Tolkien: Enchanting a Secular World

DANIEL VLITOS

This paper outlines the methods J.R.R Tolkien used to create a modern mythology for England. Tolkien's life and religious views are discussed to illustrate how the esteemed writer used a combination of Christian doctrine and pre-existing ancient mythology to create a fictional medieval universe. The inspiration for this work was the theories of twentieth century German social theorist, Max Weber, and his belief that as the Western world became more secular, it would become "disenchanted." The author uses the theories of thinkers such as St. Augustine of Hippo and Friedrich Nietzsche to argue that Tolkien's created world serves to enchant a secular West and that secular and religious individuals alike can draw moral guidance from this created mythology.

In 1971, J.R.R Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, received a letter from a fan who identified as "an unbeliever."[1] The admirer complemented Tolkien, stating that he had "created a world in which some sort of faith seemed to be everywhere, without a visible source, like light from an invisible lamp."[2] J.R.R Tolkien is one of the most celebrated fantasy authors of all time; his works cross cultural bounds and are popular with secular and religious individuals alike. This essay will outline the methods Tolkien used to create modern mythology, rooted in a combination of Christian doctrine and Tolkien's knowledge of various pre-existing ancient mythologies. This discussion will also shed light on how

[1] Catherine Madsen, "Light from an Invisible Lamp": Natural Religion in *The Lord of the Rings,*" in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 3.
[2] Ibid.

Tolkien's works serve to enchant a secular worldview without creating moral dilemmas for "unbelievers."[3] In creating Middle-earth, Tolkien did more than just write fiction; he created a mythology with a moral structure at its core that secular people can adhere to.

Before exploring his works, it is first necessary to situate Tolkien in his historical and religious context. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa in 1892.[4] His father was a bank manager from a well established English family living in the Orange Free State.[5] Tolkien's early life was a time of turmoil. In 1895 his father died and a year later, at the age of four, Tolkien and his mother were forced to move to Warwickshire, England due his ill health.[6] In his later years, Tolkien recalled that it was from a childhood under his mother's care that his passion for romance and philology sprang.[7] Tolkien's mother converted to Catholicism in 1900, despite the protests of her Baptist family, who cut off all financial aid to her in response.[8]

Tolkien attended King Edward's Grammar School as a day boy until his mother's death in 1910, when he became a full time boarder.[9] He was a clever child and although King Edward's was not as prestigious as the public schools that Tolkien's close friend in adulthood, C.S. Lewis, attended; it still

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[3] Twentieth century social theorist, Max Weber, argued that as the western world became more secular its populace would become "disenchanted," the popularity of Tolkien's work in the current era serves to contradict this theory. Sung Ho Kim. "Max Weber." *Stanford University*. Stanford University, 24 Aug. 2007. Web. 06 Feb. 2014.

[4] William Bernard Ready, *The Tolkien Relation; a Personal Inquiry* (Chicago: Regnery, 1968), 7.

[5] Ibid., 8.

[6] Ibid. 7, 8.

[7] Ibid., 9.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 11.

presented opportunities for a relatively poor boy to achieve academic success. This is notable because Edwardian England was still a predominantly class structured society.[10] William Ready argues that it proved "wise to send Tolkien to King Edward's," for it led him to Exeter College, Oxford, on a scholarship, from which he graduated in 1915.[11] He was twenty-three and rushed to marry his love, Edith Bratt, despite her family's disapproval, for "like all of his generation of Englishmen, young lions under the donkey," he was soon to be sent off to war.[12] Tolkien served as an infantry soldier in the Lancashire Fusiliers in France, until the German surrender of 1918.[13]

Tolkien returned from service in 1918 and received another scholarship to Oxford in 1919.[14] It was during this time that he worked as an assistant for the Oxford English Dictionary.[15] William Ready outlines that "Tolkien flowered in the Oxford days. To a man such as he, with the sorrow of his childhood [*sic*], life there, even wedded and with a family, was good."[16] In 1921 Tolkien started his teaching career; he became a reader of the English language at Leeds University and was the youngest professor there.[17] In 1925 he returned to Oxford, this time to Pembroke College as professor of Anglo-Saxon language.[18] Tolkien was a gifted teacher and his lectures became exceedingly popular, beyond the normal bounds for a scholar of

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 18.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 19.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

Philology. One student recalls a lecture on Beowulf that Tolkien gave in 1936, saying

> He came in lightly and gracefully, I always remember that, his gown flowing, his hair shining, and he read Beowulf aloud. We did not know the language he was reading, yet the sound of Tolkien made sense of the unknown tongue and the terrors and dangers that he recounted - how I do not know - made our hair stand on end. He read like no one else I have ever heard.[19]

In these later Oxford years Tolkien grew close to a group of colleagues and fellow authors. The group consisted of Neville Cog Hill, Hugo Dyson, C.S. Lewis and a number of other notable authors, all of whom were young bright scholars, and wrote works to their own merit.[20] The group dubbed themselves the Inklings and would meet on Thursdays at the local pub, The Eagle and Child, to discuss their latest works.[21] It was to this group that Tolkien first read *The Lord of the Rings,* or as they called it at the time, the "*New Hobbit*," in reference to the book Tolkien had written for his children and published in 1938.[22] C.S. Lewis later recalled of 1946, "at most meetings during that year we had a chapter from Tolkien's *New Hobbit* as we called it then - the great work later published as *The Lord of the Rings*."[23]

It is clear that Tolkien had a strong influence on his close friend Lewis, being responsible for his conversion to Christianity

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[19] Ibid., 21.
[20] John P Bowen, *The Spirituality of Narnia: The Deeper Magic of C.S. Lewis* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2007), 28.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ready, *The Tolkien Relation; a Personal Inquiry*, 23.
[23] Ibid., 28.

in 1929.[24] The relationship was not symbiotic; as Lewis put it, "no one ever influenced Tolkien, you might as well try to influence a Bandersnatch."[25] Tolkien and Lewis's approaches also differed: while Lewis set out to write a clear extended metaphor for his religious beliefs in the form of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Tolkien resented allegory. While Tolkien did call *The Lord of the Rings* "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work," he never set out to create a Christian fiction; he instead, although never using the term himself, set out to create a "mythology for England."[26]

Tolkien believed that there is one thing shared by all mankind: myth. He believed that myth was "the tripping and polishing into the memory of the race their memorable past and people."[27] More than that, "myth is physically imbued from the earth and air of a folk," making it especially important for long-rooted peoplesm such as the British.[28] When asked about the extended law of Middle-Earth, Tolkien said his goal had been to create

> A body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of the romantic fairy-story - the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the Earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths- which I would dedicate simply to: to England; to my country… I would draw some of the great tales in

[24] Bowen, *The Spirituality of Narnia: The Deeper Magic of C.S. Lewis*, 29.
[25] Ready, *The Tolkien Relation; a Personal Inquiry*, 28; A Bandersnatch being a fictional creature, infamous for its stubborn temperament, in Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland.*
[26] Michael Drout, "A Mythology for Anglo-Saxon England," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 229.
[27] Ready, *The Tolkien Relation; a Personal Inquiry*, 46.
[28] Ibid., 48.

> fullness, and leave many only place in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wilding pain and music and drama.[29]

To achieve his goal of creating a modern mythology for England, Tolkien turned first to Norse mythology for inspiration. To Tolkien, the strength of Norse mythology was so "potent that while the other southern imagination had faded for ever into literary ornament, the northern had power, as it were, to revive its spirit even in our times."[30] Tolkien was, however, still a devoutly religious man and committed to creating a world with a single benevolent God. He was also aware that "most mythology was distasteful to people."[31] For example, the Norse fertility God, Fyord, lies with his own sister in order to father Freyja and Freyr.[32] Tolkien, a man born in Victorian times, would not have been comfortable with creating a world where incest plays a part in the creation myth. Hence he infused his own Christian beliefs to create a monotheistic world, with a pantheon of angels, whom he loosely based on the Norse deities.

Tolkien dubbed his one God Iluvatar, also known as Eru.[33] His pantheon of angels, the Ainur, were split into two subgroups: the higher angels known as the Valar and the lower

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[29] Drout, "A Mythology for Anglo-Saxon England," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, 229.
[30] Stefan Arvidsson, "Greed and the Nature of Evil," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, (2010): 1-16, accessed March 15.
[31] Marjorie Burns, "Norse and Christian Gods: The Integrative Theology of J.R.R Tolkien," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 163.
[32] Ibid., 166.
[33] Ibid.

angels known as the Maiar.[34] The Valar consist of eight male and eight female Arch-Angels of equal power (for the most part). As in the Bible, "in the beginning there was the Word… and the Word was God," in the *Silmarillion,* Eru "spoke to them [the Ainur], propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad."[35] At first each Ainur sang alone, but Eru later led them in a chorus and together they sang all of existence into being.[36]

This emphasis on the language of creation is fitting for Tolkien as a philologist. Jared Lobell outlines how Tolkien believed that there was some magic inherent in language. This theme continues throughout Tolkien's works: the gates of Moria are opened by a magic word, the enemies of Mordor will not utter the language of that realm, a strong rebuke follows a lighthearted hobbit reference to Frodo as 'The Lord of the Rings', and the deepest evil of all is nameless and Gandalf will not speak of it when he "returned thence."[37]

To Tolkien, the purpose of language was twofold. The creation of language defined human nature and separated man from beast, while languages served as the chief distinguishing mark of a people.[38] Tolkien also believed that the mythology of a people came directly out of their language, hence "*The Lord of the Rings* as we perceive it is an English world, indeed a

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[34] David Day, *Tolkien: A Dictionary* (San Diego, California: Thunder Bay Press, 2013), 11.
[35] J.R.R. Tolkien, and Christopher Tolkien. *The Silmarillion.* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 3; Note here the power of words to create, not similarly to describe or narrate.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Jared Lobdell, *The World of the Rings: Language, Religion, and Adventure in Tolkien* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), 40.
[38] Ibid., 39; A man before his time, such sentiments would be echoed later by post-modernists as described in Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity," in The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation, 1-25.

medieval English world."[39] This creates a seeming paradox, as Tolkien also makes it clear in his works that a great deed could exist outside the purpose of history; this is most clearly shown when Gandalf duels the Balrog.

> There was none to see, yet perhaps in after ages songs will be sung of the battle on the peak… I threw down my enemy, and he fell flung on the high place and broke the mountain-side… then darkness took me, and I stayed out of thought and time, and I wandered far on paths that I will not tell.[40]

"Out of time" implies a departure from the perceived world. For Tolkien, great deeds exist, whether they happened in this physical life or not. So in some sense, Gandalf's battle on the peak actually occurred, for it exists within Tolkien's mythology for England. As Tolkien would have us believe, mythology is the incarnation within language of the history of a people.

The world that the Ainur sang into being was structured on a hierarchical model, which Tolkien based on the Christian Great Chain of Being. A creature's place on the chain is determined by who created them, when they were created, and their level of spiritual excellence. Eru and the Ainur are, of course, highest on the chain.[41] In Middle-earth the wizards, are "nearest to essence."[42] They are Maiar and hence angels incarnate; their purpose is to be the stewards of the land and

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[39] Ibid., 31.
[40] Michaela Baltasar, "J.R.R Tolkien: A Rediscovery of Myth," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 26.
[41] Day, *Tolkien: A Dictionary*, 11.
[42] Neil David Isaacs, and Rose A. Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 101.

ensure that all are following the path of spiritual excellence (their success in this endeavour is debatable).[43] Next in the chain come the races of elves and men, for they were created by Eru himself.[44] Men are Eru's favourite for he gave them the "gift of mortality," and therefore sit higher on the chain than elves, but they also more easily succumb to greed than their immortal companions and thus fall from their "heroic identity."[45] Next on the Great Chain are the hobbits; they are a subgroup of men who lack man's impetus, but excel in love and humbleness.[46] Existing at the foot of the Chain are the dwarves, ents, and dragons, each created by a various Valar.[47] They are easily distracted by their individual goals, and hence it is hard for them to achieve spiritual excellence or to participate in countering the evil that infiltrates the world. For each creature on the chain exists a perverse counterpart. The orcs are a mockery of the elves and trolls are a mockery of the ents. For men, it is the Ring-wraiths, whose lust for power has deprived them of all that once made them human. Gollum, also known as Smeagol, is a corrupted hobbit and serves as a character foil to Sam, perhaps the purest non-angelic character.

To understand the dark forces and their place in Middle-earth, we must first examine the figure of Melkor, a male Valar.[48] Created first by Eru, he was the most powerful among his peers.[49] Melkor grew dissatisfied with his place in the hierarchy, "from splendour he fell through arrogance to contempt for all

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 104.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Day, *Tolkien: A Dictionary*, 120.
[47] Ibid., 50.
[48] Burns, "Norse and Christian Gods: The Integrative Theology of J.R.R Tolkien," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, 168.
[49] Ibid.

things save himself, a spirit wasteful and pitiless."[50] When the Valar sung the world into being, he sang his own song, disrupting their creation and bringing unbalance into the world.[51] Melkor descended into the created world and took on the name Morgoth; he was the first Dark Lord and in the First Age of Middle-Earth he committed many atrocities. Most notably, he created orcs and trolls and corrupted many of the Maiar, including Sauron and the Balrogs.[52]

Morgoth exists as an obvious parallel to Lucifer, the fallen angel in Abrahamic doctrine. At first glance, evil in Tolkien's world seems to take on a Manichaeism model. The Manichaeism model, named after the ancient Persian philosopher Mani (216-276 C.E.), is the view that good and evil are two equal and opposite forces, in eternal struggle while simultaneously in constant balance.[53] However, upon further scrutiny it becomes clear that Tolkien's views on evil are more in line with those of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.).[54] Nothing in Tolkien's universe is created evil; any evil that exists is merely a perversion of something good. St. Augustine and Tolkien believed that good is necessary for evil to exist, but evil is not necessary for the existence of good. In the words of St. Augustine,

> Where ever you see measure, number, and order, you cannot hesitate to attribute all those to God, their maker. When you remove measure, number, and order, nothing at all remains… thus if all good

[50] Tolkien, and Tolkien. *The Silmarillion*, 12.
[51] Ibid., 5.
[52] Isaacs, and Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, 104.
[53] Scott Davison, "Tolkien and the Nature of Evil," in *The Lord of The Rings and Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (Chicago, Illinois: Open Court, 2003), 100.
[54] Baltasar, "J.R.R Tolkien: A Rediscovery of Myth," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, 24.

> is completely removed, no vestige of reality persists; indeed, nothing remains. Every good is from God.[55]

In Tolkien's world, those who stray from their rightful place in the Great Chain of Being are the exemplification of evil. The most common cause of this departure is pride and a desire for power.

Tolkien's view of evil appears to be in juxtaposition with that of nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. To Tolkien, desire for power beyond one's rightful place is the root of all evil; to Nietzsche, a "will to power" is the only moral compass one has:

> What is good? - all that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? - all that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? - the feeling that power increases- that a resistance is overcome.[56]

To Nietzsche, "we invented the concept of purpose… in reality purpose is lacking."[57] This exists in stark contrast to Tolkien's world, where each legitimate race has a place in the hierarchy.

Nietzsche and Tolkien, despite having very different starting philosophies, arrive at very similar conclusions. For Tolkien, myth is truth, for myth embodies the language of a people. For Nietzsche, art is truth, or at the very least art serves

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[55] Davison, "Tolkien and the Nature of Evil," in *The Lord of The Rings and Philosophy*, 102.
[56] Blount Douglas, "*Uber*hobbits: Tolkien, Nietzsche, and the Will to Power," in *The Lord of The Rings and Philosophy,* 87-98. Vol. 5 (Chicago, Illinois: Open Court, 2003), 87.
[57] Ibid., 90.

in place of truth as a "kind of cult of the untrue."[58] Nietzsche argues that because there is no inherent, divinely ordained truth, "beauty will be our salvation."[59] In this way, a secular fan of Tolkien's work can rationalize seeking moral guidance from his created mythology because at its core, it is a beautiful piece of art; "through art we are given eye and hand and above all good conscience, to enable us to make of ourselves such a phenomenon."[60] It is via the making of moral decisions that the characters within the mythology find this guidance. While divine authority is never invoked in *The Lord Of The Rings*, moral decisions are consciously made.

Good is not dependent on evil for existence in Middle-earth, yet it is through the struggle with evil that the good becomes most apparent. Due to "the gift of mortality," men have a sense of urgency that is not present in elves or dwarves, makes them the key figures in the fight against evil while instilling in them a "heroic quality."[61] It is important to note here that there is no original sin in Tolkien's world, men are not born sinners and are instead prone to the corruption of power. According to the argument of the aforementioned Jared Lobdell, Middle-earth is "a Christian world in pre-Christian times."[62] Throughout the entirety of *The Lord of the Rings* there are only fleeting mentions of the Valar and only one reference to Illuvatar; this choice on the part of the author has theological roots. The ancient people of Middle-earth exist in a time before a prophet, before even the fall of man. There are no religions in the Middle-earth, except perhaps the natural religion of the elves in their reverence of the

[58] Ibid., 92.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 94.
[61] Isaacs and Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, 104.
[62] Lobdell, *The World of the Rings: Language, Religion, and Adventure in Tolkien*, 50.

Valar. Adam has not yet bitten the apple, and hence man is in a constant struggle against temptation.

The One Ring, for which *The Lord of The Rings* is named, is the ultimate metaphor for this temptation. When Sauron, servant of Morgoth, created the One Ring he "poured into it his cruelty, his malice and his will to dominate all life."[63] The One Ring grants its bearer ultimate power, distorting the Great Chain of Being. It is no coincidence that two of the Ring's most notable powers are to turn its bearer invisible and to grant extraordinarily long life.[64] The Ring's power is the power to separate its bearer from the community of spiritual excellence. By putting on the Ring, the bearer becomes invisible and is separated from this community. The more often he uses the power, the more the power wears away at his substance. As has already been illustrated, time in Tolkien's mythology is relative. By making its bearer immortal, the Ring makes its bearer invisible to the passing of the ages.

It is ironic that Eru's gift to man is the very thing that causes the strongest temptation toward unordered power, in the form of immortality. Arwen, the elven Princess who marries the human King Aragorn, summarizes this irony beautifully at his death bed, saying

> I must indeed abide the doom of men whether I will or nill: the loss and the silence. But I say to you, king of the Numenoreans, not till now have I understood the tale of your people and their fall. As wicked fools I scorned them, but I pity them at

[63] J. R. R. Tolkien and Alan Lee, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 104.
[64] Isaacs, and Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, 106.

> last. For if this is indeed, as the elves say, the gift of The One to men, it is bitter to receive.[65]

Here we find the only mention of Illuvatar in the entire trilogy and it comes in the appendix of the book. This suggests that Tolkien was well aware of the implications of "the gift of mortality" for the spiritual excellence of man and their constant struggle to maintain it.[66] The author saved the invocation of The One for the most heart-wrenching aspect of his mythology: the passing of a loved one to a place where they cannot be followed.

It is due to their easily corruptible nature that men, despite being the "heroic race," are not the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings*. There are two other mortal races eligible for the position. An immortal race, like the elves, cannot have a heroic nature, for their immortality grants them a deep connection to the passing of the ages and makes them relatively passive in matters of urgency.[67] Aule, the smith of the Valar, created one of the remaining mortal races, the dwarves.[68] Dwarves, like their creator, are deeply connected to the earth and all the precious stones within it; this connection results in a similar passivity to that of the immortal races. Dwarves are also more easily corrupted than elves, due to their desire for wealth.

This leaves us with the hobbits, arguably the simplest of the races. The hobbits remind one of a stereotypical English country bumpkin, which makes them fitting candidates for the

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[65] Anna Mathie, "Tolkien and the Gift of Mortality." *First Things*, (2003): 10, accessed March 15, 2015

[66] Catherine Madsen, "Light from an Invisible Lamp": Natural Religion in *The Lord of the Rings,*" in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 38.

[67] Day, *Tolkien: A Dictionary*, 75.

[68] Ibid., 59; While it is true that Tolkien based the Dwarven language on Hebrew, it would be inaccurate to view the Dwarfs as an extended metaphor for the Hebrew people.

heroes of Tolkien's "mythology for England." Of hobbits, Tolkien once wrote

> I am in fact a hobbit, in all but size. I like gardens, trees, and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food, but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms; have a simple sense of humour; I go to bed late and get up later. I do not travel much.[69]

However, it is their very simplicity that makes the hobbits so pivotal, for they are almost impossible to corrupt.

Rose Zimbardo outlines how the hobbits' strength is their capacity for love.[70] Sam is moved to deeds of heroic excellence out of his love for Frodo. Sam also proves immune to the corruption of the Ring for he is at heart a mere gardener and what need does a gardener have of immortality; it is the renewal of life that Samwise values. Merry and Pippin are transformed by their love for the Lords they serve. Merry sees his finest hour while aiding Eowyn, the Rohirrim Princess, in her fight against the Witch King of Angmar; Pippin in his defence of the ever misunderstood Lord Faramir from the lunacy of his father who was corrupted by his desire for the throne of Gondor.[71] It is no coincidence that Eowyn and Faramir fall in love, a love that would not have been possible if they had not first learned it from their hobbit lieges.

Above all others is Bilbo and his capacity for pity. If Bilbo had not spared Smeagol's life, the destruction of the One

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[69] Baltasar, "J.R.R Tolkien: A Rediscovery of Myth," in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, 25

[70] Isaacs and Zimbardo, *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, 102.

[71] Ibid.

Ring would not have been possible. When Frodo states that is was a "pity that Bilbo didn't kill Gollum when he had the chance," Gandalf retorts

> Pity? It was pity that stayed Bilbo's hand. Many that live deserve death. Some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them, Frodo? Do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. Even the very wise cannot see all ends. My heart tells me that Gollum has some part to play yet, for good or ill before this is over. The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many.[72]

In his darkest hour, when Frodo reached Mount Doom and was finally able to destroy the ring, he was consumed by it and fell to its corrupting power. Had it not been for the pity of Bilbo fifty years earlier in the pits of a goblin cave, Smeagol would not have been alive to seize the ring from Frodo. In their literal struggle for power, Smeagol trips and falls into the heart of the mountain, destroying the Ring, and the power of Sauron forever.[73]

The overarching moral message throughout all of Tolkien's works is the strength of love over the corruption of power. While Tolkien used a predominantly Christian model to create his "mythology for England," the fact that his world exists in a pre-fallen era and that he allows for the making of moral decisions without divine intervention allows for secular and religious alike to find guidance in his work. "Tolkien borrows Christian magic, not Christian doctrine,"[74] and this Magic can serve to enchant a secular world. Tolkien's own version of the golden rule, "one should treat others as one would like others to

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[72] Tolkien and Lee, *The Lord of the Rings*, 59.
[73] Douglas, "*Uber*hobbits: Tolkien, Nietzsche, and the Will to Power," in *The Lord of The Rings and Philosophy*, 97.
[74] Madsen, "Light from an Invisible Lamp," 37.

treat oneself" is illustrated beautifully in the conclusion to *The Hobbit*; "there is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly west. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song over hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world."[75] These indeed, are words to live by.

[75] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit.* (London: HarperCollins, 2012).

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