrog ("Durin's Bane") or fire demon who with Orcs threw down the kingdom of Moria. The Lord of the Rings account of the under-mountain journey tested all of the Companions. Gimli found out that the true treasure was not in ores and political power, rather, it was in friendship, especially the sacrificial friendship which Gandalf took on himself to save the others. This willingness to die for one's friends had a profound effect on Gimli. Friendship and loss is translated into friendship and memory with the shift in perception that material possessions were not ends in themselves but rather were means to an end or were to be appreciated for special qualities such as beauty and spiritual effect. That change was perceived by Galadriel in Lothlorien as would later be given in her pronouncement that gold (metaphor for possessions) would have no hold over him. How else indeed can one explain Gimli's bold request not for treasures or Elven weapons; pressed by

Galadriel to name a gift he chose instead three strands of her hair as an heirloom for his Dwarf kindred.

Gimli chose memory of friendship over possessions so overthrowing the latter's hold over him just as Galadriel foretold of him for the remainder of his days. To be unfettered by possessions drew Gimli from metaphysical darkness into the true light. The gift came from a being who had dwelt once in the light of Aman the Blessed Realm. It was she who held one of the three unsullied Elven rings of power and who at times strove to perceive the Dark Lord's plans and mustering of forces for war. Gimli therefore had no need for the One Ring, having been blessed instead by one of a trinity - one held by Galadriel who had dwelt in the Tolkien version of a paradise occupied by the Valar . One must read carefully here. The number three is suggestive of the Christian concept of Trinity yet this is Tolkien's pre-Incarnational sub-creation; Galadriel herself is not analogous to the Virgin Mary. She is an embodiment, instead, of the The Lord of the Rings motif of unexpected strength found in stature, social hierarchy or gender. "The Lady of the Golden Wood who dies not" as the Rhohirrim called her had specifically permitted Gimli to enter Lothlorien in spite of a long standing law of her Elven consort Celeborn. Consequently all of the Companions save Gandalf at that time passed through a land where vibrant memory and a spiritual blessing would be carried away with them in measure according to their inner desires.

In keeping with all gifts of knowledge and spiritual counselling, effectiveness does indeed depend on how these resonate at the core of each person. Fallen nature is injured in the ability to fully recognize and accept the Good. The awareness of Providence with an intuition

that it is the moving of events, gifts and opportunities of a benevolent deity can be the gateway to better fulfilling one's life journey.

Jungian psychology emphasizes the importance of integrating significant events into one's psyche which process permits one to carry on the journey of life. Each one of us, in other words, is in a state susceptible to transformation. The person who sets out on a quest will not be the same individual who returns.¹⁵¹ Tolkien's great quest is a transformative one. This change is readily seen in Frodo and Sam, Merry and Pippin, while no less significant for Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas. *The Lord of the Rings* shows how Gandalf the Grey becomes Gandalf the White; however, this is a change apart from the others' own experiences (so more of which later.)

The corollary to psychic change is the relationship to the home place and people one returns to once a quest is accomplished. Soldiers returning from a far-away war can never fully communicate with family and friends the trauma of battle. Appearances of a soldier give the air of familiarity to the people around him or her. It is what has altered in the mind and the soul which is carried inside which the uninitiated cannot perceive. Values whether in possessions, opposition to thoughtless waste, or in awareness of the vulnerability of each person - these can be acted out or verbalized. Sometimes, though, the veteran cannot make the successful re-

¹⁵¹ See: Seland, "Dante and Tolkien": "In the final analysis, neither Dante nor Tolkien had any illusions about the utter perversity of evil. Good and evil, they realized, were like two different magnets: Satan, not wanting individuals to exist as individuals, trying to make them as he is, totally evil; God, the source of good and love, drawing those who do good closer to union with one another and with Himself." Rolland Hein in his book *Christian Mythmakers* (Chicago, Illinois: Cornerstone Press Chicago, 2002; 1st pub. 1998) noted as well the need for constant vigilance against evil in comments on Sauron: pg. 191: "His continual regaining of power and posing dire threats in succeeding eras embodies Tolkien's vision of the radical and seemingly perpetual existence of evil in time. It is capable of constant renewal of its horrendous reality and dire threats. Each generation must rise to expose its protean expressions, expending heroic efforts upon the task."

integration into civil society. They can see the fruits of their labours in preserving a world for kindred and society at large, may even abide in it for a time, yet in the end there is no returning home. This was Frodo's personal denouement. He himself said so to Sam: "I am wounded ... wounded ; it will never really heal." [Return of the King: "The Grey Havens"]; the only course open to him was to remove himself from the Shire. Only beyond the Western Sea where the High Elves lived close to Aman and the deities of light could there be a healing. Even Samwise Gamgee, a husband and father, gardener and mayor, suffered a loss which the Shire could not compensate for in him; his own journey oversea, nonetheless, carried something of the Shire away with him to remind even the Valar of life lived in the spirit and the gift of Middle-Earth.

Rite of passage episodes are a sub-text in Tolkien's created world of The Lord of the Rings. The term implies personal maturity and social acceptance in change of status. Western society recognizes marriage, birth and death as touch-stones for alchemical changes of life. Marriage is a nexus of family movement and incorporation which varies widely from culture to culture. Family alliances and property inheritance are two of the possible factors of the rite. Birth which promises continuity was formerly more widely celebrated as leading to a religious observance while marriage gives way to civil ceremony or a nominal nod to religious heritage. The predominantly Christian experience persists in baptism while for Jews (for male children) it is the bris ceremony (circumcision). There is the social-religious symbol that the child having survived emergence into the world outside the mother's womb must now be reborn to enter community. Some years on the child will enter adolescence when adult concepts and responsibilities are increasingly expected to be discerned in the teen-aged person. The Jewish youth participates in his bar-mitzvah (while a girl in reform tradition has her bat-mitzvah) which

signifies the “coming of age.” It implies as well the commitment to read the ancient religious texts and language of Middle Eastern Hebrew.

Roman Catholicism possesses an approximate parallel to the bar-mitzvah in the sacrament of confirmation which is the sealing of the young man or woman into the Christian community by the gift of the Holy Spirit to take on the evangelical call to live as priest, prophet and king. In the early twenty-first century the age of confirmation varies from diocese to diocese, or in parish to parish. There is a movement among catechists who favour mid-to-late teens as the best age for taking on adult Christian responsibilities. That which remains constant is the public nature of these rites. Both community witness and community acceptance as the Body of Christ visible is of particular importance. One caveat at this juncture is necessary. The Catholic Church of J. R. R. Tolkien’s youth and early professional years had in its ceremonies become less public over the centuries - baptism was privately done, and parents might well not attend, their place being taken by the godparents; confirmation was public, to be sure, but marriage continued (and continues to be) by invitation; only funeral masses were open it being considered an act of corporal mercy to attend and pray for the deceased, the more so if there were few relatives at hand. Both before and after Vatican II these rites of passage retained their sacral aspects. That is to say, the rites were not merely secular social events; they were and are if properly observed true encounters with the divine.

The Lord of the Rings in its rites of passage do not match or stand for Catholic, Christian sacraments. That which Tolkien inserts into the narrative is the response of free peoples directly or indirectly with regard to intuition concerning a guiding providence, that which works for the good as indeed it must do so for it is itself the Good. The dangers of evil, wrong choice and

temptation in *The Lord of the Rings* became the winnowing fan from which the chaff is carried away. It predicated rite of passage in the characterization of each significant person's immaturity before moving forward to maturity; for others it is displayed in present character and need from which by right choice one progresses that much further into the lived mystery of life's pilgrimage. Not all passage sections in *The Lord of the Rings* lead to greater strength per se; rather it is the discernment between the call to the Good, or inordinate reliance on the self which opens one to wrong choices and a drift away from the Good toward dominating power irregardless of the latter's origins. Boromir of Gondor is a trained warrior on a mission for his father Denethor. His inherent weakness is derived in training from his father, that is, reliance on arms, stratagems and pre-eminent pride. Boromir's attempt to take the One Ring by force grew out of a protracted self-debate. The Ring of Power had become a king's heirloom. Lord Denethor was a king in all but name as had been his sires for many generations. Boromir as the eldest son would in his turn become a steward-king. On that basis he believed that the Ring was his by right (in spite of the claims of Aragorn). That claim by right might have ended in injury or death for Boromir in the contest with Frodo.

There are disturbing similarities between Boromir and Frodo and the Riddle Game between Bilbo and Gollum. Both Boromir and Gollum became obsessed with the Ring - Frodo rightly believed that an evil fit had come over Boromir - in their claims to Sauron's creation. Gollum came to possess the Ring through the murder of Deagol; that is, already the malignant influence of the Ring was at work. Gandalf believed that the act of mercy by Bilbo, in not slaying Gollum, had been a serious blow against that object's influence. Bilbo eventually did feel himself more and more constrained in the desire to see the Ring and on occasion to use it to

disappear. Its other aspect, the extension of life for the possessor, had led to suspicions by Gandalf of its true nature, that it was more than a “magic ring.” On the eve of the Birthday Party it was Bilbo who confessed to Gandalf that he felt himself to be stretched thin like butter scraped over too much bread.¹⁵² In the end Bilbo did surrender the Ring to be guarded by Frodo. Here one has mercy and a willingness to cast off non-essentials.

His own sagacity had led Frodo to wonder at things Boromir said at the Council of Elrond, along the journey and at the last conference in Lothlorien. Frodo in his own way, as with Bilbo, acted with mercy since he could have easily slain Boromir once the Ring was on his finger. His main thought was to escape imminent danger. This time, however, Frodo did not escape from inside a mountain as had Bilbo. He ran up the last part of the pathway to the Seat of Seeing. Here were revelation and intervention which clarified Frodo’s thinking as what to do next. He had to save the Companions, Boromir included, from the discord being sown by the Ring. This reasoning and subsequent act of leaving (albeit with Sam who read his master well enough to anticipate how he would leave in one of the Elven boats) likewise approximated Bilbo’s leap over Gollum - both acts of prudence and compassion.

Sam’s own doubts and worries were balanced with his commitment of service to assist Frodo in a great undertaking. He had stated such in his conversation with the Elves in the Shire. His actions in realizing that only by joining Frodo, who chose to leave the Companions at Parth Galen, did he equally become a partaker in the quest and not merely exist as an appendix figure in an heroic saga. He was not a Pancho Sanchez bolstering a Don Quixote in the face of imaginary challenges. Those dangers yet to be faced by Frodo and Sam were real. One may

¹⁵² *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*: “A Long Expected Party”: pg. 45

borrow from Tolkien in saying that for the inhabitants of Middle-Earth the Ring Quest was a True Myth. The participants were exactly whom they were and the ends, whether good or ill, had their real consequences.

In coming to the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* and the appendices one is aware that the Saga of the One Ring was both a story and a model of behaviour where the Good was preserved even to the extent of personal sacrifice. It became the canon by which the Good could be realized. That aspect of *The Lord of the Rings* reflects the distant mirror of the Christian Gospels and letters as our own Canon of Life. This enlarges on the hobbits' natural law where the latter is by proscription and common lore. Exact parallel between the *The Lord of the Rings* and the Gospels, as previously stated, is not to be found insofar as Tolkien intended the former to be a personal challenge to create a quest saga. It is fairer to state that templates of human behaviour over time cannot fail in having a reappearance in Tolkien's fantasy world.¹⁵³ Social responsibility and social interaction needs to be in place for a successful community or state to exist.

Tolkien has written in *The Lord of the Rings* that the Shire inhabitants were too complacent and accepting of the status quo to readily respond to anything but the most urgent need.¹⁵⁴ Examples are given of exceptional leaders who rallied and led the community at various times in their history from the founding of the Shire to repelling an Orc invasion. The four

¹⁵³ C. S. Lewis had pertinent comment in this regard when reviewing *Lord of the Rings*: "But why ... why, if you have serious comments to make on the real life of men, must you do it by talking about a phantasmagoric never-never-land of your own? ... Because one of the main things the author wants to say is that the real life of men is of that mythical and heroic quality." - quoted in William Donaghy, "A Poet for the Kingdom: The Sacramental Stories of J. R. R. Tolkien" *Catholic Culture* [catholicculture.org] 2014 Nov. 22

¹⁵⁴ See Frodo's comments to Gandalf on the same: *LOTR: Fellowship of the Ring*: "The Shadow of the Past": pp. 75-76

hobbits of the Company were such leaders as unlikely as they first appeared. It was their growth in maturity and rigorous training during the War of the Ring that enabled them to reclaim the Shire from Saruman and his henchmen. Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin used their honed talents not for personal safety, gain or power; rather, these were used to serve the Good, to lead and to educate. They brought back to the Shire the greater knowledge of events which shaped the world of Middle-Earth and lived examples of the struggle between good and evil. The four opened up for those of the Shire who would listen the depth and height of the Good. Each hobbit's actions, no matter how small, if it were for the need of others became a part of the motions that moved their society.¹⁵⁵

There is a curious collection of proverbs, aphorisms and folk wisdom throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. These have not been thoroughly explored nor have the prophetic statements been collected for their embedded significance. Some of these were variants of sayings current in Tolkien's time, certain of these had their origins in the medieval period, while there are a few which are popular sayings derived from the Bible. Any of the foregoing added the verisimilitude of history arousing in the imagination of the reader the sound of the familiar.¹⁵⁶ Prophetic phrases stand not for the type of prophecy found in the Old Testament; here they foretold promises of

¹⁵⁵ See Schwartz's review, "Tolkien and the Great Tale": " 'In a century that saw the image of what human beings are destined for become smaller and smaller, Tolkien celebrated their purpose and potential... Tolkien's stories remind them that the virtuous life is not dull or out of date - but high adventure.' "

¹⁵⁶ The rusticity of the Shire and echoes of rural England are invoked in some passages:eg. "It's an ill wind as blows nobody no good, as I always say. All's well as ends Better!" [*LOTR: Return of the King*: "The Grey Havens" the Gaffer: pg. 1060]; "If that's where you get your news from, you'll never want for moonshine." [*Ibid.*: Fellowship of the Ring: "The Shadow of the Past": pg. 58]

fulfilment, encouragement and warning. It can be said that these resided in the mind of Iluvater before whom the sayings and results are perceived simultaneously. It is true that *The Lord of the Rings* alone does not wholly divulge this matter; it is the posthumously published *The Silmarillion* which places *The Lord of the Rings* in the great cosmogony of Tolkien's own fertile imaginary world. Confining oneself to *The Lord of the Rings* the prophecies are attached to the guiding Providence which overarched Middle-Earth. The Good broke into that world in what its inhabitants would have called fortuitous action or persons, and as the legitimation of right action by significant persons. Aragorn is one such personage. Frodo is the other herald of movement against evil and for the good or light. To heed the signs of the times in order to realize the fruition of prophetic utterances follows the Middle-Earth traditional encounters with the gods (or angels of a grand order) who dwelt in the Blessed Realm. Elves are that special link of personal and inherent knowledge of the other world. It was among them and those races of mankind who followed and intermarried with them that the sayings were carefully preserved. Hence the dreams of Faramir and Boromir concerning the Halflings had meaning among the high race of Gondor, the descendants of those who had once dwelt on the Middle-Earth version of Atlantis. The prophecies and epic tales (mainly poetic) preserved among Elves and Men gave them a greater world view than beings who were restricted in their oral or written histories. The hobbits of the Shire had become very restricted in their comprehension of anything beyond the borders of their country. The Breelanders had a broader memory though episodic at best. Stories of things great and terrible happened down South or East or elsewhere. It was the breaking out of self-imposed limits that the Free Peoples in the end played out their unique roles in the overthrow of Sauron and the work of Saruman.

It was that greater knowledge which informed Aragorn's understanding of justice. He dispensed for justice that which was due the other whether aggrieved or due to receive the weight of law. Nonetheless his judgement, both as king-in-waiting and as the king in Gondor after the defeat of Sauron, was blended with mercy, the knowing of mortal frailty and the coming under the domination of forces which eroded the Good. This perception of natural justice gave Aragorn the sway of the righteous judge. It was during the final march of Gondor to Barad-dur's iron gated outpost the Morannon before which lay a great desolation that in *The Lord of the Rings* unnerved younger untried warriors. They were not held to be cowards nor shirkers of duty, nor deficient in inner conviction. Aragorn both as judge and as father of his people in persona regnal gave them the means to save face by being offered the chance to render service in routing the enemy around Cair Andros. As Tolkien noted, many saw how their king was truly wise while others had their fears sufficiently quelled to follow with the vanguard to the Morannon. If his forces failed in battle then the younger men would have to face Sauron's minions wherever they went; if success attended Aragorn all fighters shared in the great cause, just as did the men of the Dale and the dwarves under Dain, and the Elves of Lothlorien and Rivendell.

Part of the appeal of *The Lord of the Rings* is the wide spectrum of abilities and psychological states represented by Tolkien. The foregoing judgement of Aragorn showed both the response to fear and the right action of a leader as point of reference and model. Denethor displayed the dangers of pride and lust, the latter being for power. Each trait led to his downfall - overweening hubris that he alone could do combat with Sauron to the extent that he would see his own sons die for his sake though he spoke openly as doing all for the good of Gondor. Neither the counsel of others nor encouragement of leadership in others of the allies were evident

in the Steward's rule. To this was added reliance on secret knowledge gained from the Palantir. Had he been open about what he saw - especially when the visions shifted to the use of Sauron to mislead Denethor then the heart of his leadership may have more closely matched Aragorn's. The wise ruler embodied in Aragorn sought advice from others to expand his own basis for decisions and actions.

Compared to these higher concerns the hobbits Merry and Pippin needed to grow beyond their "tweens" to the phase where age and experience provide what is needed. For them it was gravitas and awareness of mortality which were needed to assist them to make that transition. Pippin was violently wrenched into that awareness by his direct encounter with Sauron through the Seeing Stone of Orthanc. His subsequent racking by Denethor and the march to battle at the Morannon completed the growth. Merry, on the other hand, was elevated in maturity in the fight with the Witch King of Angmar before the walls of Minas Tirith, ameliorated in part by his caring for Dernhelm alias Eowyn and for King Theoden. The gifts he received included wisdom in self-sacrifice, and insight from an elder who did not fear death.

How then do Gimli and Legolas go further to immerse themselves in the Good in comparison to the hobbits? The response to this interrogatory is the focus on their mutual friendship. It became part of the lore of the age for the tension between the two races ran deep. There were times of co-operation notably by the Elves of Eriador and the Dwarves of Moria. One must remember how extraordinary was the permission granted Gimli to enter Lothlorien. St. Thomas Aquinas in the proofs of the existence of God included acceptance that the beauty and grandeur of the natural world spoke of a creation that needed a First Cause or Creator. God identified with the good in corollary sees that all that is Good partakes of the nature of God. To

appreciate the beauty of the natural world, in spite of post-Fall corruption, was the movement of the individual to participate in the Good and thereby to be touched by God. Among persons who recognized this aspect of the natural world there is a bonding of sympathies.

Legolas and Gimli were, as Tolkien might have phrased it, doughty warriors yet they appreciated qualities which did not derive from the warrior spirit. It can be argued that natural beauty being found within the Good inspired the Elf and Dwarf to fight for its defence against the agents of Sauron's darkness. It was as a result of war that Gimli and Legolas were exposed to realms of nature that fired their inner spirits. The Battle of Helms Deep took Gimli into the refuge caves where he was shown into the inner reaches of Aglarond. His praise of the rock formations - the stalactites and stalagmites with their glorious profusion of colour and the reflecting pools that mirror their forms - was highly poetic. His retort to Legolas's suggestion that Dwarves would mine it was Gimli's opportunity to make a revelation to Legolas, that Dwarves would render guardianship of the beauty of the caves and make it a by-word in all that they would do there. Gimli's apt phrase was that there would be an unending pilgrimage of Dwarves just to view the caves. Here was not a desire to mine for treasure or metals for forging objects. Dwarves looked back, rather, to their own creation from the earth. *The Simarillion* revealed how the Fathers of the Dwarves were created by Aule in imitation of Iluvatar. Indeed, Gimli's praise of Aglarond was as much spiritual as it was rhapsodic. Beauty created as part of the Good evoked that underlying sense of otherness in Gimli. Just as he asked only for a strand of Galadriel's hair - in itself neither treasure, power nor means to an end - so here Gimli spoke not of possession but of sharing the Good with others.

It was from the aftermath of Helm's Deep that Legolas came close to an Aglarond epiphany. For him it was listening under the eaves of Fangorn Forest. Legolas the Wood Elf from Mirkwood felt an affinity for the living forest as did Gimli for the bones of the earth. Here the age of the woods and the deep memories took Legolas back to a world where rampant time had slowed, though not ceased, or land where the Ents walked in the world near equal to the Elves in their ages. Tolkien wrote that for the Elves time flowed both slowly as ripples of seasons over the numberless years; yet time was ever fleeting for so many things and beings with mortal humans among those transient creatures. Fangorn Forest was both beautiful and sombre, therefore ancient enough to make Legolas feel as if he were young once more. This parallel experience to that of Gimli was a deep appreciation of life as found in the plant kingdom. In the end Gimli and Legolas agree in a pact that should the future so admit they would each be the guest of the other so sharing in the joy each had received in that which was created out of the Good. This was a viewing of the world as can be found in the Biblical creation account where the verse is found, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."¹⁵⁷

There was one person outside the Fellowship of the Ring who recognized something of the delight in natural beauty and in something more. Faramir was "the king who might have been"; he shared in many of the qualities of Aragorn together with the suggestion of an Elvish ancestry combined with the descent from the Men of Westernesse or Numenor. His mother was one of the peoples ruled by Prince Imrahil who even Legolas bowed before in recognition of that Eldar Race ancestry. Faramir was a skilled warrior and strategist, a leader of men, obedient to his father but showing mercy where the law demanded harsh treatment. Whereas Denethor the

¹⁵⁷ Genesis 1:31: King James Version

Steward sought knowledge for warfare and strength, his son loved learning for its own sake in asking Mithrandir (Gandalf) about the scrolls and books of lore in varied languages held at Minas Tirith. Faramir was given the insight that behind beauty, knowledge, the precious gift of life there was that which ultimately gave birth to Middle-Earth. The memory of Numenor and that which lay beyond was still observed in Gondor (as witness the standing posture of prayer which Frodo and Sam witnessed in the hidden refuge of Henneth Annun.) Even Aragorn recognized all these qualities in Faramir in his making him the due successor of Denethor the Steward of Gondor and in his creating him Prince of Ithilien. In all these things there was not the worship of nature nor of text nor of any created image for this was not a world in which Tolkien had given place for pantheism. God was not in all things; God gave form and substance to that which was in Valinor, Numenor and Middle-Earth even where it was his servants who were given the gift to craft them. The Ainur in the “Ainulindale” were variously described as deities or ranks of angelic beings. (Tolkien revealed in one letter that he had in mind the latter though Men and Elves and all free peoples may have regarded them as gods.) They were the servants of Iluvater therefore even they were subject to the what is termed in *The Lord of the Rings* as “providence.”

It was the genius of Tolkien that in *The Lord of the Rings* that he repeated minor motifs and images to draw the fabric of the storied tapestry together. One can marshal the passages where knowledge was in the service of the Good or evil depending on the free choice of individuals who either possessed knowledge or came to be aware of the same. Saruman in his pursuit of knowledge concerning the Rings of Power became enamoured of power itself and the subjugation of others in so wielding it. This knowledge which would have aided the Council was

withheld just as Gandalf had described it. By this retention of knowledge combined with Saruman's hypnotic powers of persuasion he became a deceiver, even of himself, in his believing that he could serve Sauron yet hope to find the One Ring to overthrow Sauron, becoming in his stead the new Sauron. Gandalf had rejected the Ring when offered it by Frodo for he feared how it might ensnare his good intentions; likewise Galadriel forebear receiving the Ring to save her soul and keep the world from the reign of a terrifying Queen. [One is tempted to wonder if Tolkien viewed this choice as that of refusing to be a type of anti-Virgin Mary.]

Frodo had great need of Gollum's knowing of a way into Mordor other than the great gate of the Morannon. That hidden way led up from Morgul Vale to the cave-tunnel through to Mordor. Here was the way which might permit Frodo to slip into Sauron's realm to achieve the goal of the Ring's destruction. Gollum possessed other knowledge through which he hoped to possess once again his "Precious." Shelob the great spider monster guarded the under way. Gollum was so awed of her reign of darkness that he was led to worship her (albeit to the extent she could serve his purposes.) The encounter with Shelob did not go as Gollum had planned. He had lost the true concept of friendship, and the benefit of gift as given out of friendship or act out of charity. The phial of Galadriel with its light of a star routed the initial Shelob attack on Frodo and Sam. It was for great friendship that Sam proved to be so determined and strong in beating off Gollum in his attempt to murder him. Sam fought for himself and for Frodo by drawing on deeply rooted strength, one might say an innate spiritual power for the preservation of life. The treachery of Gollum who in Sam's estimation still owed a life debt to Frodo engendered furious retribution.

Gollum had lost touch with hobbit-ness in his isolation under the Mountain and on his many travels to find the Ring. Indeed, by all accounts in Tolkien's writings, Frodo and Sam were Gollum's first contact with people of his own origins excepting that brief encounter with Bilbo long ago. Here lay the greatest cause of his miscalculations after that of losing to Bilbo in the riddle game. His thoughts were of possession and a ceaseless consuming of the self. This nihilistic abyss is very much that death-dominant flux of modern Western culture. Therefore there is a recognition in Gollum of the reader's own or potential for deviation from the Good, that receiving and giving in gift all that God bestows on us. Even Gollum's almost poignant act of reaching out to the sleeping Frodo before entering Shelob's lair needs to be qualified. Here was regret for something lost yet it did not yield to repentance. The startled Sam did regret his accusation against Gollum which itself readily joined repentance - though of a limited duration. Sam in the larger framework of his life was connected to those around him in service and friendship. He was not fixated on possession of things. For Sam it was the way one lived life that mattered. His world had the potential for increased light rather than Gollum's abyss.

Sam did have his own struggle with the temptation of the Ring after he had removed it from what he thought was Frodo's dead body after Shelob's second attack. This event was one of several challenges of a moral nature which key figures in the quest had to resolve. The knife edge of choice which Galadriel spoke to the eight Companions was a necessary preparation for leaving the dream world of Lothlorien to re-enter the battle ground which was Middle-Earth. The greater struggles were those which had to contend with blended matters, not polar opposites of good or bad choices, as indeed we are all challenged to face in our daily lives where spiritual demands and secular society do not necessarily co-exist in careful balance. How to live in the

world while remaining apart from its antithetical institutions, mores and popular culture is no easy task. Interior honesty is essential in giving content to action and speech. Boromir's desire for a powerful weapon to use against Sauron led to a choice that led him astray and made him susceptible to the lure of the Ring. The blandishments of the Council members on the inherent evil of the Ring did not dissuade Boromir's gradually intensifying obsession to possess the One Ring; here was the shadow twin to Gollum's personality that can reside in any of us, and who may surface and cloud our judgement. Boromir's salvation came in his returning to right reason and so he was freed to use his training in combat to serve his fellow Companions during the Orc attack that followed. His self-sacrifice in attempting to protect Pippin and Merry, as noted above, was his final expiation and liberating act. The Ring had lost its hold over him.

It was the choice to lead his troops that freed King Theoden from the corrosive advice of Wormtongue who did the bidding of Saruman. Theoden could have sent his nephew to repel Saruman's assault while remaining at Meduseld. His free choice to offer his life was made possible by Gandalf's uncovering of Wormtongue's malevolent hold on the king. The good counsel of Gandalf who sought neither possession nor power for himself is in stark contrast to Saruman in his succumbing to the lust for possession of power. These and preceding observations show the inversion of just what a non-religious secularized world judges as desirable in contra-distinction to the Gospel of Christ. To surrender one's life was to gain it; to disallow oneself the desire to possess yield's freedom, and to be emptied of the Neitzchean Will to Power was to gain all that was truly liberating and empowering. Understanding these teachings form the core of a Christian's being just as the various individuals of *The Lord of the Rings* who were conscious of such values possessed true knowledge.

A parallel of the foregoing may be found in the father-son dichotomy of Denethor and Faramir. The father's stated goal of defending Gondor from Sauron's assaults appear to at first to be reasonable for a Steward's concerns. His foresight failed, however, in his growing obsession with a lost means of overturning the Dark Lord's powers. He had thought himself sufficiently possessed of personal power to use the Palantir to both survey the movements of Sauron's agents and hosts, and to engage in mental battle with the mind of Sauron. In these ways Denethor took his own bad counsel and in doing so succumbed to the sin of overweening pride. This stance led to a desire to perpetuate the reign of the Stewards of Gondor for the glory of the dynasty. Yet even that was not enough for him - he lost Boromir and was prepared to send Faramir to battle even at the risk of losing him. When the hope of success became clouded in his mind with Sauron's illusion of defeat and scenes of annihilation he gave himself to the ultimate despair, the taking of his own existence. The nothingness of evil yawned open to receive him when he gave in to the trap of Sauron's distortion of hope, faith and charity through use of the Palantir. Evil done affects more than the one person. At the last Faramir became the innocent brought to the altar of sacrifice to despair when his father proposed to burn both himself and the son in the tomb of the Stewards. The faithful soldier Beregond while doing all he could to forestall Denethor's tragedy in Rath Dinen nonetheless slew the guardian of the keys in order to enter the mortuary city, and fought with the men of Denethor who had carried the bier on which Faramir was brought to the mausoleum. Tolkien knew well that there was according to Catholic teaching the concept of just war while at the same time that there was no good war; battle entails loss of life, maiming and psychological injury for combatants and non-combatants alike. Denethor by his action had brought the enactment of civil war to Minas Tirith. Aquinas would have seen the

wisdom of a king's justice when King Elessar pardoned Beregond for the deaths he had been forced to cause to save Faramir yet send him into "exile" albeit to serve his leader Faramir the Prince of Ithilien. Crusaders to the Holy Land, should they live to return to their homelands, did penance before once more receiving the Eucharist. Beregond went to Ithilien as penance while the life there for him and his son Bergil would be one of healing.

Tolkien adumbrates motifs throughout his text. It reinforces for the reader the ideals and lessons that shaped the author's own development and education. *The Lord of the Rings* ennobles core values which repeated reading can instil both consciously and by subliminal pericope.¹⁵⁸ Friendship, trust, self-sacrifice, mercy, true justice - these blend into the cardinal virtues. Critics who liken these values to English public school indoctrination seem willing to deride *The Lord of the Rings* as adolescent. These nay-sayers miss the story of transformation. Any true quest is a journey to maturity through lessons learned and trials endured. Frodo embodies that psychological and spiritual metamorphosis. He returns to the Shire as a form of cultural saviour though Frodo can never truly "come home" for he has outgrown insularity. The partial isolation of returning soldiers, such as Tolkien, exists precisely because they are not the same as the recruits who set out to answer the call of citizens' duty. Tolkien says as much in his personal writing and in *The Lord of the Rings*. One must "experience the horrors of war" to fully comprehend it. War is not made real at a second or third remove from the event. It is the mark of

¹⁵⁸ Anita Miller Bell, "*The Lord of the Rings* and the Emerging Generation: A Study of Message and Medium: J. R. R. Tolkien and Peter Jackson" (Ph. D. Dissertation: Drew University, 2009): "Tolkien's Worldview and Theology of Eucatastrophe: 'A Piercing Glimpse of Joy'": pg. 377: "Tolkien believes a true mythic journey offers not just an enjoyable momentary escape, but also a deep engagement in reality."

a gifted author or poet who can elicit something of that shattering change in the response of readers to his or her words.

From another angle of the prism the reader is shown not only self-sacrifice; there is the doing of duty and *caritas* without reward or acknowledgment. Frodo helped to save the way of life represented in the Shire without its inhabitants comprehending that it was the hobbit Frodo Baggins who with his sturdy disciple Samwise Gamgee had liberated Middle-Earth. Strider and his kindred Rangers guarded Bree and the Shire over the years without the peoples of either place knowing what they did. The act of service without recognition becomes a guard against pride; it nurtures a respectful humility which counter-acts the spirit of superiority while forming a consciousness of the stewardship of talents that others may lack. The gift is turned toward others as gift. This recognition and imparting maintains a dynamic growth in a person whereby one is always in the process of becoming. True vivification holds the frame for transformation.¹⁵⁹ It becomes in *The Lord of the Rings* a prerequisite for the quest of Frodo, Sam and the other members of the Fellowship of the Ring.

The emphasis on Frodo's quest should not obscure the fact that the quest was not achieved by one individual. It was two hobbits who made it to the Cracks of Doom; Sam's quest paralleled Frodo's when not functioning as an integral part of the latter's. Here the "Everyman" hobbit connects with the reader. Each one of us travels on our own life-quest no matter our social

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Gunnar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (Philadelphia, PA: Pilgrim Press Book, 1971): pg. 121: "Frodo is not a "Christian"; but what Frodo does and undergoes speaks to us of what a man's responsibility, according to the Christian faith, must always be - to renounce the kind of power which would enslave others and ourselves and to submit to that power which frees us to be all that we are capable of being."

station, education or opportunities. It is the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance bound up with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity that can be grasped by each person going through the mundane challenges of living today. Sam Gamgee the gardner, handyman and valet becomes a husband, father, elected citizen and remembrancer; indeed, he had become a social leader on a par with Peregrin Took and Meriadoc Brandybuck. Tolkien offers encouragement here along the pilgrim path of emptying oneself to permit “Goodness” to enter in.¹⁶⁰ The Eastern Orthodox speak of this as “deification” or becoming “gods” a concept jarring to one unfamiliar with the Christian theology that nurtured this belief. The orthodoxy lies in St. Paul’s writing of emptying one’s self in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit - “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”¹⁶¹ One need remember Gandalf’s observation of the recuperating Frodo after the victory at the Ford of Bruinen. Likewise the resurrected Gandalf at his reunion with Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas is said to have light fill his upturned hands like water. Gandalf’s particular fate in *The Lord of the Rings* suggests kinship with minor spirits or “gods” (Maiar) in that he neither ceases to exist in Middle-Earth as does mankind, nor waits in the Halls of Mandos to be reborn as with Elves. The Istari came from the Uttermost West as envoys and guardians to reside in the world. Therefore after the defeat of the Balrog on Caradhas mountain peak one finds Gandalf being in-filled once more in the mortal guise in which he lived in the world.

¹⁶⁰ Though made in the context of rabbinical exegesis the comment by Michael Fishbane on myth is appropriate here: “... mystical myth making refashions Scripture into verbal prisms in the hope that primordial wisdom might be refracted through them into the heart of the seeker. So viewed, the mythic imagination is a tool of the spiritual quest, and myth making a ritual of divine disclosure.” : *The Exegetical Imagination On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Harvard University Press, 1998): pg. 99

¹⁶¹ Galatians 2:20: King James Version: “nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ...”

The kenosis (emptying) and in-dwelling is played out as a spiritual mystery at Gandalf's meeting of the three hunters on Treebeard's mountain cliff. It has been observed previously that as the sun shone Aragorn noticed the play of light in and around Gandalf. The wizard was returned as a gift from the Middle-Earth paradise in a time of great need. Contrast this with Saruman who sought to fill his own being and augment it via the One Ring without recourse to those who sent him as chief of the Istari. He turned his back to the light by becoming absorbed in darkness. Saruman was not astute enough to grasp what Gandalf foresaw - Sauron the Dark Lord had become attenuated and reduced nearly to Will alone, without a true body. Sauron had been the chief lieutenant of Morgoth the fallen Vala who in the end was defeated and cast in chains into the Uttermost Void - darkness and emptiness without equal. Having escaped and hidden himself Sauron repeatedly re-entered Middle-Earth to attempt imitation of Morgoth as a new Dark Lord over Elves, Men and all living creatures. Tolkien in his writings that constitute The Silmarillion chronicled Sauron's attempts to achieve what Morgoth/ Melkor had once possessed. At the final alliance of Elves and Men at Dagorlad before the Morannon both Gil-galad and Elendil perished but Sauron lost the battle. The loss of the Ring when it was cut from his finger led to his losing his material manifestation. A determined Will of evil reshaped as shadowy form at Dol-Guldor as the Necromancer. Driven from his bastion there he positioned himself at Barad-dur - a work of the Men of Westernesse at the height of their power but enlarged and redoubled for his needs. One reads that Frodo from Amon-Hen saw the fortress wreathed in clouds and smoke just before he became aware of the sleepless Eye of Sauron. In a fashion similar to how the tattered cloaks gave form to the nothingness of the Nine Riders or Nazgul so their master needed a cloak for his own absence of a true body. This is a great dichotomy in Tolkien's epic

and drawn into his great mythologies. Evil can harm and kill while seemingly possessed of inexorable forces of power; yet what remains is emptiness, a voiding of the material and spiritual creation blessed by God (or Eru in *The Silmarillion*).

Saruman may be compared to Gollum in the pursuit of empty power. Neither one in their own beginnings was evil. It was their choices in the exercise of Free Will which increased their susceptibility to falling away from the Good. Both became obsessed with the possession of a thing and the abstract idea of secret power. Gollum turned his back literally on light - the sun and moon. Saruman deigned to be an All Father, creating his own creatures, the Uruk-hai, just as Morgoth in the primeval dawn warped Elven kind into Orcs. Neither Saruman nor Morgoth was capable of creating life from non-life. There were points at which choice of liberation were set before Gollum and Saruman. Bilbo's acquisition of the Ring gave Gollum the freedom once more to have the possibility of change, as Gandalf had intimated to Frodo. Saruman's window of redemption, if it may be called that, came while he too did not possess nor would be able to obtain the One Ring, in the trial at Orthanc before Gandalf and the witnesses. Gandalf the White neither possessed nor sought the One Ring therefore he was free to work for the Good and free of being possessed by things material and immaterial. Saruman was eclipsed and in the end did share in imitating Sauron - to be lost to the realm of Aman and Middle-Earth.

Choices, guiding virtues, and the perennial question - for what might a person be willing to die for in order to save others - these echo throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien found in the matter of heroic quest the template for his sub-creation's being able to address these serious themes. Told through the medium of fantasy literature he was able to engage theology, literature and the personal. Each of us in our own lives leads a quest and a pilgrimage. The essential thing

is to have a vision of what that journey entails rather than a daily wandering without goal or reason. We will in time complete that journey like innumerable ancestors before us. Others will carry on. Awareness of life and personal death rather than overwhelming us offers instead the challenge to achieve in those areas we are most gifted in, using those talents to achieve and share; and like Frodo we will leave this life without possession in order to carry on toward completion in the Good.

Chapter Five:

Poetry and Hymns — Medieval Lyrics, Thomas and Tolkienism

The prose work in which Tolkien's characters illustrate aspects of the virtues is given in tandem with a parallel narrative in poetry, chant and prophetic tropes. These, as will be seen, are an integral part of the whole including exposition of the virtues. Nothing that Tolkien wrote was without purpose; failure to include the poetry would be a serious defect in the analytic journey through *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the necessity of recapitulating connections with Aquinas and Medieval inspiration.

Scattered throughout *The Lord of the Rings* are poems and poetic pronouncements which add to the mood of the narrative. There is hobbit rusticity, noble Elvish verse, and prophetic utterances passed down as lore. These passages can evoke homeliness and intimacy or the suggestion of time long past. The question is how these poems fit into the overall story and their significance for the theme of virtues and telos. Hymns and sequences by Thomas Aquinas are obviously religious in nature though careful examination can yield more than surface images. Certainly Tolkien was influenced by his study of Northern European myth and sagas which were most frequently preserved by way of verse form. Verse retains the air of chant with its implied mystical and spiritual heritage. *Pange lingua* the great eucharistic hymn of Aquinas blends church teaching on transubstantiation, the necessity of faith, liturgical movement and adoration. The words evoke timelessness and the intersection with the time in which we find ourselves. It is prayer set to music (called Gregorian Chant) which is simple enough for anyone to memorize

making it universally accessible. In its fullest liturgical setting which involves a procession with the Eucharistic Host and incense one may be able to glimpse that which is outside one's usual mundane routines. The experience calls one to open up the imagination to consider other realities.¹⁶²

That openness to imagination is the avenue to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It alerts one as well to formulation of context for the various peoples of his sub-creation. The narrative brings one into encounters with the sublime and with great darkness. Opposites in character and faith are in place as contrasts for the reader or hearer to contemplate. The verse embedded in the text can partake of this duality depending on the former's origins. It is less obvious when aspects of the virtues surface; nonetheless links do indeed exist. The first necessary step, however, is to recognize the groupings and sequence of the poetic matter as one progresses through *The Lord of the Rings*. As with the story line there is a shift in atmosphere, purpose and growth. The regression at the end of the book - the return to the Shire - is likewise tempered by change and maturity. Early on there is not a complete separation of all verse types; the opening chapters are the "overture" to the principle work so that various themes to be developed are presented to prepare one for the changes to come. The rusticity of hobbit song is offered alongside Gandalf's revelation of the Ring inscription to Frodo. Even Bilbo's old song of setting out on the road of adventure shows a sophistication of one more learned in "his letters" and suitable to a hobbit engaged in writing a book and translations of Elvish verse.

¹⁶² Thomas Kullman has written on the literary aspects of the poetry in *The Lord of the Rings* with some observations pertinent to this chapter: "Poetic Insertions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 23, No. 2 (2013/2014): pp. 283-309

This early stage of poetry undergoes transition from the songs of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry to the songs at the Prancing Pony. The Bombadil-Goldberry compositions began to open up to the travelling hobbits knowledge of a wider world, older, more startling and enduring than what lore was preserved in the Shire or possibly even at Bree. It was the verses concerning Strider/Aragorn found in Gandalf's letter to Frodo and the song chanted by Strider at Weathertop which marked the full change of tone. The journey through the Midgewater Marshes was more serious than the wandering in the Old Forest for now the hobbits were truly transforming into travellers on a quest. Old Man Willow had threatened their lives but the Black Riders directly sought them because of Frodo's possession of the One Ring. Sam's recall of verse learned from Bilbo about Gil-galad led to Strider's song which opened a portion of the very ancient history of the struggle between the Elves and Sauron (with suggestions of Morgoth further back in time) into which Frodo and his companions now found themselves. They had become part of the verse and inserted into the oral tradition as in a liturgical rite.

To review in brief the foregoing here are the first two important songs of the text, the first by Bilbo and the second based on the line from the One Ring. Bilbo on leaving Bag End after the great Birthday Party lay the scene for a journey of potential adventure or quest:

“The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it join some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet,
And whither then? I cannot say.”¹⁶³

¹⁶³ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “A Long Expected Party”: pg. 48

Gandalf on retrieving the Ring from Frodo's fireplace had the hobbit look at the script which line the outside and inside of the object before giving the translation and its full rendition:

“Three Rings for the Elven-king under the sky
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.”¹⁶⁴

The former lines speak of simplicity and being open to the joy of life. By contrast the One Ring incantation is the antithesis of the virtues — devoid of justice, fortitude, temperance, prudence, faith, hope or love. There is darkness instead of light in which the action is one of restrictions (rule, find, bring, bind). The choice is being offered to follow the path of life in the light or go into the shadows of despair beyond hope. The contrast is further set if one realizes that 22nd September was the Catholic feast day of St. Thomas of Villanova (1488-1555) - known for his great charity to the poor and who on his death bed gave away his last coin so dying without possessions on any kind.¹⁶⁵ Bilbo began the process with his great party and the relinquishing of

¹⁶⁴ *Lord of the Rings: “Fellowship of the Ring”*: “The Shadow of the Past”: pg. 64

¹⁶⁵ John J. Delaney, *Pocket Dictionary of Saints* abridged edition (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1983)

the Ring; Frodo would go further in the quest - to destroy the Ring of Power itself rather than merely give it away.¹⁶⁶

The next two sets of verse are of several stanzas each with contrasting messages. Bilbo, Pippin and Sam sing a song of Bilbo's celebrating nature, walking and the comforts of home. Tolkien's keen attention to the natural environment is evident throughout the book greatly aiding one in visualizing the world of Middle-Earth. The song of the Elves whom the hobbits encounter at Woody End speaks of something more than the mundane world. Their paean to the Vala named Elbereth begins to open up the history of creation and the beings regarded as gods on Middle-Earth. Tolkien in his correspondence stated that he conceived of them as angels performing the creative will of Eru. Elbereth in particular embodies aspects of the Virgin Mary though not to be equated with the latter. This is appropriate in a quest story inspired by medieval imagery for at its height in the medieval period Marian devotion was in full flower.¹⁶⁷ Finally, these were High Elves, as Frodo noted, who were in exile from the Far West until such time as they sailed over sea again to the Undying Lands. Importance is attached to the sense of longing for something

¹⁶⁶ Tolkien was imitating as well the medieval idea of symmetry in composition: Sarah Appleton Weber, *Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form* (Ohio State University Press: 1969): pg. "This symmetry of sacred history is repeated in turn in the life of each man, who is related to the events of the first creation and to those of the second, since he is bound by nature to Adam and bound by nature and grace to Christ. Thus his life becomes an imitation of Christ and an overcoming of the sins of Adam. . . . Through the liturgy of the Church and the sacraments, the correspondences within sacred history and within the life of a man are joined. A knowledge of the concept of symmetry is fundamental to understanding the thirteenth and fourteenth century Christian's way of ordering and associating events of sacred history."

¹⁶⁷ Weber, *Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric*: pp. 12-15 re Mary. Cf. Anselm M. Townsend, *Geoffrey Chaucer's Hymn of the Blessed Virgin: The A. B. C. called La Priere de Nostre Dame* (Milwaukee, Illinois: Bruce Publishing, 1935); Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002; 1st pub. 1995): "Lay Piety": pp. 222-23.

beyond the here and now, that which Tolkien and C. S. Lewis commented on in different ways. The Elves sang of this longing by allusion: “O Elbereth! Gilthoniel! We still remember, we who dwell In this far land beneath the trees, Thy starlight on the Western Seas.”¹⁶⁸ Tolkien related this longing poetically as the longing to return to Eden, a time before the Fall, to dwell fully in the light of the Creator. His friend Lewis invoked the German word *Sehnsucht* which defined a pang, a deep longing, and a sense of loss mingled with desire to fill a void.¹⁶⁹ The great quest with the One Ring is presented as the attempt to overthrow the darkness of Sauron; it is equally the seeking to restore Paradise and to be enveloped in the Good.

There follows in the text other verse which returns one to the simpler life of hobbits of the Shire - a drinking song, and one celebrating a hot bath at the end of the day. These lines blend into the brief attempt by Frodo to raise the companions spirits in the Old Forest before the transition to the unique character and compositions of Tom Bombadil. The latter is a nature spirit in bodily form - as is Goldberry - akin therefore to the Istari or Wizards (Gandalf among them) whom one learns had come out of the Uttermost West; they are lesser spirits of the Vala (the

¹⁶⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Three is Company”: pg. 93. The star was an attribute of the Virgin Mary: see: J. C. J. Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983): pg. 232: “ A star is the attribute of St. Mary the Virgin who is *Stella Matutina*, “Star of the Morning”, and *Stella Maris*, “Star of the Sea”, two stars whose brightness never fades.”

¹⁶⁹ Allen B. Robertson, “Two Paths to Joy: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe” in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource, 2015): pp. 23-26

Maiar) who have taken on mortal forms to be emissaries in Middle-Earth.¹⁷⁰ Tom is bound up with the natural world in a way that enables him to fully appreciate the hobbits attachment to the Shire. He is a repository though of ancient knowledge of a wider world into which the hobbits are to journey; his songs are preparation for that which lies ahead if the hobbits but listen to his words among what appear to be only merry tunes, humour and wonder. Bombadil's last verse which he has Frodo and friends memorize in case they need his aid is actually an antique form of enchantment calling on nature for help: "Ho! Tom Bombadil, Tom Bombadil! By water, wood and hill, by the reed and willow, By fire, sun and moon, harken now and hear us! Come, Tom Bombadil, for our need is near us!" This format is reminiscent of Amergin's verse on the Milesians reaching the shores of Ireland in which naming things invoked their inherent powers.¹⁷¹ It certainly was a Celtic verse familiar to Tolkien. Similar forms from Anglo-Saxon poetry were another source to inspire the author. That occurs, for instance, when the barrow-wight utters words of enchantment before the attempt to slay the hobbits trapped in the mound:

"Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone'
never more to wake on stony bed,
never till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead.
In the black wind the stars shall die,
and still on gold here let them lie,
till the dark lord lifts his hand,

¹⁷⁰ These may bear comparison to the Seven Sages as noted in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* who were sent to civilize mankind by the god Ea. One other point to note — the latter also refers to a demon called Azag which calls to mind the great Orc chieftain Azog with whom the Dwarves battled over Moria.

¹⁷¹ For Amergin see Charles Squires, *Celtic Myth and Legend* (Hollywood, CA: Newcastle Publishing, 1975; 1st pub 1905): pg. 123: "I am the wind that blows upon the sea ... I am the ocean wave; I am the murmur of the surges; I am seven battalions; I am a strong bull; I am an eagle on a rock; I am a ray of the sun ... I can shift my shape like a god."

over dead sea and withered land.”¹⁷²

It is the song to Bombadil and living nature which Frodo managed to repeat that brought rescue from the barrow-wight.

The resilient and masterful Bombadil is given more poetry to help along the narrative yet woven into the words are clues to Tolkien’s deeper mythology, easily overlooked for one unfamiliar with the latter’s other writings: “Get out you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight! ... Lost and forgotten be, darker than the the darkness, Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended.”¹⁷³ It was in the *Silmarillion* that Tolkien gave the tale of the final downfall of the Vala named Melkor/ Morgoth (Sauron’s master); he was bound and cast into the Void beyond the circles of the world with the gates shut - utter darkness, utter emptiness, to be alone for eternity reliving in memory again and again existence and defeat.¹⁷⁴ The lines for the wight are prescient in their forecasting the fate of Sauron should the quest to destroy the One Ring succeed. This method of Tolkien’s resembles his use of dream imagery as well to suggest future events, be it Frodo’s dream of an island revealed in light or seeing a figure being lifted from the top of a tower by a great eagle (Gandalf’s rescue from the tower of Saruman by Gwahir).¹⁷⁵ It is

¹⁷² *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Fog on the Barrow-Downs”: pg. 156. See: John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* ed. William Daniel Conybeare (London: Printed for Harding and Lepard, 1826): pg. 229: from the Exeter Manuscript: Gnostic Poem: Book IX Section 4: a paraphrase by Conybeare: “Deep the gulph that hides the death, Long and dark the way they tried. The wealth that swell’d their earthly pride Kindred or stranger shall divide; While breathless in silent tomb They wait the last dread day of doom.”

¹⁷³ *The Fellowship of the Ring*: “Fog on the Barrow-Downs”

¹⁷⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) ed. Christopher Tolkien: pp.254-55

¹⁷⁵ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Council of Elrond”: pg. 278

was a way for Tolkien as well to expose his readers to the richness of word power in Anglo-Saxon poetics, and add to the air of antiquity in the narrative.

One of the longest poems in the book is Tolkien's play on a rendition of The Cat and the Fiddle recreated as a story of the Man in the Moon tipping at an inn. This is a piece of "atmosphere" for the scene which unfolds at the Sign of the Prancing Pony in Bree. It is a delightful example of Tolkien at play with words and humour. For English-speaking audiences the poem sung by Frodo is a connection to the past in childhood rhymes with the suggestion in the text itself that only a worn version is remembered "today" (ie the 1950s when the book was published but equally valid decades later.)¹⁷⁶ A foil is created out of the recitation for a shift in tone for the next verse is likewise "old" but of the another order, that is, a prophecy in the popular sense of the word. There is a negative lesson in the common room scene to heighten the hobbits and Strider meeting; Frodo's calling attention to himself (even if to avoid having Pippin talk about Bilbo's mysterious disappearance) was a lack of prudence on his part. He literally repeated his uncle's disappearing act by using the Ring - the very opposite of what he had intended. Frodo starts to realize that he must be far more alert and exercise his skill in judging character.

The lines written by Gandalf in his letter to Frodo about Strider refocuses the narrative on the quest and a parallel saga which is dependent of the former:

"All that is gold does not glitter,

¹⁷⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: "Fellowship of the Ring": "At the Sign of the Prancing Pony": pp. 174-76; an earlier version was published by Tolkien in *Yorkshire Poetry* 2, no. 19 (October/November 1923) - for a reprint see J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books 1971; 1st pub. 1966): under "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from The Red Book" [1st pub. 1962 in book form]: pp. 31-33

Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.”¹⁷⁷

Rebirth and restoration are evident in these lines along with a play of contrast between darkness and light. The reference to a fire springing from cold ashes possibly refers to the symbol of the phoenix - a mystical bird reborn out of the ashes of its own immolation and taken as a Christian imagery for Christ albeit without indicating that Strider/Aragorn is a Christ-figure.¹⁷⁸ Rather it is Tolkien inserting medieval Catholic passages into the text.¹⁷⁹ The entire set of lines begins to crystallize the theme of the virtues for the words invoke faith and hope together with the promise of justice coming to fruition.

Tolkien was able by way of his verse to bring up summaries of his older mythologies which would be published posthumously as *The Silmarillion*.¹⁸⁰ The aforementioned poem on Gil-galad as sung by Sam at Weathertop and the longer formal verse of Strider concerning Beren and Luthien-Tinuviel (his remote ancestors) are the earliest significant examples. The former

¹⁷⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Strider”: pg. 186

¹⁷⁸ George Ferguson, *Sign & Symbol in Christian Art* (Oxford University Press, 1972; 1st pub. 1954): pg. 23

¹⁷⁹ There was an Anglo-Saxon poem called *The Phoenix* based in part on a Latin poem attributed to Lactantius; the Anglo-Saxon composition is dated to the ninth century as found in the Exeter Book: J. Leslie Hall, trans. *Judith, Phoenix and Other Anglo-Saxon Poems* (New York: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1902)

¹⁸⁰ Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*: see the index which gives names followed by explanation and page citations.

alludes to the darkness of Mordor so linking it to the Ring inscription. Strider's lines harken back further to the war of the Silmarils. Gil-galad conjures up the heroic warrior in the Northern tradition. Beren and Luthien is a love poem in the chivalric tradition; it illustrates simultaneously the power of love in the face of trials including separation and death. The virtue of love (*caritas*) is shown not as something sentimental - rather, it is giving, sacrificial and enduring. Dante's own longing for Beatrice as realized in the *Paradiso* may be noted as one source of inspiration for the Beren and Luthien mythic account.¹⁸¹ Finally, the first full line of the last stanza of Strider's recitation echoes Sam's Gil-galad by bringing back links to the Ring and foretelling as it were by way of a leitmotif in music that which lie ahead for the hobbits and their companions to be on the quest: "Long was the way that fate them bore, O'er stony mountains cold and grey, Through halls of iron and darkling door, And woods of knitted morrowless." Here is the call to be prepared to practice the virtues of fortitude and hope (*spes*).

In an apparent throw-back to the Prancing Pony one has Sam's composition on the Troll some time after the attack on Weathertop. This rustic folk-song however serves to remind one that even the humble are capable of sub-creation for they are likewise made in the image of God; there is the implicit message that one must not unduly judge someone by their origins alone - repeatedly Samwise is shown to be quite capable of surprising his companions in word and

¹⁸¹ Beren and Luthien were unmarried until meeting each other. Both Beatrice and Dante married other partners - that which remained was Dante's admission that he had loved Beatrice since he was twelve years old; she remained an unattainable, idealized love.

deed.¹⁸² He is being raised in profile, for among the hobbits on the journey and at Rivendell, only Frodo and Bilbo are mentioned as the other composers of special verse. The very next significant set of poetic lines in the narrative are from Bilbo himself in the great hall of Rivendell after Frodo's recovery from the Battle at the Fords. Here is an elaboration on the tale of the Silmarils in which Bilbo carries on Strider's poem of Beren and Luthien by recounting the epic sailing of their descendant Earendil with Elwing across the Sundering Seas to Aman the Blessed Realm to beseech the Powers for aid in Middle-Earth. Once more it reiterates the theme of sacrifice for others. Earendil having set foot in the realm of the gods with the Silmaril cannot return again to Middle-Earth; instead he and Elwing are set to sail the celestial heavens while perceived on earth as a star of hope:

“But on him mighty doom was laid,
till Moon shall fade, an orb'd star
to pass, and tarry nevermore
on Hither Shores where mortals are;
for ever still a herald on
an errand that should never rest
to bear his shining lamp afar,
the Flammifer of Westemne.”¹⁸³

¹⁸² A poem Tolkien wrote for C. S. Lewis on sub-creation and myth suggests this universal ability: *Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light, through whom is splintered from a single White to many hues, ... Though all the crannies of the world we filled With Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build Gods and their houses out of dark and light, and saved the seed of dragons - 'twas our right (used and misused). That right has not decayed: we make still by the law in which we're made.* : Colin Duriez, *J. R. R. Tolkien: The Making of a Legend* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2012): pg. 69

¹⁸³ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Many Meetings”: pg. 253. A version of this poem appeared in print prior to publication of *The Lord of the Rings* but in a less lofty form though certain stanzas became part of the former word for word: Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader*: “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil”: pp. 24-27: “Errantry”

As if to echo the hobbit's verse the scene in the hall ends with the brief recitation which was related to the Elven song in Woody End for it was a poem to Elbereth the Queen of the Valar:

“A Elbereth Gilthoniel,
silivren penna miriel
o menel aglar elenath!
Na-chaered palan-diriel”
o galadhremmin ennorath,
Fanuilos, le linnathon
nef aear, si nef aearon!¹⁸⁴

This last was from a verse of remembrance of the former home of the high elves beyond the Sundering Seas; it is equally a hymn of hope and faith of powers beyond Middle-Earth. The stage is now set for the quest in earnest.

The power of words in promise and potentiality are the touchstones of Tolkien's verse within the structure of the prose narrative. They are the carvings and symbols of his Gothic cathedral which both ornament and carry their own inherent meaning.¹⁸⁵ Together the decoration of medieval cathedrals worked with the superstructure to form the setting for the vivifying liturgy of the Mass. Tolkien's passing reference to the role of his poetry is an understatement of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 254. This poem appeared in a volume Tolkien's verse set to music under the title *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle* music by Donald Swann, poems by J. R. R. Tolkien (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967): pp. 63-67: the poem itself was not set to music but Tolkien gave his own notes on the chant and pronunciation.

¹⁸⁵ Great medieval cathedrals were framed to be models of heaven on earth replete with sacred geometry, liturgical spaces and explicit religious artistic expressions. Behind these works lay the image of God as the Great Architect of the Universe as measuring all things with an architect's compass, or as Aquinas wrote: *God, Who is the first principle of all things, may be compared to the things created as the architect is to things designed (ut artifex ad artificial)*. Gargoyles and other fantastic forms in medieval churches speak of the darkness while angelic forms, saints and images of the Trinity are the light of true life. One may say that an existence devoid of the virtues as guide or as a mode of habitation is to walk in the shadows of unfulfilled realization of existence: draft notes by author on “Architectural Insight from Aquinas and Tolkien” 2015

how well they compliment and carry on the flow of the action and intent of the text. There is a relationship with Gandalf's observation of the importance of old wife's tales - there remain in them remnants of things which once the wise deemed important to know.¹⁸⁶ Here is a subliminal message by Tolkien to keep reading poetry as well as the words of songs both ancient and modern to avoid the danger of impoverishing our culture.

Poetry can enforce an economy of words by which the author must distill the essence of any message. Later observations on Aquinas's hymns and sequences well illustrate the point; faith and teaching which filled volumes of the *Summa Theologica* had to be reduced to comparatively few stanzas. Tolkien's verse lines in *The Lord of the Rings* likewise summarize longer sagas and histories. He uses words to suggest and to open momentary glimpses of other narratives. Two prophetic passages and the one Ring's incantation offer variations on this structural use of poetics; all three occur at the Council of Elrond:

“Seek for the Sword that was broken:
In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
And the Halfling forth shall stand.”¹⁸⁷

“All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken:

¹⁸⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Houses of Healing”: pg. 899

¹⁸⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Rings”: “The Council of Elrond”: pg. 263

The crownless again shall be king.”¹⁸⁸

“Ash nazg durbatuluk, ash nazg gimbatul,
as nazg thrakatuluk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul.”¹⁸⁹

“One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the Darkness bind them.”¹⁹⁰

All three sets of verse knit the narrative and recapitulate that which is to unfold. Isildur’s Bane is the Ring, the Halfling is Frodo in particular (and the hobbits collectively). The crownless one who is to be a king, that is Aragorn, is a message of hope. Finally the one Ring’s lines are a warning that action must take place; there is no time for complacency. It bears comparison with the comment: “Living by faith includes the call to something greater than cowardly self-preservation.”¹⁹¹ Aquinas offers a similar sentiment: “Hence a captain does not intend as a last end, the preservation of the ship entrusted to him, since a ship is ordained to something else as its end, viz. to navigation.”¹⁹² [The paraphrase is more widely known: “If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever.”] Three parallel themes are presented: the threat of an unchecked growth in the power of Sauron raised to a metaphysical level in the One Ring; the kingly narrative which flows around Aragorn/ Strider; and the role of

¹⁸⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Council of Elrond”: pg. 265

¹⁸⁹ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Council of Elrond”: pg. 271

¹⁹⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Council of Elrond”: pg. 272

¹⁹¹ Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware, *Finding God in the Lord of the Rings* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001): pg. 40.

¹⁹² Joseph Rickaby, trans. and ed., *Aquinas Ethicus: or The Moral Teachings of St. Thomas. Volume I. A Translation of the Principal Portions of the Second Part of the “Summa Theologica”* (London: Burns and Oates, 1896): pg. 12: I-II. Q. II. ART. V.

hobbits as Everyman in the affairs of the world. The Council of Elrond takes decisions which arise from all three sets of verse. Prior to the Nine Companions setting out there is Bilbo's song on adventures and his staying at home while others go forth; it is the last echo of simple hobbit sentiment before the quest challenges begin.¹⁹³ The next generations are to take over with their own share of responsibilities for the present time. It is also a signal to the reader that this is Frodo's story not that of his uncle Bilbo.

There is a hiatus from poetic recitation in the narrative until the Companions are embarked in the dangerous travel through ancient Moria, the city of the Dwarfs [as Tolkien choose to spell the latter]. Here is the opportunity for Gimli to provide a song which included the myth of Durin the Deathless. Within the words there lies the warning of undue pride and a great disaster which devastated Moria. The final lines awaken the idea of hope for a new beginning though none can tell when that may be. Tolkien evokes Nordic sagas, alters the perception of dwarves, and even suggests the power of a Beowulf history behind the few stanzas. Gimli's performance alerts one that even dwarves have love of music and song/ poetry. It is a contrast to the orcs and trolls who have no music and no known tradition of verse. For Tolkien narrative and poetry are an essential sign of humanity's being to sub-create in imitation of God's own creative being. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings* the free peoples all possess these attributes. This creates a chasm between the latter and the creatures in thrall to Sauron and to his predecessor and master Melkor/ Morgoth. It is stated in *The Silmarillion* that Morgoth could not create new life;

¹⁹³ *Lord of the Rings*: "Fellowship of the Ring": "The Ring Goes South": pp. 295-96: *I sit beside the fire and think of people long ago, and people who will see a world that I shall never know. But all the while I sit and think of times there were before, I listen for returning feet and voices at the door.*

he could only corrupt and twist. It was essential to remove song and music for these called for independent minds capable of imagination; only the subservient could suit Morgoth's or Sauron's purposes. Gimli's song is the more powerful for its conclusion suggests that which had been might one day be restored in full creativity:

“The world is grey, the mountains old,
The forge's fire is ashen-cold.
No harp is wrung, no hammer falls:
the darkness dwells in Durin's halls;
The Shadow lies upon his tomb
In Moria, in Khazad-dum.
But still the sunken stars appear
In dark and windless Mirrormere;
There lies his crown in water deep,
Till Durin wakes again from sleep.”¹⁹⁴

One recognizes the sleeping King Arthur on the Isle of Avalon motif.¹⁹⁵ The Arthurian legends, it is to be remembered, recount how the knights of the Round Table had their own great quest, the search for the Holy Grail. Only three have a vision of the sacred object; two not being wholly worthy may never touch it while the third knight having been deemed worthy may no longer remain among mortals but is translated into paradise. Tolkien inverts the Arthurian quest by having in the end three people being at the end capable of destroying the One Ring of Power - Gollum obtains it to keep it yet loses his life; Frodo and Sam each wore the Ring and live to come back for a little while before in effect travelling over sea to paradise. Gollum had lost his hold on the seven virtues. Frodo, though in the end the Ring overrode his intentions, nonetheless

¹⁹⁴ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “A Journey in the Dark”: pg. 334

¹⁹⁵ David Day, *The Search for King Arthur* (New York: Facts on File, 1995): pp. 149-55; Carl Lindahl et al, ed. *Medieval Folklore: A Guide to Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs* (Oxford University Press: 2002): pg. 25

succeeded in and through the compassion he had earlier shown toward Smeagol/Gollum. In this matter both *caritas* and justice prevailed from his judgements. Sam in clinging to faith and hope, and love for Frodo shared in the redemption of the Ring's destruction. This bore out Aquinas's statement that, "... among worldly things there is nothing which seems worthy to be preferred to friendship."¹⁹⁶ The weave of Tolkien's motifs and fount of Northern myths in his narrative and poetry is as finely done as the Elven cloth which so fascinated the hobbits when presented with the cloaks made by Galadriel and her maidens.

There has been criticism in the past that Tolkien's writings have too few feminine characters amidst a boys juvenile adventure.¹⁹⁷ Galadriel is too rarified on the one hand and Eowyn becomes too submissive on the other. A closer reading belies that fallacious argument. The poems themselves make repeated references to love stories. Frequently one discerns that the

¹⁹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship: To The King of Cyprus* trans. Gerald B. Phelan, rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982; 1st pub. 1949): pg. 44: "[77] First of all, among all worldly things there is nothing which seems worthy to be preferred to friendship. Friendship unites good men and preserves and promotes virtue."

¹⁹⁷ These critiques occurred early on in the publishing history of *The Lord of the Rings*, and latterly in accusations of misogyny; two notorious reviews were by Edmund Wilson, "Ooh, Those Awful Orcs" *The Nation* 1956 April 14: "... certain people - especially, perhaps, in Britain - have a lifelong appetite for juvenile trash."; Philip Toynbee, "Dissension Among The Judges" *Observer* 1961: "for it seemed to me that the books were dull, ill written, whimsical and childish." Guido Schwarz in 2003 attacked Tolkien for misogynist and racist undertones: *Jungfrauen in Nachthend - Blonde Krieger aus den Westem. Eine motivpsychologisch-kritische Analyse von JRR Tolkien, Mythologie und Weltbild* (Konigshausen & Neumann). Tolkien critic and author Jane Chance counters these charges in her book *Tolkien, Self and Other: "This Queer Creature"* (New York: Palsgrave Macmillan, 2016): see outline of chapter 7 in her Preface pg. xv. Tolkien himself wrote with regard to Toynbee in a letter to Mr. Minchin: "Do not worry too much about Philip Toynbee. Few good reviews can have done me so much commercial benefit. So many people rose up to slay him that the noise was nearly as good as a new book.": J. R. R. Tolkien to H. Cotton Minchin 1962 November 14 : copy located on auction site for Christies [christies.com : Sale 2456: Fine Books and Manuscripts 23 June 2011 New York]

couples are partners in the necessary completion of a quest or great task, such as Beren and Luthien. Legolas's song of Nimrodel and Amroth, for the Companions after the escape from Moria and loss of Gandalf, is both tragic and haunting. One may relate the final stanzas for both of the main figures:

“Where now she wanders none can tell,
In sunlight or in shade;
For lost of yore was Nimrodel
And in the mountains strayed.

But from the West has come no word,
And on the Hither Shore
No tidings Elven-folk have heard
Of Amroth evermore.”¹⁹⁸

It is obvious that Tolkien believed in the strength of love between couples even if given in the conventional terms of his age or as reflected in the mythic sources which gave him inspiration. In this respect he is separated from Aquinas who held to the medieval scholastic prejudices of the era regarding the abilities and character of women. At the other extreme the reinterpretation of Aragorn's betrothed, Arwen, as a warrior Elven maid who would defy her father Elrond in the Peter Jackson cinema trilogy version of *The Lord of the Rings*, reveals the failure to appreciate the underlying message of strength, intelligence and equality between the sexes as may be inferred from Tolkien's own prose and poetry. Here is the pre-eminence of Beatrice's role in Dante who leads the way to enlightenment in Paradise. Again, in reference to Beren and Luthien one verse from Aragorn's song addresses the idea of love as both an ideal and something to be desired:

¹⁹⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Lothlorien”: pp. 358-59

“When winter passed, she came again,
And her song released the sudden spring,
Like rising lark, and falling rain,
And melting water bubbling.
He saw the eleven-flowers spring
About her feet, and healed again
He longed by her to dance and sing
Upon the grass untroubling.”¹⁹⁹

Recall as well that music - to which dance is wedded - is a sign of peoples of light in the Tolkien mythology.

Poetry is invoked as an expression of sorrow and remembrance in the lines Frodo composed while in Lothlorien for the fallen Gandalf, aided by a short stanza from Sam. It is a reminder of the importance of voice from the folk or Everyman. Tolkien also used it to offer glimpses into Gandalf’s greater story just as Gimli’s song had opened some pages on the history of Dwarfs:

“A deadly sword, a healing hand,
a back that bent beneath its load;
a trumpet-voice, a burning brand,
a weary pilgrim on the road”.²⁰⁰

There is affinity here with Aragorn of whom later in the narrative it was recalled that “the hands of a king are the hands of a healer” - suggesting Gandalf’s own true status as a lord of power. Tolkien has borrowed the concept from the English tradition that the king’s touch could cure scrofula or other ailments; even Samuel Pepys the great diarist wrote of witnessing this practice

¹⁹⁹ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “A Knife in the Dark”: pg. 209

²⁰⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Mirror of Galadriel”: pg. 379

in the 1600s.²⁰¹ The “weary pilgrim” serves as a sign that Gandalf had a spiritual aspect which became a separating reality between himself and Saruman (who fell to the temptation of being a lord of power for domination and self above service to others.)²⁰²

The two songs of Galadriel function at different levels. Hers is the persistence of memory from the Elder Days to the War of the Ring’s conclusion. The recitation of words recalling Ilmarin suggest a blessing in the pronunciation which is to go with the Companions as they set out from Lothlorien to journey down the Great River Anduin. There is as well the suggestion that the timelessness of Lothlorien is to cease leaving it open to the passing time of Middle-Earth: “O Lorien! The Winter comes, the bare and leafless Day; The leaves are falling in the stream, the River flows away.”²⁰³ Tolkien gives one a glimpse of the Elven past, their hopes for the present, and forecasts what may come in the narrative story-line. It is a challenge to faith and hope which underscores Galadriel’s song for while one may be aware of time’s passing it is the future which is the unknown that challenges us on all levels. Even Robert Burns alluded to it in his ode to a field mouse: “The best laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men Gang aft agley.”²⁰⁴ The quest to destroy the One Ring was one of hope — faint though it was from its conception — rather than surrender to

²⁰¹ G. Gregory Smith, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1925) pp. 78, 484

²⁰² Cf. Katharyn F. Crabbe, *J. R. R. Tolkien* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981): pg. 80: “Tolkien’s heroes are only in part traditional conquering heroes. They are preeminently suffering heroes who persevere. The status of the heroes as sufferers is psychologically, if not logically, connected to the next great characteristic of the Tolkien here - his mercy.”

²⁰³ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Farewell to Lorien”: pg. 393

²⁰⁴ Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. (Kilmarnock: John Wilson [1786]): pg. 138: To A Mouse, On turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November, 1785: “But mousie, thou art no thy-lane, In proving foresight may be vain: The best laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men Gang aft agley, An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain, For promis’d joy!”

despair in a false certainty of how things would unfold. It forms part of humanity's indomitable spirit — the persistence of hope in the face of often overwhelming odds. This is not celebration of foolhardy hope; it is to focus on the positive aspect of human potential. In his lifetime Tolkien's country went to war, a war he participated in, without a guarantee of success. The United Kingdom would do the same in World War II against a power as dark as any depiction of Sauron and his forces. The government and people held on to hope since to do nothing was to surrender. A statement that is equally applicable here comes from a study of theology and Tolkien: "Living by Faith includes the call to something greater than cowardly self-preservation."²⁰⁵ That reality was infused into Tolkien's sub-creation *The Lord of the Rings*.

The second song which Frodo heard Galadriel sing is given in Elvish and in prose translation. It reiterates a sense of loss for a former home, an Eden for which Elves in exile on Middle-Earth continue to long for in a return. This is that longing which Tolkien tried to explain as a draw within us to return to the Creator in whose presence we are in paradise, the proverbial Garden of Eden. Separation and loss are linked to hope. The latter comes to fulfillment through achieving co-inherence which is the fullest indwelling of God's Presence in us. [The term was originally used by the Patristic writers to discuss the presence of both divinity and mortality in the person of Jesus, and later to the relationship of the Persons of the Trinity within the one Godhead.] The image of Varda in Galadriel's song had attributes of the Virgin Mary according to Tolkien's own commentaries:

"... beneath the blue vaults of Varda wherein the stars tremble in the song of her voice, holy and queenly. Who now shall fill the cup for me? For now the Kindler, Varda, The Queen of

²⁰⁵ This quote is often mistakenly attributed to Tolkien. It comes from Bruner and Ware's *Finding God in the Lord of the Rings*: pg. 40

the Stars, from Mount Everwhite has uplifted her hands like a cloud, and all paths are drowned in shadow ...”²⁰⁶

This is the Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star, of the Catholic hymn by whom one may seek assistance in observance of the virtues and who participates in the leading to the Creator. Galadriel’s lines speak of a past transgression which obscures the way between the figure of Varda and the Elven exiles. This is not to claim a similarity with the teaching of Original Sin but it does call for a reconciliation being offered from beyond the Sundering Seas just as humanity was offered reconciliation beyond its own ability by way of the Incarnation. Galadriel who was portrayed in *The Lord of the Rings* as a person of power, wisdom and the special attributes of one who had dwelt in Aman the Blessed Realm becomes in her song a figure of potent poignancy in the words of distress.

Transgression and redemption form the basis of the next significant poem of the text which was composed by Aragorn and Legolas to honour the fallen Boromir who died defending Pippin and Merry against the Orcs. In giving his life Boromir offered a penance for having tried to wrest the Ring from Frodo on Amon Hen. Here three points of the compass are addressed with the omission of the East where Sauron dwelt. The opening lines are to the winds of each direction while the final section summarized his death and funeral rites:

“Beneath Amon Hen I heard his cry. There
many foes he fought.
His cloven shield, his broken sword, they
to the water brought.
His head so proud, his face so fair,
his limbs they laid to rest;
And Rauros, golden Rauros-falls, bore

²⁰⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “Farewell to Lorien”: pg. 398

him upon its breast.
'OBoromir! The Tower of Guard shall
ever northward gaze
To Rauros, golden Rauros-falls, until
the end of days.'"²⁰⁷

Behind these lines one may suggest that Tolkien is borrowing from the story of the Germanic Odin's two messenger ravens - Hugin and Munin - Thought and Memory, who brought him news of all that was transpiring in the world. They flew on the winds of Middengard (Middle-Earth) just as the winds in the paean to Boromir were asked for news.²⁰⁸

Aragorn's brief plaintiff verse to Gondor is packed with allusion : "West wind blew there" - links the song for Boromir to his home city and denotes the understanding that blessings came from the West beyond which dwelt the gods; the Silver Tree of Gondor was a tangible link to the two great trees of Aman - Telperion and Silperion - which produced the light of the world before the creation of the sun and moon. It may be a stretch of connection to include the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Knowledge but the imagery is suggestive. There is at the least the idea of a hoped for restored idyllic state for Gondor. Trees were a favourite image of Tolkien's as seen in the Party Tree, Old Man Willow, trees for refuge and the Silver Tree, and the soon to be discussed Tree-men, the Ents of Fangorn Forest.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Two Towers": "The Departure of Boromir": pg. 438

²⁰⁸ Donald A. MacKenzie, *Teutonic Myth and Legend* (London: Gresham Publishing,): pg. 26: *As Odin sat brooding and listening in Asgard two ravens perched on his shoulder. Their names are Hugin, which is "reflection", and Munin, which means "memory". When day dawned Odin sent them forth, and they returned at eve to whisper in his ears all the doings of men.*

²⁰⁹ See, for example, Shelly Saguro and Deborah Cogan Thacker, "Tolkien and Trees" [Chapter 9: pp. 138-54] 2013 [independent.academia.edu]

The next set of poems is a transition into the adventures of Merry and Pippin following their fortuitous escape from the Orcs who had captured them at Parth Galen. At first glance the reader may think that one is being taken into another Bombadil type distraction to lighten up the mood of the narrative. It is true that the tenor of the text changes but here one is reminded that the narrative is coming from rustic hobbits. Treebeard alias Fangorn is the great Ent who opens up the mythology of his race and sets the stage for intervention in the corruption of Saruman. Whereas Bombadil is a singular character (“oldest and fatherless” according to the Elves) the Ents were beings awakened by the Elves to speech. That latter faculty raised the tree-people to a free race with its own culture; this is in keeping with Tolkien’s emphasis on words as carrying cultural meaning and as a means of shaping that culture. Treebeard let the hobbits know that the Ents shaped their own special speech suited to their great length of lives and utter patience. Like hobbits they were connected to the earth and were much attached to place in spite of the male Ents former habit of roaming. Their role as shepherds of the trees suited Tolkien’s great regard for living trees while within the text of *The Lord of the Rings* this gave them an affinity with the Istari as having responsibilities to others.

Treebeard imparts to Merry and Pippin two poems in the common speech. The seemingly simplistic lines meant to teach young Ents about living creatures reminds one of Stuart chapbooks for instructing children yet there is a much older lineage for the giving of names recalls the Irish seers verse invoking the elements and creatures on the claiming of Ireland. Thus Treebeard’s poem is transformed into a celebration of nature.

“Beaver the builder, buck the leaper,
Bear bee-hunter, boar the fighter,

Hound is hungry, hare is fearful”²¹⁰

There is in “Bear bee-hunter” the idea of kenning from Old English verse where a descriptive is used to refer to something in poetic language. Similarly the four free peoples are given short alternate designations:

“Eldest of all, the elf-children;
Dwarf the delver, dark are his houses;
Ent the earthborn, old as mountains;
Man the mortal, master of horses”²¹¹

Hobbits are added to the list at Pippin’s suggestion as “Half-grown hobbits, the hole-dwellers.”

They have become part of the Ent world narrative.

After two short lines of poetry in Entish which refer to Lothlorien there follows Treebeard’s recitation of the song of the Ents and the Entwives. This dialogue versification follows a representative Ent and Entwife through the four seasons. It might be compared to the differences between spirits of agriculture and a spirit of the woods and hillsides. It provides the most extensive history of the Ents for readers aside from narrative glimpses. As observed previously it is the Free Peoples who are shown regularly making use of verse and song sub-creation. The very end of the poem the Ent and Entwine sing these lines together:

“Together we will take the road that
leads into the West,
And far away will find a land

²¹⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “Treebeard”: pg. 485

²¹¹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “Treebeard”: pg. 485. Cf Tolkien’s commentary on descriptive words in Anglo-Saxon of a style which fell out of use following the Norman Conquest such as *sundwudu* for “flood-timber” or “swimming-timber”, ie. a ship: John R. Clark Hill, trans. *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment* rev. by C. L. Wrenn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954): pg. xiii. See also: Lee M. Hollander, trans. *The Poetic Edda* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1962]: pg. xxi

where both our hearts may rest.”²¹²

West is the favoured direction for thither dwelt the gods of Aman, therefore to go West is to seek fulfilment. This “right orientation” has instilled an awareness of Tolkien’s guiding virtues. Treebeard himself is shown as possessing knowledge of and practices some of the virtues. He exercised both temperance and prudence in not disposing of the two hobbits on first sight (though he said that his first impression was that they were orcs) with the consequence that both hobbits and Ent were able to assist each other.

The two final sets of verse from the Ents occur in the context of the Entmoot. The “hasty” Ent named Bregalad sang for Pippin and Merry a lament for the passing of rowan trees destroyed by orcs from Orthanc where Saruman ruled. As such it is a witness to injustice against living things:

“O rowan dead, upon your head your hair is dry and grey:
Your crown is spilled, your voice is stilled, for ever and a day.”²¹³

Ents as shepherds of the trees decided in light of news from the hobbits, as well as Treebeard’s long rumination on Saruman’s designs of power, to take direct action. Their marching song with its exclamations of doom and war needs to be recognized as being more than a form of retribution. Doom in the sense used here is the older one meaning judgement rather than the popular one today of impending disaster. The famous Doomsday Book survey of England was so called for the fact that it was so detailed that one might imagine that it was imitating the day of divine judgement on the Last Day when all sins and righteous acts would be accounted for in

²¹² *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “Treebeard”: pg. 499

²¹³ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “Treebeard”: pg. 505

each individual.²¹⁴ Saruman was to have justice rendered by the very ones who had suffered injustice at his direction:

“To land of gloom with tramp of doom,
with roll of drum, we come, we come:
To Isengard with doom we come!
With doom we come, with doom we come!”²¹⁵

Justice and judgment are now being re-emphasized for the narrative as it unfolds, and returns to the sequence with Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli and the returned Gandalf. Before them lie prophecy, testing in battle and the righting of wrongs. They participate with the warriors of Rohan in conflict with the troops and allies of Saruman at the Battle of the Hornburg while the Ents are assailing Isengard where Saruman has remained. The poetry refocuses and re-energizes the tale as the text progresses closer toward the confrontations with Sauron’s armies. In a parallel fashion just as the Tower of Orthanc at Isengard will fall one sees the forecast of what will become of Sauron’s fastness of Barad-dur. This will be the Doomsday for Middle-Earth.

The reunion of Gandalf with Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli at the same cliff face where Treebeard met Merry and Pippin was the occasion for the wizard to deliver verses from Galadriel to the man and elf in lines invoking both the past and future possibilities:

[To Aragorn] “... But dark is the path appointed for thee:
The Dead watch the road that leads to the Sea.”²¹⁶

[To Legolas] “... If thou hearest the cry of the gull on the shore,

²¹⁴ Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English* rev. ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990): pg. 297: *dom* - judgement, *domdaeg* - day of judgement

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 507

²¹⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The White Rider”: pg. 524

Thy heart shall then rest in the forest no more.”²¹⁷

The former is a destiny laid out for Aragorn should he have the fortitude to pursue it. Legolas is to prepare for a transformation that will take him from Middle-Earth. Curiously Gimli receives only a prose message though closer examination shows poetic influence:

“To Gimli son of Gloin ... give the Lady’s greeting.
Lockbearer, wherever thou goest my thought goes with thee.
But have a care to lay thine axe to the right tree!”²¹⁸

Gimli may have been advised to practice due temperance in action - he would have attacked Gandalf before the latter revealed himself for fear that it was Saruman instead - but of greater interest here is Galadriel’s act of *caritas* toward one of a race with whom there had been mixed relationships by the elves. It was a defining reciprocal flow of that virtue which likewise strengthened the bond of friendship between Legolas and Gimli.

Tolkien resets the poetry to reintroduce the idea of antiquity. Lines recited by Aragorn commemorated the founding of the Rhohirrim domain with the arrival of that people under the banner of Eorl the Young. It harkens to echoes of Anglo-Saxon verse with *kenning* and offered Tolkien a space to enjoy creating by impression from the forms of past composition. It opens with five repetitions of “Where” and four lines of answer while at the same time keeping a fast paced flow of words evocative of a rapid speed on horseback: “Where now the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing? Where is the helm and the Hauberk, and the bright hair flowing? ... The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow. Who shall

²¹⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The White Rider”: pg. 524

²¹⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The White Rider”: pg. 525

gather the smoke of the dead wood burning, Or behold the flowing years from the Sea returning?”²¹⁹ There follows at the scene in Meduseld the lines spoken by Gandalf in retort to Wormtongue; these were in praise of Galadriel [the Lady of the Golden Wood]. Surprisingly he openly refers to her ring which preserves from corruption without specifically calling it one of the three great Elven rings: “Galadriel! Galadriel! Clear is the water of your well; White is the star in your white hand; Unmarred, unstained is leaf and land In Dwimordene, in Lorien, More fair than thoughts of Mortal Men.”²²⁰ Wormtongue, who was the secret servant and spy of Saruman, had described Galadriel as a dangerous sorceress; Gandalf revealed that the truth was that Wormtongue was the untrustworthy one who cast all truth into shadow.

Thereafter the text of *The Lord of the Rings* has only small passages of verse until the scene turns to the journey of Frodo, Sam and Gollum/Smeagol. The first is the battle cry of King Theoden aroused from the enchantment of Wormtongue with the promise that the tide was to turn against Saruman: “Arise now, arise, Riders of Theoden! Dire deeds awake, dark is it eastward. Let horse be bridled, horn be sounded! Forth Eorlingas!”²²¹ The next three verse sets are all given after the Battle of the Hornburg and pertain to the Ents:

“Ere iron was found or tree was hewn,
When young was mountain under moon;
Ere ring was made, or wrought was woe,
It walked the forest long ago.”²²²

Though Isengard be strong and hard, as cold as

²¹⁹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The King of the Golden Hall”: pg. 530

²²⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The King of the Golden Hall”: pg. 536

²²¹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The King of the Golden Hall”: pg. 540

²²² *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The Road to Isengard”: pg. 567

stone and bare as bone,
We go, we go, we go to war, to hew the
stone and break the door!”²²³

“Ents the earthborn, old as mountains,
the wide-walkers, water drinking;
and hungry as hunters, the Hobbit children,
the laughing-folk, the little people.”²²⁴

These “archaeological” fragments address the ancient past, the present and change as well as new relationships. The friendship between Treebeard and the two hobbits reflects the unusual bonding between Gimli and Legolas, or Gimli and Galadriel; it suggests that the removal of darkness which impairs hearts and sight will heal divisions; it is suggestive of a restored paradisiacal vision.

This section closes with Gandalf’s recitation of ancient lore to Pippin on their ride to Minas Tirith: “Tall ships and tall kings, Three times three, What brought them from the foundered land, Over the flowing sea? Seven stars and seven stones and one white tree.”²²⁵ Again one has Tolkien using text to suggest deep roots of history and a premonition of the role of the star image, the Palantir and White Tree in the conclusion of the great story of *The Lord of the Rings*. There is the temptation to identify this tree which was the symbol of the kings of Gondor with the Cross the latter being often described as a “tree” on which “hung the saviour of the world” (as is recited in Catholic liturgy on Good Friday), or the older Anglo-Saxon verse known to us as *The Dream of the Rood*. The latter may be nearer the imagery in Tolkien’s legend in his knowledge as an Anglo-Saxon scholar. Here Christ is depicted as a youthful warrior which has

²²³ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “Flotsam and Jetsam”: pg. 588

²²⁴ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The Voice of Saruman”: pg. 609

²²⁵ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The Palantir”: pg. 620

analogies with Aragorn whose success over Sauron would restore the kingly symbol of the White Tree. The Rood vocabulary is compared by Jeannette C. Brock with similar descriptives used in Beowulf (king, hero, valiant warrior).²²⁶ Tolkien does not equate Aragorn with Christ but does depict Christ-like qualities in Aragorn's embodiment of the virtues. Consequently Gandalf's short refrain ending with the White Tree is also prescient of Frodo's role which is about to unfold in the next part of the narrative.

The shift to the struggle by Frodo and Sam to find a way into Mordor and their addition of Gollum/ Smeagol to their number is marked by only three long poems, none of which is of high drama, yet bracketed with brief lines referring to deeper matters. Gollum's two sets of rhyme serve to convert him into the Smeagol figure who was much more akin to hobbit kind. They serve as well to show what Smeagol had lost in obsession with the Ring, and offer fleeting glimpses of what might have been regained had the Ring not so devoured his personality. His word-portrait of the harsh lands he has journeyed over depicts a desire for water and food - namely, fish; that in turn brings back the riddle challenge in his encounter years before with Bilbo. This gnomic verse (inspired by Anglo-Saxon models) is a touch-stone for readers for it recalls riddles of childhood and in so doing echoes the familiar:

“Alive without breath;
as cold as death;
never thirsting, ever drinking;
clad in mail, never clinking”²²⁷

The antiquity of the structure re-emphasizes the quasi-medieval feel to *The Lord of the Rings*.

²²⁶ Jeannette C. Brock, “The Dream of the Rood and the Image of Christ in the Early Middle Age” *The Hanover Historical Review* 6 (Spring 1998) [history.hanover.edu]

²²⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The Passage of the Marshes”: pg. 646

Sam is given the final long set of verses, his poem on the “Oliphant,” which does conjure up Smeagol’s own riddle verse:

“Grey as a mouse,
Big as a house.
Nose like a snake,
I make the earth shake ...”²²⁸

Sam the versifier is capable of inventive lines, humour and his own mode of creativity. He remains down to earth with an inner optimism which will carry him through great trials. This optimism reinforces his determination to stay by Frodo come what may - the practice as it were of the virtue of fortitude.

The three remaining recitations all relate to the quest and conclude with Sam invoking aid in Elvish - a distinct sign that he is to be more closely identified with Frodo’s ultimate mission. Gollum’s capture and promise to lead the hobbits to Mordor contain’s Frodo’s injunction to remember the malignant power of Sauron’s creation: “One Ring to rule them all and in the Darkness bind them.”²²⁹ Gollum insists on swearing by the Precious which Frodo intuitively will end in Gollum’s betrayal (echoes of Christ’s words at the Last Supper that one among his disciples will betray him). One artist working in the Byzantine style to illustrate *The Lord of the Rings* strikingly invokes such reflections in his drawing; Gollum is kneeling as Frodo on a rock above with a hand raised is clearly to be identified with a Christ-like figure; Sam as a disciple stands to one side as witness. The medieval Byzantine iconographic medium is quite different from the

²²⁸ Ibid.: “The Black Gate is Closed”: pp. 672-73; Geoffrey Chaucer uses a variant of “Oliphant” in *The Canterbury Tales* in his parody verse “Sir Thopas” where that knight was said to desire the elf-queen but was thwarted in an encounter with Sir Olifaunt (Elephant) in the “Countree of the Faerie”

²²⁹ *The Two Towers*: “The Taming of Smeagol”

usual interpretation which harkens to medieval northern European artwork which can be too heavily reliant on warrior imagery at the expense of the richer symbolism to be found in Tolkien's writing. The former adds the aspect of hagiography [inflated saints biographies] to *The Lord of the Rings* and in so doing perceives the theology of the author which undergirds the narrative.²³⁰ Moreover this scene with Gollum is crucial for what happens later on Mount Doom.

The next verse occurs at Frodo's interrogation by Faramir in Ithilien. Here the former is put to the test when Faramir repeats part of the message which sent Boromir to Imladris to solicit aid for Gondor: "Seek for the Sword that was Broken. In Imladris it dwells."²³¹ Here the image of the king is reiterated though Frodo wisely refrains from that full conclusion before Faramir whose father ruled Gondor as Steward. The reader, on the other hand, is given a repeated leitmotif to link the mission of Aragorn to Frodo's quest.

It is Sam who utters lines that finishes verses in this part of the narrative. Standing over Frodo after Shelob's attack one beholds Sam challenging the great spider creature uttering words which come to him by inspiration: "Gilthoniel A Elbereth! A Elbereth Gilthoniel, o menial palan-diriel, le nallon si di'nguruthos! A tiro nin, Fanuilos!"²³² Elbereth, queen of the Valar, represents divine agency among the Elves. Therefore Sam is calling on divine aid to fight an agent of darkness. Shelob as a descendant of Ungoliant is to Sauron what the latter was to Morgoth - uncontrollable lust for light and life to turn all into darkness meant to serve the needs solely for herself. It is no wonder that Gollum worshipped her for he recognized in Shelob the same

²³⁰ Illustrator Sergei Iukhimov resides in Odessa, and has illustrated the Russian 2 volume edition of *Lord of the Rings* (1993) and *The Silmarillion*.

²³¹ *The Two Towers*: "Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit"

²³² *Lord of the Rings*: "The Two Towers": "The Choices of Master Samwise": pp. 756-57

obsession that he had for the Ring. Ungoliant had brought darkness to Valinor, the abode of the gods, by destroying the trees of light at Morgoth's instigation. It would be the Valar who most understood the threat of utter darkness; Elbereth as a potent name among them was in its utterance both an encouragement to Sam and a warning to Shelob. This was Sam's St. George and the Dragon moment. Defeat of Shelob is a clue to the reader that the great darkness of Sauron himself may not be utterly unassailable. Tolkien who confessed to giving Elbereth attributes of Mary may even be suggesting lines from the Memorare (a Catholic prayer to the Virgin): "Remember o gracious Virgin Mary that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided..." Though the story can carry on without the reader being aware of this possible connection the very use of Elvish (Tolkien's "Latin" in *The Lord of the Rings*) signifies for the reader that something special is being spoken. It is this hymn to Elbereth which will bring an end to all poems in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Aside from the prophetic lines of Malbeth the Seer which applied to Aragorn, the next set of verses all concern King Theoden, Rohan and his heir Eomer.²³³ Tolkien begins with the song of Rohan which was to be interpreted as having been composed at some time long after the great muster and ride to Minas Tirith - it gives a vivid description of the muster, the route, and the grim determination of the host under Theoden.²³⁴ Again it is a hint of the outcome for who would

²³³ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Passing of the Grey Company": pg. 812: [Malbeth the Seer]: *Over the land there lies a long shadow, westward reaching wings of darkness... From the North shall he come, need shall drive him, he shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead.*

²³⁴ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Muster of Rohan": pp. 834-35: *From dark Dunharrow in the dim morning with thane and captain rode Thengel's son...*

compose it if the battle was not successful? Tolkien follows this poem with present tense verse to carry along the action: Theoden's rallying cry at the edge of battle before Minas Tirith,²³⁵ Eomer's memorial spoken over the fallen king's body,²³⁶ lines for Theoden's steed Snowmane,²³⁷ and Eomer's own defiant verse when battle looked to be turning against him.²³⁸ Then Tolkien rounds out the Battle of the Pelennor Fields with another poem made long afterwards by another Rohan bard.²³⁹ This structure can be easily overlooked if one gives attention only to the prose narrative; yet it speaks of the marvellous coherency of structure the author gave to his work. The opening verse of the first poem contains the fateful phrase "Forth rode the king, fear behind him, fate before him. Fealty kept he; oaths he had taken, all fulfilled them."²⁴⁰ Tolkien borrowing from Northern mythology highlights the importance of oaths both in the necessity to keep them and the dire consequences for failing to do so. An oath is in effect a covenant either between two persons, or between oneself and a deity. Aragorn would offer a chance for the dead oath breakers

²³⁵ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Ride of the Rhorrim": pg. 870: *Arise, arise, Riders of Theoden! Fell deeds awake: fire and slaughter! spear shall be shaken, shield be splintered, a sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises! Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor! and Ride now, ride now, Ride to Gondor!*

²³⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Battle of the Pelennor Fields": pg. 877: *Mourn not overmuch! Mighty was the fallen ... War now calls us!*

²³⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Battle of the Pelennor Fields": pg. 878: *Faithful servant yet master's bane, Lightfoot's foal, swift Snowmane*

²³⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Battle of the Pelennor Fields": pg. 880: *Out of doubt, out of dark to the day's rising I came singing in the sun, sword unsheathing. To hope's end I rode and to heart's breaking: Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!*

²³⁹ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Battle of the Pelennor Fields": pp. 882-83: *We heard of the horns in the hill ringing, the swords shining in the South-kingdom ... red fell the dew in Rammas Echor*

²⁴⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: "The Return of the King": "The Muster of Rohan": pg. 835

of Dunharrow to redeem themselves by joining him in battle²⁴¹; Gollum took an oath “ by the Precious” to serve the Master of the Ring (and ultimately betrayed Frodo which set the stage for his own death)²⁴²; while Elrond cautioned Gimli against lightly entering into an oath which might bind one beyond one’s endurance.²⁴³ King Theoden kept the oath between the realms of Gondor and Rohan as heir of the original oath-taker in the royal lineage. Though he died in battle he did so with honour — that is to say — he knew of the risks but did not flinch for to do nothing was to surrender to ultimate defeat in the end were Sauron to be victorious. Sacrifice was the potential in his particular oath fulfillment. It was a wrapping up of fortitude, faith and hope in that which he might not personally live to see come to fruition. That was what Tolkien and his contemporaries faced during World War I; it was what Frodo came to realize when he returned temporarily to the Shire before sailing into the West. Eomer’s short refrain combined the foregoing and the spirit of Northernness:

“Out of doubt, out of dark to the day’s rising
I came singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.
To hope’s end I rode and to heart’s breaking:
Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!”²⁴⁴

In classic style Tolkien depicted Eomer readying himself to die rather than accept defeat before the enemy. It was the arrival of the fleet up the great river under Aragorn which saved the day. In a vein similar to Eomer’s verse the concluding verse celebrated those who died that day on the

²⁴¹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Passing of the Grey Company”: pp. 819, 821

²⁴² *Lord of the Rings*: “The Two Towers”: “The Taming of Smeagol”: pp. 642-43

²⁴³ *Lord of the Rings*: “Fellowship of the Ring”: “The Ring Goes South”: pg. 298

²⁴⁴ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Battle of the Pelennor Fields”: pg. 880

Pelennor Fields yet all had entered into the battle with the same determination as King Theoden:
“Death in the morning and at day’s ending lords took and lowly.”²⁴⁵

Returning to the initial prophetic poem which the sons of Elrond conveyed to Aragorn one has again a framing verse which links up to the post-Pelennor Fields battle. Malbeth the Seer’s lines evoke the threat of Sauron while offering a role for those who broke their trust (the Dead) to redeem themselves “at the Stone of Erech” when called by the heir of the original one who had called for them (that is, a king). The verse emphasizes Aragorn’s kingship which is in due time attested to when he can summon up the Dead and rally them at Erech. Stones have been used as symbols of worship, places of sacrifice, memorialization of the ancestors and boundary markers. They can mark as well covenants as in Middle Eastern covenant stones set up between kingdoms denoting treaties. Certainly the New Testament has numerous allusions to rocks/stones (ie Peter the Rock). The Stone of Scone has long been used as a coronation stone for the kings and queens of England and earlier in Scotland. This prophetic verse of Malbeth is matched in the aftermath of the Battle of the Pelennor Fields when Aragorn secretly comes into Minas Tirith to assist in the healing of those in danger of dying from the Black Breath of the Nazgul, or as it was stated in the lore recalled by Ioreth: “When the black breath blows and death’s shadow grows and all lights pass, come athelas ! come athelas ! Life to the dying In the king’s hand lying!”²⁴⁶ The first verse spoke of redemption and the second speaks of restoration. Poetry has been used once more to add structure to narrative.

²⁴⁵ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Battle of the Pelennor Fields”: pg. 883

²⁴⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Houses of Healing”: pg. 899

Tolkien did not confine his “bookend” poetry to Aragorn. Legolas the Elf is given two more sets of lines - one before the final battle before the Morannon and the other at the Field of Cormallen.²⁴⁷ Both compositions referred to the sea (calling up Galadriel’s warning to Legolas) and the latter to that which lay beyond — the great home of Elvendom along the coast of Aman the Blessed Realm: “Sweet are the voices in the Lost Isle calling, In Eressea in Elvenhome that no man can discover, Where the leaves fall not: land of my people forever!”²⁴⁸ It reminds one of Tolkien’s comments on the sense of loss, that being in exile, which we experience resulting from separation from a “Garden of Eden” transcendental state which is the loss of full harmony with the Creator. Out of that sense of loss is the harbouring of hope for a restoration of communion. In a pre-Incarnational setting Tolkien cannot make direct allusions to the Eden paradise; on the other hand he elicits the atmosphere which can accompany relevant connections. Hence the verse of Legolas though fully comprehensible within the sub-creation of Middle-Earth is more than fantasy narrative.

There is only one song-poem within the entire narrative of the sojourn in the Land of Mordor between the Cave of Shelob and the rescue on Mount Doom. The lines come from Samwise Gamgee - the Every Man / Every Woman voice - whose song in the Tower of Cirith Ungol is a defiance of despair and the affirmation of hope in the face of overwhelming circumstances. It could be the song of the foot soldier in the trenches of World War I, or of

²⁴⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Last Debate”: pg. 909: *Silver flow the streams from Celos to Erui ... In the wind from the Sea!* ; *ibid.*: “The Field of Cormallen”: pp. 992-93: *To the Sea, to the Sea! The white gulls are crying ... In Eressea, in Elvenhome that no man can discover, Where the leaves fall not: land of my people forever!*

²⁴⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Field of Cormallen”: pg. 993

civilians caught in the military invasion of their town; its hope lies in the metaphysical reality.

Sam's second stanza is particularly poignant:

“Though here at journey's end I lie
in darkness buried deep,
beyond all towers strong and high,
beyond all mountains steep,
above all shadows rides the Sun
and Stars for ever dwell;
I will not say the Day is done,
nor bid the Stars farewell.”²⁴⁹

The lines in their reference to strength (towers and mountains) opens the space for the overlooked, the ordinary person, one who is seemingly powerless to both hope and to achieve something which does not reside in power of a Sauron or armies. It brings back into focus Elrond's observation at the Council in this being the hour of the Shire folk. The hope which Sam used to carry him on to aid Frodo in the quest to Mount Doom gave utterance to one last prediction even in the face of what they both believed was to be certain death in the destruction of Mount Doom: “Now comes the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom.”²⁵⁰ As with the Rohan poems this is an instance of projection into the future reflecting of a past event. It foretells for the reader the scene at Cormallen when the minstrel (a scop in Anglo-Saxon literature) does indeed create a song to honour Nine-fingered Frodo.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Tower of Cirith Ungol”: pg. 943

²⁵⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Field of Cormallen”: pg. 987

²⁵¹ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Field of Cormallen”: pg. 990

The great song of the eagle to the people of Minis Tirith on the downfall of Sauron is overlaid in several potential meanings beyond Tolkien's Middle-Earth narrative.²⁵² Symbolically the apostle John is portrayed as an eagle whose Gospel opens with the great hymn to the Logos - In the beginning was the Word - which represents the second person of the Trinity (Christ) and the creative Word of God. At the level of mythology the eagle inhabits the top of the World Tree (Yggdrasil) according to Norse beliefs; it is also the sworn enemy of the dragon which gnaws at one of the three roots of Yggdrasil. ["Gospel" or "Good News" in this case is the announcement of the overthrow of the agency of darkness and death with the triumph of the forces of light.]²⁵³ One may note as well the similarity of the eagle's song to the refrains of several Psalms of the Old Testament.²⁵⁴

Subsequent to the foregoing the remaining few poem/ song verses draw the reader back to the roots of the story and the reminder of healing beyond the Sea. The final song for King Theoden is one of honoured remembrance:

“Out of doubt, out of dark, to the day's rising
he rode singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.
Hope he rekindled, and in hope ended;
over death, over dread, over doom lifted
out of loss, out of life, unto long glory.”²⁵⁵

²⁵² *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Steward and the King”: pg. 999: *Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor... Sing and rejoice ... Sing and be glad ... Sing all ye people!*

²⁵³ MacKenzie, *Teutonic Myth and Legend*: pp. 14-15

²⁵⁴ Psalm 95, 97, 99 [Douay-Rheims edition]

²⁵⁵ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “Many Partings”: pp. 1012-13

The virtue of hope is praised while Tolkien waits to see how many readers recognize the Triune invocations of four lines [doubt, dark, day's; singing, sun, sword; death, dread, doom; loss, life, long] and the duplication of hope in the middle line. Both Bilbo and Frodo are given variations on the former's old song with reference to rest and a westward journey:

“The Road goes ever on and one
Out from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
Let others follow it who can!
Let them a journey new begin,
But I at last with weary feet
Will turn towards the lighted inn,
My evening-rest and sleep to meet.”²⁵⁶ [Bilbo]

Still round the corner there may wait
A new road or a secret gate;
And though I oft have passed them by,
A day will come at last when I
Shall take the hidden paths that run
West of the Moon, East of the Sun.”²⁵⁷ [Frodo]

The very last verse goes to the Elves as they join Frodo and Sam on the way to the Grey Havens:

“A! Elbereth Gilthoniel!
silivren penna miriel
o menel aglar elenath
Gilthoniel, A! Elbereth!
We still remember, we who dwell,
In this far land beneath the trees
The star-light on the Western Seas.”²⁵⁸

The narrative ends on words of promise and hope leaving behind the dark words concerning the great rings to be replaced with the light.

²⁵⁶ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “Many Partings”: pg. 1024

²⁵⁷ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Grey Havens”: pg. 1066

²⁵⁸ *Lord of the Rings*: “The Return of the King”: “The Grey Havens”: pg. 1066

Poetry in *The Lord of the Rings* taken together is both essential to the main narrative text and functions as a parallel “book.” There is precedent as well in British historical studies where poems serve as document sources for past events. Poems relating to the late Yorkist and early Tudor periods are treated frequently as sites where fragments of accurate descriptions survive. Tolkien has tapped into another strain of literary genre to “authenticate” *The Lord of the Rings* as the translation of an ancient text. It is his inventiveness which enables him to claim the result as his own. In turn he makes the varied inspirations of the poetic sections serve the main narrative of virtues and pilgrim goal.

Thomas Aquinas in contrast to Tolkien did not purport to write a work of fiction or even a heroic poem similar to the *Chanson de Roland* or *Jerusalem Delivered*. His narrative nonetheless was concerned with the true myth of the Gospel. The hymns and sequences attributed to him are expressions of that reality, a distillation of the theological works and significant aides to Catholic education in the faith. Here is the kindred spirit with Tolkien. One loses something of the poetry in translations from the original Latin though the better versions echo the intent to be aide memoire to an aural culture.

There is theology in the lines of an Aquinas hymn. Their strength, though, lies in the images projected fixing themselves in a person’s mind’s eye. That power persists in the continued use of Thomist hymns in present-day Latin Rite liturgical celebrations. Aquinas revealed himself to be a fine word portraitist. He involves the various senses just as the divine liturgy does with changes in bodily posture (standing, kneeling, etc.). This technique reinforces the messages in the poetry. The sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi (written ca. 1264) -

Lauda Sion Salvatorem - suggests procession, vocal acclamation, seeing by sight and by faith and exaltation of the eucharistic doctrine.

“See today before us laid
The living and life-giving Bread
Theme for praise and joy profound

The same which at the sacred board
Was, by our Incarnate Lord,
Giv’n to His Apostles round

...
On this festival divine
Which records the origin
Of the glorious Eucharist”

More solemn was the combined hymn-sequence for Holy Thursday evening at the commemoration of the institution of the Eucharist - Pange Lingua Gloriosi [Sing my tongue the glory ...] and Tantum Ergo [So Great a Sacrament]:

“Pange Lingua Gloriosi
Corporis mysterium
Sanguinisque pretiosi
Quem in mundi pretium
Fructus ventris generosi
Rex effudit gentium

Verbum caro, panem verum
Verbo carnem efficit
Fitque sanguis Christi merum
Et si sensus deficit
Ad firmandum cor sincerum
Sola fides sufficit

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur certuni
Et antiquum document
Novo cedet ritui
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui

Acclaim, my tongue, this mystery
Of glorious Body and precious Blood
Which the King of nations shed for us
A noble womb's sole fruitful bud

The Word in flesh makes true bread flesh,
The Blood of Christ then come from wine.
Though senses fail to see this truth,
Faith will make pure hearts incline

So great a sacrament therefore,
Let us revere while kneeling down.
Let old laws held to this new rite
Let faith, not sense, conviction ground"²⁵⁹

Word, sign and reality coincide in the medieval mind of Aquinas. The Incarnate Word by the spoken word became the Word itself in the eucharistic presence. The phrases "This is my body ..." "this my blood..." were believed to actually participate in the original speaking of the words of Christ (words of institution) at the Last Supper with the same consequence - that the body and blood became present under the form of bread and wine. The poem-prayer hymn *Adoro Te Devote, Laten Deitas* [Devoutly I Adore You, Hidden Diety] expressed that understanding:

"Visus, tactus, gustus, in te fatilure;
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.
Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filus
Nil hoc verbo veritatis verius

Sight and touch and taste here fail;
Hearing only can be believed.
I trust what God's own Son has said.
Truth from truth is best received."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Robert Anderson and Johann Moser, trans. and ed., *Devoutly I Adore Thee: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1993)

²⁶⁰ Anderson and Moser, *Devoutly I Adore Thee*: pp. 68-69

The spirituality of presence was not neglected in Aquinas's prayers. His words extolled the True Presence in the eucharist sacrament. Simultaneously he taught the Church's ancient belief in the mystical body of Christ whereby believers were joined together in a pre-eschatological communion. That is, the interconnectedness of the faithful was a reality which at its deepest level meant that whatever one does affects all for all are connected through the love of Christ. Beauty of expression was a necessary concomitant in the hymns since they were being offered to the source of all Beauty and Truth, that is, God. Olivier-Thomas Venard has written on the significance of words in faith to approach Aquinas's poetics since Thomas himself has written sparsely on poetry as a subject save to disparage it.²⁶¹ The latter may seem at odds with Aquinas's own poetry legacy but Venard notes that the context of that attitude was linked to classical poetry which had doctrine in conflict with Christian teaching.²⁶² Scripture has extensive examples of spiritual hymns and poetry while there is a long legacy of Christian composition. We cannot attain in our words the true Beauty of God but to borrow from Tolkien we nonetheless by sub-creation attempt a mirror of that beauty in narrative and poetic utterances.

The preceding hymns of Aquinas make much of how faith is required when the ordinary senses fail to apprehend the metaphysical reality. Faith, Hope and Charity are intertwined in the words; we dare to have faith and hope in the traditions of the Church as handed on from the Apostles while the love of God flows out to us in the sacraments. That is not to say that God is confined to the latter in order to reach us. Rather it is the centrality of the eucharistic gift of

²⁶¹ Olivier-Thomas Venard, "Religious Imagination and Poetic Audacity in Thomas Aquinas" in *Poetry and The Religious Imagination: The Power of the Word*, ed. Francesca Bugliani Knox and David Lonsdale (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2015): pp. 67-90

²⁶² Venard, "Religious Imagination": pg. 67

God's own self which is the meeting point between Creator and creature. The virtues do not sit in isolation as abstract entities. They are descriptors of ourselves and the means of travelling along the pilgrim pathway. The divine Verbo - the Logos of John's Gospel - is God speaking Himself; in turn the Word spoke the words of institution to offer the gift of the transformed eucharistic elements - bread and wine become flesh and blood.

Reality behind the words is what Tolkien understood in sub-creation and his idea of eucatastrophe. Aquinas understood that words possessed power not because we utter them; it is words given by God and so given back to Him that differentiates them from mundane usage. Hence Tolkien's fantasy writing and poems are sanctioned under sub-creation and can express spirituality (the virtues and the Good) without taking on a sacerdotal function. The two sets of understanding are related for both require response from the creature made in the image of God. Certainly Aquinas's own theological and poetic writings are akin to Tolkien's for neither is equated with the eucharistic liturgy. They do echo lines from the *Summa Theologica* - "Just as it is better to illuminate than merely to shine, so to pass on what one has contemplated is better than merely to contemplate."²⁶³

²⁶³ *Summa Theologica* II - II, 188 : Sicut enim maius est illuminare quam lucere solum, ita maius est conteplata aliis tradere quam solum contemplari.

Chapter Six:

Set it down in a Book for them to Remember: Public and Cultural Response to *The Lord of the Rings*

The publication of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* occurred at a specific time and place. It is the public response and interpretation in other media contexts which projects the author's words into our own present time just as the teachings of Aquinas continue to reach us centuries after he lived. How the virtues and the Good are perceived through Tolkien's writing constitutes both a search and an act of education. Taken out of the setting of one specific faith background it may be argued does not completely vitiate the virtues message nor the spiritual impact of a desired end or telos.

Once a text has been released into the public sphere its reception, interpretation and alteration is beyond the control of the original author. Levels of knowledge among readers as to the background of a book will impact on general comprehension and individuals' level of enjoyment. The author may hope to create a narrative sufficiently in tune with a chosen audience that it will ensure that any message will be appropriately conveyed from author to reader. Not all times or places were subject to such a diverse readership. Aquinas wrote to educated scholars being formed as theologians and philosophers all of whom were raised in the world of medieval Catholicism. Tolkien by contrast writing and publishing in the mid-1950s dared to hope that he had created a long story capable of holding the attention of some who might choose to explore the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*. He was aware as an educator that not everyone was an adept in philosophy, European mythology nor even the more obvious teachings of Catholicism.

One is led back to the question of whether Tolkien in his narrative channelled Thomist Catholicism as either an overt or subliminal message. Are the virtues sufficiently illustrated in the diversity of characters in a manner likely to inspire imitation? Do readers intuit a guiding providence or spirit at work beyond Elves and the Valar? Any attempt to answer these questions must be sought out in reviews, fan literature and media forums, and attempts to re-present *The Lord of the Rings* by audio or visual means. There is the inevitable editing of text in order to accommodate time constraints on audio formats or in film. That which is kept in or out will reflect production and expected audiences for the “product.” Emphasis on technical displays and “fast action” at the expense of character portrayal and the virtues also conveys insight into cultural entertainment. For the media industry in general there is no telos beyond materialistic success, that is, financial profits. All other results are incidentals. Therefore the concern - can Tolkien’s voice qua Aquinas qua the virtues be found among the cinematic remnants?

The initial platform to start on is the response to Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* when first published in the 1950s and the transition which occurred in the 1960s during the counter-cultural revolution of the post-Beat Generation or psychedelic era. First criticisms were divided between enthusiastic endorsements by associates of the author and persons hostile to fantasy literature in general. Those who expected another *Hobbit* or a *Farmer Giles of Ham* had to adjust their vision to an adult view point. Persons astute enough to detect sagas and northern mythic material in the narrative began to understand the deeper creative abilities of Tolkien. The commentaries are worthy of note since they show how readily a story can be recast for good or ill — analogous to the parable of the sower casting seeds some into thorny ground and others into fertile soil. Curiously it was C. S. Lewis who wrote an unreserved article of praise in the

Time and Tide.²⁶⁴ [Tolkien was not fond of the former's overt didactic language in the space travel novels (Pelandra, Out of the Silent Planet and That Hideous Strength) so this was a generous act on Lewis's behalf.] Lewis saw beyond the surface of a lengthy fantasy work by his awareness of its profound literary undercurrents, innovation and symbolic language under the guise of history.

Donald Barr, writing for the New York Times reviewed *The Two Towers* in 1955.²⁶⁵ He has obviously read *The Fellowship of the Ring* and was aware of other reviews of the latter. Missing in his own commentary is the theological background to *The Lord of the Rings* yet he did capture the vision of epic tradition, the European traditions of Beowulf and the legends of the ring of the Nibelungen - all with a distinctive English cultural cast. Interestingly there is reference to Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens - hugely popular in their day - and the post-World War I abstractionism of the modern novel; he posited that those intellectuals who were praising Tolkien longed for something more: "That "The Lord of the Rings" should appeal to readers of the most austere taste suggests that they too now long for the old, forthright, virile kind of narrative."²⁶⁶ Barr understood that this was a mature work: "It is an extraordinary work - pure excitement, unencumbered narrative, moral warmth, barefaced rejoicing in beauty, but excitement most of all; yet a serious and scrupulous fiction, nothing cozy, no little visits to one's

²⁶⁴ C. S. Lewis, "The Gods Return to Earth" *Time and Tide* (1954 Aug. 14): pg. 1082-83; the magazine was a British weekly for political and literary reviews.

²⁶⁵ Donald Barr, "Shadowy World of Men and Hobbits" : Review of *The Two Towers Being the Second Part of "The Lord of the Rings" By J. R. R. Tolkien: New York Times: Books: 1955 May 1*

²⁶⁶ Barr, "Shadowy World of Men and Hobbits"

childhood.”²⁶⁷ Moral warmth and beauty do indeed connect with the virtues; unfortunately Barr does not carry that thread further.

Several authors have pointed out that Tolkien became an iconic figure to a new generations in the 1960s university setting and their concomitant “drop-out” youth who sought an alternate lifestyle - the so-called “hippie” or psychedelic culture.²⁶⁸ Frodo and themes from *The Lord of the Rings* were adopted to support rural, non-capitalist, back to the land environmentalism. Pop music groups fastened on what was their version of Elves, wizards and “pipe weed” quite apart from Tolkien’s intentions or inherent meanings.²⁶⁹ Yet it meant that a wider North American readership “re-discovered” the English author and his special fantasy writings.²⁷⁰ Both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* became books of interest to continuing

²⁶⁷ Barr, “Shadowy World of Men and Hobbits”

²⁶⁸ Jane Ciabattari, “Hobbits and hippies: Tolkien and the counterculture” BBC: Between the Lines: 2014 November 20

²⁶⁹ See: Andy Greene, “Ramble On: Rockers Who Love ‘The Lord of the Rings’”: *RollingStone* 2012 Dec. 13

²⁷⁰ See Jared Lobdell’s article: “J. R. R. Tolkien: *Words That Sound Like Castles*”: *Rally* 1, No. 3 (August 1966): pp. 24-26: ... *that there has arisen in these Latter Days a guide to the forest of the past, a creator of peoples, a writer good beyond hope, under whose guidance we may walk the nameless North of Sigurd, the forest of Broceliande, the Saxon lands and the Celtic lands, reborn in joy.* In contrast the Associated Press release “Rings trilogy author dies” is so brief as to convince one that there was a media lack of understanding of Tolkien’s impact on the literary world and the full meaning of *The Lord of the Rings*; while calling him a “literary superstar to millions of youthful admirers” the summation of the latter book was one sentence: “‘The Lord of the Rings’ is a fantasy about the battle between good and evil, for which Tolkien invented a world populated by a people he named hobbits struggling against Sauron, lord of the magic rings.”

generations.²⁷¹ The Internet provided opportunity to broaden that readership, expand on the age level of devotees and fostered the growth of on-line communities of varying levels of connected interest groups whether specialist or fantasy artists.²⁷² Consequently the new challenge is to recapture the original text and to filter out erroneous and false accretions to the public narrative.²⁷³

The projected world of fantasy as it comes back to the viewers' world today floats as diverse images within the avenues of the Internet. Tolkien websites exist within that variable matrix at all levels of intellectual pursuit and pure amusement. Art, poetry, affiliated war games, music all compete with academic level articles and contributions of Tolkien aficionados. The text of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* along with the author's other stories, letters and interviews have gone far beyond any foreseen transformation which Tolkien could have predicted. Some sites have endeavoured to keep true to the author's creation and intent seeking for further insight and depth of analysis. Other sites are only tangentially related to the text while a larger number are inspired by the film versions which have taken on a life of their own parallel to the written word. Some site participants it must be observed have become obsessed with the darker side of the film imagery divorced from any resemblance to the virtues which underlay the original *The Lord of the Rings*. Therefore when one speaks of persons interested in Tolkien or

²⁷¹ Readership extends to Pope Francis who as Cardinal Bergoglio mentioned in a 2008 sermon, "talking about life being an ongoing journey of hope - he compared the journeys of Bilbo and Frodo to those of Aeneas, Odysseus and Biblical characters such as Abraham and the Israelites in the wilderness.": TheOneRing.net 2013 May 30 citing TolkienBrasil.com

²⁷² Domenico Bettinelli, Jr. "Tolkien on the Net: An *Odyssey* for the new millennium" *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 2001): pg. 46

²⁷³ "Original text" is used with the caveat that the published text has had revisions and minor alterations in its varied book printing history. It is as complex as a *Hobbit's* genealogy.

The Lord of the Rings qualifiers must be made to understand which strand of pursuit any one individual is engaged in. For this current work it is those sites which value the original texts of Tolkien that have been considered for reflection. It is out of the creative word that all else flows.

One cannot ignore the resurgence in Tolkien admirers since the advent of the Peter Jackson trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, or of the extended adaptation of *The Hobbit*. It seems that each time those who have an antipathy toward Tolkien's fantasy writings are ready to pronounce his appeal has waned they are proven to be quite mistaken. In the early 1960s one English critic was prepared to bury the world of hobbits, wizards and the Ring. Then the surge in Tolkien status took off at universities and among the counter-culture movement. By the late 1970s thanks in part to the dedicated editorial work of Christopher Tolkien the world at last received the elder Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* (1977)²⁷⁴. Subsequent manuscript editions likewise by Christopher Tolkien fed the avid interest in the father's creative processes; these titles included *Unfinished Tales* (1980), *The Book of Lost Tales 1* (1983), *The Book of Lost Tales 2* (1984), *The Lays of Beleriand* (1985), *The Shaping of Middle-Earth* (1986), *The Lost Road* (1987)²⁷⁵, and the volumes devoted to drafts of *The Lord of the Rings* (eg. *The Return of the Shadow*, *The Treason of Isengard*, *The War of the Ring*, and *Sauron Defeated*).²⁷⁶ Humphrey Carpenter with Christopher Tolkien produced the edition of J. R. R. Tolkien's correspondence in 1981 - grist for

²⁷⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977)

²⁷⁵ See bibliography

²⁷⁶ See bibliography

the mill by academics and fans alike.²⁷⁷ The publication of earlier writings and translations by Tolkien continue to appear keeping the interest in this English author very much to the forefront if the advance publicity prior to each volume is any indication. That run includes *The Children of Hurin* (2007), *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrun* (2009), *The Fall of Arthur* (2013), *Beowulf A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell* (2014) and *The Story of Kullervo* (2015).²⁷⁸ Interestingly one reviewer of *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* touches on Tolkien's gift to us as a teacher: "The connections of The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun with the deep myths of Northern European civilization offers the reader useful insight into Tolkien's own mythology which rests behind The Lord of the Rings, but even more importantly, the publication of this work provides an "accessible" means for reflecting on some of the most significant legends of pre-Christian antiquity. In this regard, J. R. R. Tolkien continues his professorial role: opening minds to study and appreciate the cultural heritage of Western civilization."²⁷⁹ It is

²⁷⁷ Humphrey Carpenter with Christopher Tolkien, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981)

²⁷⁸ See bibliography. To this list one should add two children's books, *Mr. Bliss* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982) and *Roverandom* (London: HarperCollins, 1998). Two names from *Mr. Bliss* appear in *The Lord of the Rings* - Gaffer Gamgee and Boffin. Reviews of the texts such as *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* run from the dismissive to the well received - eg. *The Telegraph* 2009 May 3: "Mark Sanderson wishes J. R. R. Tolkien's verse sage *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* was more epic": "It is some kind of achievement to bulk up the equivalent of 500 Twitter messages to 377 pages but there is no disguising that fact that everyone involved is simply flogging a dead Norse." Contrast that commentary with *The Washington Post* 2009 May 5 Book Review: 'The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun' by J. R. R. Tolkien By Elizabeth Hand: "Yet, perhaps more than any other single work of Tolkien's, this one provides a direct experience of the fierce intellect and imagination the produced "the author of the century" as British scholar T. A. Shippey called him."

²⁷⁹ *The New American* 2009 Aug. 4: A Review of J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun" - James Heiser.

against this textual background that one may meditate on the film versions of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien had crafted his book after extensive drafts, revisions, and emendations. The integrity of the text is the distillation of his meticulous process. Film adaptation which excises and rewrites the plot line can be viewed as a violation of the original narrative, or an attempt to carefully select that which gives the spirit of the book within the confines of visual presentation and dialogue. Tolkien wrote in the foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* that it was impossible to please all readers at all points in his book.²⁸⁰ One may say the same of Jackson. For the purposes of high adventure he omitted everything between Gandalf's warning that Frodo should leave the Shire and the Black Riders' attack on the Prancing Pony. Lost were the transitional scenes from idyllic Shire setting, the Old Forest with Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, and the Barrow Wight encounter. The Council of Elrond became the formative setting for the first film. Thereafter the two main streams were the story of Aragorn with an enhanced role for Arwen, and the travel and travails of Frodo and Sam with Gollum/ Smeagol. One leading film critic had grave reservations under the heading, "Hobbits robbed of top billing in Lord of the Rings: First of Tolkien trilogy works fine as just another wizard epic."²⁸¹ Author Bradley Birzer reflected on the film's failure to capture the Catholic nuances of the book to which one may add that the virtues are likewise attenuated.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ *Lord of the Rings*: Foreword: pg. 8

²⁸¹ *Mail Star* 2001 Dec. 15: pg. E1: Roger Ebert review of *The Fellowship of the Rings* (sic)

²⁸² Bradley J. Birzer, "The Christian Gifts of J. R. R. Tolkien" *New Oxford Review* (November 2001): pp. 25-29: *For Tolkien, one can not separate his Christian message from his stories. With Jackson's movies, it seems, Tolkien's timeless story will become part of the politically correct, secular world the English philologist so very much despised.*

Stratford Caldecott, by contrast, seemed to think that Peter Jackson managed to preserve more of the message of Tolkien than is commonly given credit. His paper, “Grace of the Valar: The Lord of the Rings,” undertook to discern themes which did translate onto the screen.²⁸³ The One Ring was the symbol of domination and self-absorption with which Sauron had sought to reform creation just as had his mentor and master Melkor/ Morgoth. Tolkien’s “true story” was that which by way of myth taught certain truths. Caldecott emphasized reverence for the world of nature, for tradition and for the spiritual world for which the impetus for the film was the “call to arms” to defend these values against those of Sauron and that for which he stood. The former readily transform into environmentalism, certain traditional images of people values (humanism as opposed to consumerism and technology) and global consciousness for world betterment. It is arguable that while these are all to some extent laudable these do not tell the whole of Tolkien’s own vision nor expose his value system rooted deeply in Catholicism. Caldecott wrote in conclusion that, “Sung beautifully by Annie Lennox, the closing song succeeds in capturing the essence of Tolkien’s concern with death, shot through with Christian hope. Such moments of creative fidelity to Tolkien raise the film far above film-making, to the level at times of almost religious art.”²⁸⁴ Perhaps one asks too much for a filmmaker to translate a book into something which can capture the complexity of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien’s word is best found in reading the word of the narrative. He brought his best to this act of sub-creation for it was to honour the gift of creative thought received from the Creator. Tolkien’s own splinter of light

²⁸³ Stratford Caldecott, “Grace of the Valar: *The Lord of the Rings*” *Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue* ed. Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes (Macon, Georgia: Regent’s Park College, Oxford with Smyth & Helwys, 2005): pp. 193-205

²⁸⁴ Caldecott, “Grace of the Valar”: pg. 204

allowed divine truth to shine out from his fertile fantasy creation, his mythology for England and the world. A movie theatre, on the other hand, is neither a cathedral nor a place of worship. The filmmaker hopes at best to reflect back some of the light of a truly inspired work of literary creation. Like photocopies of photocopies that in time produce images that grow less clear so too film is gradually out of focus. Jane Ciabatti in her article concerning the 1960s counter-culture and the Jackson film version of *The Lord of the Rings* observed that: “In these blockbuster films, Tolkien’s intricate narrative arc has been scaled beyond its original humanity and reduced to CGI eye-candy. The spirit of his work remains, in his original texts. Go there to rediscover Tolkien the myth maker, the believer in the mysteries of faith and storytelling.”²⁸⁵ The original icon is the truest portrayal of what an artist intended; the book is so much richer than the movie.

The interplay of image, symbol and word has been the basis of a movement denominated Radical Orthodoxy.²⁸⁶ It is a blend of philosophy and theology which engages post-modern thought through the use of semiotics [word, meaning, knowledge]. The leading British proponents are based in the Anglican Church tradition who have looked to Thomas Aquinas and the later medieval Mass as touchstones for translating their discourse into tangible terms.

Although their interpretation of Thomism has been challenged it is their work toward pulling abstract thought back into daily theological debate and spiritual understanding that continues to

²⁸⁵ Ciabatti, “Hobbits and hippies”

²⁸⁶ Leading proponents include John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward and Alison Milbank. The initial text is seen as John Milbank’s 1990 *Theology and Social Theory*. Augustinian doctrine initially undergirded the theological aspects but the move to Aquinas moved the project further while retaining the impetus from the former. See also: John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, ed. *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999); John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2000); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

attract attention. More pertinently members of the movement have engaged the legacy of G. K. Chesterton and J. R. R. Tolkien.²⁸⁷ The latter is attractive for his use of mythology and language to convey truth as well as his Thomist understanding of the virtues. Tolkien's own devotion to the Eucharistic mystery adds another layer of connection to Aquinas and the Radical Orthodoxy advocates. According to Catholic teaching one is given the ordinary elements of bread and wine which by word become the Word of God in flesh and blood and full spiritual presence though the appearance of the bread and wine remain. This was the inspiration for Aquinas's eucharistic hymns and Tolkien's lembas in *The Lord of the Rings*. In accord with Radical Orthodoxy that which is called Transubstantiation is the meeting point of sign, symbol, word and meaning. It is the point of unity. If one is to argue that there lies in Tolkien's fantasy writing a mystical emanation it is in the transmission of that light which the author exercised in his development of the text.²⁸⁸ Film is a fragile vessel for such truths. It can suggest, create interstices of meditation and mediation, and play on the senses with sight and sound. To encounter the actual message, to make alive the word of an author - that requires the viewer or reader to take into themselves a

²⁸⁷ Alison Milbank, *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians: The Fantasy of the Real* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007); Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity: The Literary Agenda* (Oxford University Press, 2013) - brief references to Tolkien occur with regard to his "shire" of *Lord of the Rings* and his neo-Anglo-Saxon prose bringing a reality to a world of fantasy or imagination. In an interview with Alison Milbank she revealed that she had located a set of the *Summa Theologica* which Tolkien had obtained from his guardian Father Morgan with annotations by both men. It removes any doubt that may be cast on Tolkien having knowledge of Thomism: Pieter Collier's interview with Dr. Alison Milbank on the publication of *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians* [tolkienlibrary.com] 2007 October 22.

²⁸⁸ Cf Collier's interview with Alison Milbank: *For me, Tolkien's books are so successful precisely because they play between the real and the fictive, and because they are religious in giving the reader a hunger for transcendence - for a world beyond this world.* For reviews of Milbank's *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians* see: Aidan Nichols, "Alison Milbank ..." *The C. S. Lewis Chronicle* 6, No. 1 (Hilary 2009), and Ralph C. Wood, "The Catholic Fantastic of Chesterton and Tolkien" *First Things* 2008 [firstthings.com]

particular point of unity of sign, symbol and word. Special effects and actions scenes can entertain. It requires a commitment to think on what has been portrayed on the screen with an active search to be immersed in the original narrative to fully understand what was behind the filmmaker's creation. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* becomes the prelude to the liturgical setting.

Just at there is a diversity in how Tolkien or *The Lord of the Rings* is received for popular and academic interests there are various ways to approach the text - literary, philological, mythic, and theological among them.²⁸⁹ Each genre provides illumination; each adds layers of connectedness to the Western literary tradition blended with theological implications. The author was a complex man, an accomplished academic and deeply spiritual person whose sub-creations were a blend of all the foregoing. Part of the reader appeal with *The Lord of the Rings* is the fact that there is so much for so many persons to resonate with in his or her own core attractions.²⁹⁰ One who is truly convinced of the value in reading Tolkien will inevitably read his books repeatedly; one may say that for many readers it is almost a liturgical unfolding of narrative. That multiple exposure permits some of Tolkien's underlying themes to infiltrate the store of images each one of us may take away from the readings. Here is the practice which Aquinas ventured to observe with regard to the virtues - immersing oneself in the habitual practice conforms one with

²⁸⁹ Cf Emily McAvan, *The Postmodern Sacred: Popular Culture Spirituality in the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Urban Fantasy Genres* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2012): See Chapter Seven: "Christ Figures and the Messianic in *The Lord of the Rings*"; McAvan observed in her introduction, "It is the interplay between the traditional religions and New Age-ized spirituality that the stream of spiritual popular culture that I call the postmodern sacred finds itself.": pg. 2

²⁹⁰ This was alluded to in Janet Adam Smith's review article in *The New York Review of Books* 1972 December 14: "Does Frodo Live" [Review of Paul H. Kocher's biographical volume *Master of Middle-earth: The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien, The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings*]

the source of these virtues, our telos in the Good. Attenuated though the virtues have become in the film versions enough remains to still inspire and perchance lead to imitation. The opposition of virtue and vice are ever present: charity versus avarice; prudence versus folly; hope versus despair; faith versus false gods.

Filtering through these mixed media by way of Tolkien are the teachings of Aquinas - for whom the *Summa Theologica* was without value unless it led one to our true end with the guidance of the virtues which radiate from that end or the Good. All else, to paraphrase a rabbinic scholar, is commentary. The shimmering ripples in time from the *Summa* to *The Lord of the Rings* continue to lap at the edges of modern media interpretations of Tolkien's classic. The cardinal virtues are studies in human psychology — that which produces the best in the person and for community; Aquinas adumbrated these aspects through the ultimate lens of scripture, tradition and teaching. Yet they are accessible whether one is a believer or not. The crown which is composed of the theological virtues interjects the metaphysical thereby placing humanity beyond mere self-fulfilment and individualism. One regards “the other” - that is - sees habituation of the virtues outside what might otherwise be singularly directed goals; awareness of the interconnectedness of society at the same time places society apart from being described as a mere organism of persons intent on power, consumerism and equivalency with “value” (that is to say, when persons are equated with a value or no value, deserving to live only if of “value” or able to consume). Frodo did not undertake his mission with the One Ring for his own self-preservation — indeed, he early on suspected that he would not live to return from the journey to Mount Doom. He took on the burden for others, for the free peoples of light, as their emissary or culture warrior. That journey of faith honed the other virtues until all that he possessed had been

stripped away except the will itself. Sam who participated in the same quest but for another reason showed that the same process can occur under a different path's beginning, that of charity. Life was precious in its own right, not for what it might do to engross the political or economic landscape.

The substitution of metaphysics by ecological or humanitarian action feigns the pilgrimage of the virtues for in either instance it is a truncated motion. One works for the ecology but for what end? What specifically is embodied in "ecological activism" ? Does it prioritize an abstract natural world or does it actually include the idea of balance where humans are part of and valued as integral elements in the ecological framework? Humanitarianism is similarly in need of definition for it implies the rendering of assistance but does the action employed foster independence in those to whom aid is rendered? How much presumption is there in those who offer a humanitarian vision and what of the recipients? The absence of a metaphysical numinosity creates an open-ended "working for betterment" without defining better for what end. Aquinas and Tolkien understood that the virtues carried one along life's pathways with the ultimate goal of resting in God in the fulfilment of reciprocal relationships. Even ecological-spirituality without a definable Other relationship becomes no more than a utopian vision of stasis in defiance of planetary change in geology, weather, and life itself. Climate change activism, for example, will not stop earthquakes, hurricanes or landslides. Neither will it stop all species extinctions for the latter has been a continuous process so long as life has existed on earth. Indeed, Canadian author Margaret Atwood in her dystopian vision includes the idea of human extinction.

There is a positivism in Tolkien and Aquinas which works to deflect undue pessimism, despair and millennial apocalyptic hysteria. The virtues are building stages in enlarging life potential. This is not to say that terrible events do not occur in the world. Rather the Thomist and Tolkienesque visions see a way through and beyond such scenarios. One recalls that Gandalf did not surrender to despair for as his message implied unless one can foresee all ends beyond all hope there is no room for capitulation to psychological or spiritual defeat. This applies to the individual journey and by extension to society's response to various challenges. The desire for immediate relief has increased with the rapid change in communications in the modern world. Time's limitations need to be realized while the sage words of scripture recall that to everything there is a season. Aquinas's medieval world was regulated by the liturgical and agricultural repetition of the seasons. In *The Lord of the Rings* one has the entire journey set in a calendrical cycle from waning summer, darkening winter, and the struggle of spring to emerge into new life (paralleling the campaign to defeat Sauron). Tolkien showed that it took time to grow in the virtues and to achieve goals step by step. The great pilgrimage way from Chartres to Santiago de Compostela of the medieval period in Aquinas's day down to the Twenty-first Century is ideally undertaken literally by foot until the goal is reached. The growing interest in pilgrimages in North America and Europe of this nature may hint at the seeping awareness that immediate gratification is a misleading desire. People of faith and people of no set faith are equally drawn to the way of quest just as both can draw on the richness of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* with its medieval Thomism for the past and present are always commingled. Whether the goal is Santiago di Compostela, the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham or a rural chapel in Nova Scotia the ending is our beginning, our telos in the Good. Author Joseph Pearce was convinced that

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* was far more than "a good read": "The profoundly Christian nature and super-nature of Tolkien's work can be demonstrated by adopting a tri-focal approach. First, by looking at Tolkien the Man we shall discover the soul of a Christian mystic; second, by studying Tolkien's Philosophy of Myth we shall come to understand the theological basis of his own mythological world; and third, by looking at the Myth itself, as revealed in *The Silmarillion* and the *Lord of the Rings*, we shall see that Tolkien's epic go beyond mere "fantasy" to the deepest realms of metaphysics."²⁹¹

Some would criticize fascination with either the book *The Lord of the Rings* or the film trilogy as an escapism from modern reality with technological advantages, global connectivity and the facts of science. It would be a mistake to claim that Tolkien fans are aberrant refugees from modern society. They are neither Luddites nor regressive utopians. Reading *The Lord of the Rings* is to confront reality in encounter with human personality in all its aspects both the light and the dark. Tolkien has stripped away the mechanized and technological jungle in order to display the humane. Social veneer is as prone to obscure the power structures at work in the modern world as the Internet technology. This is not to say that all potentially adverse trends or personages are in a category with Sauron or Saruman, or with Beowulf's Grendel. *The Lord of the Rings* as sub-creation in true literary and oral story tradition magnifies types for emphasis. Here Jackson's trilogy does connect with the author's intent for film can more readily enlarge than subtly suggest (even if nervous in dealing with spiritual matters).

²⁹¹ Joseph Pearce, "True Myth: The Catholicism of *The Lord of the Rings*" *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 2001): pg. 35

Careful reflection on the Thomist matter in *The Lord of the Rings* looks to the question of what purpose is something proposed. What is its end? Does the common good or good of the individual actually have a place today? Capitalists are in the business of making profits for themselves and for their partners; shareholders are buttresses though not necessarily appreciated. To carry the analogy further one may look to the role of developers in urban settings. Progress and building for its own sake take on a projection in time which considers all prior physical structures and landscapes as impediments to the over-arching goal of building for the future. Not all clearing away is an evil, nor is it necessarily avoidable. Too often what is missing is vision, a Tolkienesque sub-creation, for an environment meant for people - preservation of heritage, humane working spaces, and the invitation to nature to be intermixed with our surroundings. [The elven offer to plant trees in barren Minas Tirith on its restoration may have reflected Tolkien's desire in post-World War II bombing devastation in England but it still has something to say to us today.] Construction to create iconic high-rise towers of concrete and glass as touted in many Western cities may be seen to offer employment to those in the relevant industries and as places to located businesses. The push for condominiums and apartments, however, soon reveal that the "vision" for the developer capitalists is too frequently that of construction by the wealthy for the well-to-do. Middle-class and working-class peoples are rapidly displaced. Is this the end to which urban politicians wish to move to in order to endorse developers? The Saurmanist fascination with steams and wheels and iron as the foundations for domination is uncomfortably too close a parallel. One wonders where the Garden Cities of nineteenth century landscape architects or 1960s ecologists have vanished. Under these circumstances political administrators have succumbed to moral equivocation or indifference.

An answer may lie in the proposition that the virtues have no place in the business world. Sentimentality is irrelevant though that statement is implied too often to mean that sentiment per se is a weak force in the human personality. Charles Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times* was one such soulless individual who wanted anatomical descriptions of animals without their relationship to people or aesthetic considerations.²⁹² The desire for beauty whether described as aesthetic or not was explainable to Aquinas as the inner desire to unite with Perfection, for all that is truly beautiful partakes of God. Tolkien grasped this teaching as he so frequently revealed in his lyric portraits of nature or simple gardens. It would be a revolutionary change in thinking for advocates of progress to take the Good into their plans. The foregoing architectural musings are a case in point. We do not customarily focus urban centre's resources these days on the building of great cathedrals as in the Middle Ages. Indeed, city high-rises are not places of worship. Rather one could look at infusing the concepts with virtue inspired patterns - the holistic setting for workers and for tenants in general. Windowless, claustrophobic chambers are inexcusable in today's society. Utility and aesthetics are not mutually antithetical. Developers, architects and business have more than enough failed precedent over the past two centuries which no longer need to be duplicated. Nor should there be amnesia in regard to the crafts of the past. Cogs and wheels are cogs and wheels; people are neither. It is possible to be a slave to technology - witness Ted Sandyman in "The Scouring of the Shire." Orthanc had become a monument to the aspirations of Saruman. The immensity that was Barad-dur was a supreme exemplar of glorification of the self. Neither supported the virtues or reflected the radiant light of the Good. The ancient Greek idea of hubris, that is, overweening pride, is an anti-caritas effusion

²⁹² Charles Dickens, *Hard Times. For These Times* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854)

which inevitably foreshadows a fall. Sauron's defeat is captured by Jackson in film as the overlooking of the potential of the individual to make change happen, in this instance, the simple hobbits Frodo and Sam, without power or armaments.

The individual is the beginning of the virtues. Each one of us has potentiality framed within our societal matrix and the decision either to remain in stasis or move forward in maturity. Virtues remain abstract unless acted on in the shaping of one's character. Once the positive decision is taken the effect radiates out from the individual for conduct and attitude impinge on all whom we meet, befriend or love. The course of one's vocation or business is equally affected. Pursuit of habituation in the virtues releases one's potential on the one hand; on the other hand as the trajectory of that life leads to the Good it encompasses others for the Good is that which is over all and sustainer of all thereby connecting individuals in the greater human family.

Not all of us are meant for the heights, as Sam once intimated to Frodo, even if for a while one participates in great matters. Sam's life of the "simple gardener" is apropos for how we recognize our individual lives at present. Within the latter framework we become the vessels of the virtues working out our own path toward our end. Should our path be one shaped by a specific spiritual faith then that telos is God. Those who do not commit themselves to specific metaphysical constructs may consider nonetheless the advantages in leading a life informed by the virtues. It is recognition that we as individuals do not exist in isolation nor can we achieve our potential through absorption with the self in disregard to others around us. The question does return, however, of what end is in sight for leading a life in any positive pattern? The State expects compliancy but offers no recognition. Consumerism is an activity without a cumulative effect of satisfaction. Technology is a means not an end in itself. Progress is relative to what has

preceded it, and for what end it is to occur; alone it is a noun without content and as a verb it needs definition in relation to the human condition. The author's hometown in the 1960s had three principle means of transportation available - rail, bus and car; today only the last remains. Once the school offered at least four languages for instruction beyond English; since the mid-1960s only French is offered, and no view on the horizon of the occasion to learn the language of the First Nation's people the Mi'kmaq. [Somewhat akin to learning English in Scotland without an offering of Gaelic.]²⁹³ Progress in genetics may provide healing methods for certain diseases but the alternate route is disturbingly close to discredited eugenics and Nazis aspirations of a pure super-race [cf. Saruman's breeding of the Uruk-hai.] Science never exists in a pure form - it always impacts humanity for better or worse depending on it utilization. The virtues and a sense of the Good disturb the plans of advocates of Progress and improvement though not nearly enough.

These are not tangential musings in the context of Aquinas and Tolkien. They are what may be "applicability" just as Tolkien said of how readers may react to his writings. Modern media such as cinematography has contributed to a global dissemination of the Tolkien mythology which has led to a renewed interest in the original texts of the author. Delving into the latter becomes an exercise of exploration and discovery of what is not in the films, and better appreciation of the latter's re-arranged content when made into film. Discovery inevitably leads to questions - readers want to know more about Tolkien's sources of inspiration, his creative

²⁹³ By way of an aside both Tolkien and Lewis may be said to have Nova Scotia links. Tolkien referred to the province in his 1936 Father Christmas letter; the daughter of the woman in whose house both C. S Lewis and his brother Warnie resided for many years inherited a Nova Scotia baronetcy.

process, joy in languages, nature themes, friendship, loyalty, sacrifice and hope. Thomism rises up to offer glimpses of the cardinal and theological virtues as made manifest in personalities which Tolkien has made “real” in his vast sub-creation. Readers and film-viewers reverse the lens to project what they have learned and seen onto that world around them. Consciously or not they are projecting a Thomist way of seeing. The conscious act of doing so even if refracted through Tolkien means that even the individual may yet shake the counsel of the wise and pierce the veils of modern Barad-durs.

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