



LUND
UNIVERSITY

SEEKING THE FLAME IMPERISHABLE

Biblical Intertextuality in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

Henrik Ljungström
A80 Literary Seminar
Autumn 2004
Department of English
Lund University
Supervisors: Birgitta Berglund & Lena Olsson

ABSTRACT

This essay analyses the intertextual relationship between J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and the Bible. The notion of intertextuality is presented in context with the studied work. Examples are made of how themes and symbols from the Holy Scripture are re-used in *The Silmarillion*, and an analysis is offered on how this relationship affects the understanding of the two texts. Briefly taken into account is John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which precedes Tolkien's work as a variation of the biblical text. Chosen sections of *The Silmarillion* are analysed in order to show how the author's notions of evil, sin, man as fallen, and man as a sub-creative being are conveyed through the mythical narration. Non-Christian elements are also discussed, as is their importance to the interpretation of the studied text. The essay attempts to show how Tolkien used myth as a mode to present his view of divine reality.

The heart of man is not compound of lies,
But draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
And still recalls Him. Though 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 of dark and light,
And sowed 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.

- J R R Tolkien

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
In the Beginning...	4
<i>Ainulindalë and the Bible</i>	4
<i>The Ainur, Angels, and Pagan Demigods</i>	8
<i>The Creation of Light</i>	11
<i>Religion and Worship in Middle-earth</i>	13
Melkor and Lucifer – Morgoth and Satan	16
<i>Insurrection of Iron, Fire, and Darkness</i>	16
<i>Evil as Part of the World</i>	18
The Fall of the Elves	19
<i>Creativity and Sub-creativity</i>	19
<i>Fëanor's Sin and Fall</i>	21
The Fall of Men	24
<i>Paradise Gained – The Gift</i>	24
<i>Paradise Lost – The Flood</i>	26
Apokatastasis Pantou – The Final Restoration of All Things	28
Conclusion	30
Bibliography	32

Introduction

In the Western world, the Judeo-Christian Bible is and has been a great influence on culture and society. Although the modern Western world is secularised to a great extent, most people have at least a second-hand knowledge of the Bible, perhaps being able to recount one of the more familiar stories from it, such as that of Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark or the life and death of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising to find traces of "the book of books" in other literary works; be it themes, character names or symbols. Making biblical allusions in works of fiction is thus a very powerful tool to use when one wishes to convey a message or meaning, as our general familiarity with the Bible is likely to steer our minds into certain tracks.

The focus of this essay will be on *The Silmarillion*, by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973), and its relationship with, first and foremost, the Bible. J.R.R. Tolkien is of course popularly most known for his books *The Hobbit*, first published in 1937, and *The Lord of the Rings*, the three volumes of which were first published in 1954 and 1955, and have recently been the basis for a successful trilogy of films. In comparison to these works, however, *The Silmarillion* is more interesting in that it remained a creative process for Tolkien during the better part of his life. Early drafts of *The Silmarillion* appeared already in the late twenties, but it was not published until 1977, posthumously. As noted by Brian Rosebury in his book *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment*, the book

resembles a huge canvas, worked on over forty years, of which some parts have been painted over repeatedly while others have been little modified, except where minor details have been touched up to avoid serious inconsistency. (Rosebury, 92)

The Silmarillion was only published after Tolkien's son Christopher had acted as an editor to complete the book, working with his father's manuscripts. But apart from its extended time of realisation, *The Silmarillion* is unique because it offers a foundation upon which the entire mythology that Tolkien created rests. Not only are the early days of Middle-earth and its profuse number of different inhabitants recounted, but the very myth of creation is also told. In this aspect, *The Silmarillion* is very much a parallel to the Christian Bible. Indeed, from a chronological viewpoint of the events that take place in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion* is a mythic account of things that happened many thousands of years ago, describing what has shaped the world and its peoples, much like the Bible does for Western culture. Tolkien was himself a devout Roman Catholic, and as such quite familiar with the Holy Scripture. With that in mind, it is not surprising to find a great many similarities between the Bible and *The Silmarillion*. In this essay, I will try to analyse how the Bible, the

Old Testament as well as the New, shines through in *The Silmarillion*, and discuss how this relationship affects the understanding of the two texts.

Such a relationship between two literary works can be described with the term “intertextuality”. In their book *Literary Terms and Criticism*, John Peck and Martin Coyle define this notion as “the way in which one text echoes or is linked to other texts either by direct quotation and allusion or simply by being a text” (Peck & Coyle, 175). In his article “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review”, Steve Moyise divides intertextuality into various categories, beginning with the “intertextual echo,” which encompasses quotations, allusions and echoes. According to Moyise, “a quotation involves a self-conscious break from the author’s style to introduce words from another context” (Moyise). Somewhat differently, an allusion “is usually woven into the text rather than ‘quoted’, and is often rather less precise in terms of wording” (Moyise). An echo, he further claims, “is a faint trace of a text and might be quite unconscious” (Moyise). Moyise’s second category of intertextual types is labelled “narrative intertextuality,” in which words or phrases are not recognised as much as the overall story. Instead of utilising verbatim quotations, the intertextual relationship is “activated by all sorts of allusions and echoes” (Moyise). Heinrich Plett also discusses such a familiarity with other stories in his article “Intertextualities”, arguing that the analysed texts “do not integrate prefabricated textual elements without alterations, but rather reshape them and supply them with new meanings” (Plett, 9). For this essay, the term intertextuality should primarily be understood in both of the ways just described, i.e. in the sense of recognisable themes as well as “echoes” of other literary texts.

However, the concept of an intertextual relationship between literary works carries a complexity of its own, as it is often suggested that all texts are somehow linked to each other. Moyise writes about such a weave of texts:

No text is an island and contrary to structuralist theory, it cannot be understood in isolation. It can only be understood as part of a web or matrix of other texts, themselves only to be understood in the light of other texts. Each new text disturbs the fabric of existing texts as it jostles for a place in the canon of literature. (Moyise)

Although Moyise’s article is primarily concerned with intertextuality as a somewhat isolated relationship between two texts alone, more specifically the Old Testament and the New, the above quotation at least hints at the complex nature of intertextuality. Others have suggested a viewpoint from which it is hard to even discern the beginning of a text, since there is always a precursor from which it borrows. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle write in their book *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* that “[n]o journey, no life, no narrative ever

really begins: all are ‘always already’ begun” (Bennett & Royle, 3). This discussion is continued further on, suggesting that intertextuality really is “the displacement of origins to other texts, which are in turn displacements of other texts and so on” (Bennett & Royle, 6). Thus, an intertextual approach to a text would mean that a full understanding of the text studied can only be achieved through an understanding of the text or texts it builds on. Or, as George Wesley Buchanan puts it in his book *Introduction to Intertextuality*, “it is necessary to know about the earlier literature upon which commentary [...] was based before any reader can know the meaning of the commentary based upon it” (Buchanan, 3).

The basic understanding of intertextuality then, as mentioned above, is when themes from already familiar texts are incorporated into a new text, in order to carry a point across. In other words, the reader’s understanding of the older text affects his interpretation of the new text. However, my opinion is that intertextuality functions in two directions, as the prefix “inter-” suggests. The new text’s use of familiar themes could just as well have an influence on the reader’s understanding of the old, familiar text and lead to a reinterpretation of the already established text. Moyise, for example, writes that “old texts appear to be given new meaning by being used in new contexts” (Moyise). The fact that the old text was written before the new one does not necessarily matter, as the understanding and interpretation of both texts are influenced. Indeed, Moyise argues that “[i]ntertextuality suggests that the meaning of a text is not fixed but open to revision as new texts come along and reposition it” (Moyise). Bennett and Royle also conclude that “the idea that everything begins with [...] one particular text is both deeply compelling and deeply false” (Bennett & Royle, 8).

For my biblical source, I have chosen the King James Version, as it is the translation that Tolkien himself would have been most familiar with. Although my focus will be on the intertextual relationship between the Bible and *The Silmarillion*, I will also comment briefly on a few instances where myths or religions of other cultures, such as Norse mythology, seem to play a part in Tolkien’s stories. I will not elaborate on these connections, but they are mentioned for two reasons. First, the echoes of pagan mythologies in Tolkien’s text give an interesting approach to how Tolkien, as a devout Catholic, related to his own, fantastical mythology. Second, they also illustrate the complexity of intertextuality; that all texts are part of a great weave, with many intertwining threads and patterns. Furthermore, I shall also comment briefly on the relationship between *The Silmarillion* and another major Christian literary work; namely John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Although the former is the work of a Catholic and the latter of a Puritan Protestant, this connection is included because the two

texts are of the same kind; a variation of the biblical text, intended to bring into light the universal truth of God.

Humphrey Carpenter writes in his biography of J.R.R. Tolkien: “*The Silmarillion* is the work of a profoundly religious man” (Carpenter, 91). Tolkien himself did not believe that biography was a particularly good method of literary criticism. As quoted by Carpenter, he once wrote that “investigation of an author’s biography is an entirely vain and false approach to his works” (Carpenter, Author’s note), yet I am not inclined to agree with that statement. Such a structuralistic view of literature would in my opinion overlook an important part of a text’s conception, namely the background and experiences of the author himself. It is my opinion that Tolkien, as a Christian, incorporated much of his own beliefs and values in his books. Carpenter appears to be of the same opinion: “[Tolkien] wanted the mythological and legendary stories to express his own moral view of the universe” (Carpenter, 91). And as Bradford Lee Eden puts it in his article “The ‘Music of the Spheres’”: “his Catholic background would also have influenced his thought and creative processes” (Eden, 183).

It should also be noted that *The Silmarillion* is in many ways a very complex text, not least because of the great number of characters that appear in it. To make matters more intricate, characters, places, peoples etc are often referred to with a number of different names, depending on which race’s language Tolkien chooses, or in which chronological part of the story the reference appears. The Elves, for instance, can be called the Eldar or Quendi, between which there is a slight difference in meaning, leading to even more risk of confusion. In this essay, I will try to keep the nomenclature as simple as possible, and in the cases where different names are used, brief explanations will be given.

In the Beginning...

Ainulindalë and the Bible

Just like the Bible, *The Silmarillion* opens with a mythical description of how the world was created. Tolkien calls this section the Ainulindalë, and in many ways it acts as a parallel to the biblical book of Genesis. However, whereas the Bible gives a rather brief description of how the world was created by God in six days, not counting the seventh day of rest, the Ainulindalë provides the reader with a longer story that both follows and departs from the Christian teaching. The overall themes of the two texts are the same; God creates the world. But the proceedings of these creations are quite different. The Bible is rather straightforward in that God alone created the world: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis, 1: 1). One of the major departures from this in *The Silmarillion* is that the supreme

being is aided by a sort of intermediaries in the act of creation: “There was Eru, the One, who in Arda [Earth] is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made” (Tolkien, 3). The Ainur are thus reminiscent of the Christian angels, who are referred to as “sons of God” in the biblical book of Job:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job, 38: 4-7)

According to this passage, the “sons of God”, i.e. the angels, had already been created when God “laid the foundation of the earth”. Just like the Ainur in *The Silmarillion* were first created by Eru, the Bible also tells us that God made the angels: “Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created” (Psalms, 148: 2, 5). However, in the Bible, the angels are not participant in the creation of the world; that is the Lord’s own work. In Tolkien’s text, the Ainur take a significantly more active part in the forming of Arda, i.e. the world. Ilúvatar, which is the name I henceforth will use when referring to the supreme being of Tolkien’s universe, suggests themes of music for the Ainur to elaborate on: “and they sang before him, and he was glad” (Tolkien, 3), a passage which in itself echoes the biblical “God saw that it was good” (Genesis, 1: 10). Ilúvatar then goes on to present the Ainur with a mighty theme, “unfolding to them things greater and more wonderful than he had yet revealed” (Tolkien, 3). Saying that he has kindled the Ainur with “the Flame Imperishable”, Ilúvatar instructs them to adorn the mighty theme, “each with his own thoughts and devices” (Tolkien, 3). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton too describes creation as God’s revelation to his angels, followed by its realisation:

My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
That detriment, if such it be to lose
Self-lost, and in a moment will create
Another World, out of one man a Race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell (Milton, VII: 152-156)

So spake the almighty, and to what he spake
His Word, the filial Godhead, gave effect.
Immediate are the acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but to human ears
Cannot without process of speech be told,
So told as earthly notion can receive.
Great triumph and rejoicing was in heaven

When such was heard declared the almighty's will;
 Glory they sung to the most high, good will (Milton, VII: 174-182)

At this point in Tolkien's myth of creation, the first signs of evil appear. Melkor, one of the Ainur, is not satisfied with simply adding to Ilúvatar's theme:

[B]eing alone [Melkor] had begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren.

Some of these thoughts he now wove into his music, and straightway discord arose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to [Melkor's] rather than to the thought which they had at first. (Tolkien, 4)

Melkor's own theme is in disharmony with Ilúvatar's, a revolt against the supreme being, like "a raging storm, as of dark waters that made war upon another in an endless wrath that would not be assuaged" (Tolkien, 4). Yet Ilúvatar ends the dissonance by introducing a more powerful theme. Once more, Melkor contaminates it with music of his own: "[A]gain there was a war of sound more violent than before, until many of the Ainur were dismayed and sang no longer, and Melkor had the mastery" (Tolkien, 5). For the third time, Ilúvatar produces a new theme to counter Melkor's rebellion. This time, however, Ilúvatar's theme does not quench Melkor's, but rather takes control of it by weaving itself into it, becoming "two musics progressing at one time [...] utterly at variance" (Tolkien, 5):

The one was deep and wide and beautiful, but slow and blended with an immeasurable sorrow, from which its beauty chiefly came. The other had now achieved a unity of its own; but it was loud, and vain, and endlessly repeated; and it had little harmony, but rather a clamorous unison as of many trumpets braying upon a few notes. And it essayed to drown the other music by the violence of its voice, but it seemed that its most triumphant notes were taken by the other and woven into its own solemn pattern. (Tolkien, 5)

This passage illustrates how Melkor's evil endures, although Ilúvatar gains control over the overall theme of creation. Evil is defeated in the sense that Melkor is not allowed, or able, to take mastery of the created world. But, as it is woven into the resulting theme, evil is still part of it, and Melkor can continue with his malice, eventually earning for himself the name Morgoth, meaning "Black Enemy" (Encyclopedia of Arda). Ralph C. Wood writes in *The Gospel According to Tolkien*: "[T]he dissonance that they introduce into Ilúvatar's world cannot silence the harmony that he is determined to bring about. Like the God of the Bible, Ilúvatar refuses to stamp out evil by force" (Wood, 11). Evil endures, and has a very big part to play in Tolkien's universe.

Finally, then, Tolkien arrives at the actual act of creation. Ilúvatar stops the music as it is, and shows the Ainur what it is that they have composed together:

‘This is your minstrelsy; and each of you shall find contained herein, amid the design that I set before you, all those things which it may seem that he himself devised or added. And thou, Melkor, wilt discover all the secret thoughts of thy mind, and wilt perceive that they are but a part of the whole and tributary to its glory.’ (Tolkien, 6)

The music of the Ainur is thus revealed as a vision of the world to come. It hints at one of Tolkien’s overall motifs in *The Silmarillion*; that Ilúvatar alone is the highest creator, and only he knows the full meaning and purpose of the world and all that is in it. It is true that the Ainur is in one sense part of the creation process, since it is their elaboration of Ilúvatar’s musical theme that becomes the world, but it is only Ilúvatar himself who has the power to bring the vision into reality:

‘Let these things Be! And I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be; and those of you that will may go down into it.’ And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame; and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing: Eä, the World that Is. (Tolkien, 9)

With this, Tolkien avoids any deviation from the Bible. The use of the Ainur as intermediate creators is a variation of the Holy Scripture, but the underlying message of a single, supreme creator is not tampered with. As Wood puts it, “[n]othing even remotely polytheistic is suggested here. The valar are not divinities but subordinate beings whom Ilúvatar has created with the Flame Imperishable of his own Spirit” (Wood, 12). Indeed, whereas Tolkien chose sometimes to modify the biblical text, he was not deviating from the messages that it conveys. The Ainur and the angels may play slightly different parts in their respective creation myths, but the main theme remains: only God can create autonomously. In a way, the existence of intermediaries in the text helps to emphasise the fact that God is the sole Creator. Their role as ‘channels’ of Ilúvatar’s creative power acts as a narrative device, which strengthens the message that all creativity ultimately stems from the Lord.

This leads to one of the Christian themes that Tolkien himself acknowledged is an important part of his mythology, namely sub-creation, which means that all creative ability found in man stems from God, the single Creator. The fact that God alone is capable of autonomous creation is present throughout the Bible:

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou

madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. (Psalms, 8: 3-8)

The image of man created as “little less than God” is linked to Tolkien’s concept of sub-creation. The general idea is that man, as created by God, can sub-create. We cannot, however, create autonomously, since all that is made goes back to God’s initial creation. To use Wood’s expression: “we ourselves are makers because we have been made” (Wood, 13). The “Imperishable Flame” that Tolkien refers to again and again in *The Silmarillion*, could then be interpreted as the Spirit of Ilúvatar, which burns in his created world and its inhabitants. Indeed, it is Melkor’s desire to have this flame for himself that leads to his fall from grace. Overall, the themes of creation and sub-creation hold great significance throughout the book, and become closely intertwined with evil. Brian Rosebury comments on Tolkien’s myth of creation as “a fulfilment of creative purposes which proceed directly from God and mediately from him, through the sub-creativity of created beings” and “its address to the problem of evil” (Rosebury, 97). The ability of sub-creation, or artistic creation, is thus a gift. But the ability to sub-create can be abused, and this is the case on many occasions in *The Silmarillion*. For example, the sub-creative ability of the Elves has a significant part in their subsequent fall.

The Ainur, Angels, and Pagan Demigods

In the *The Silmarillion*, the Ainur’s part is far from over when Ilúvatar brings the world into being. Tolkien retains their function as intermediaries, but once the world has been created, the Ainur go on to become a link between Ilúvatar and his created realm. In this guise, the Ainur are presented with both similarities and dissimilarities when compared to the biblical angels. This relationship will be the focus of this section.

The second part of *The Silmarillion* is called the Valaquenta, which means the “Tale of the Powers” (Encyclopedia of Arda). Here, the story of the Valar and the Maiar is recounted. Before going into details, however, it is necessary to clarify how the Valar and Maiar relate to the Ainur. Once the world has been realised by Ilúvatar from the musical theme that the Ainur have elaborated on, he offers the Ainur to enter the world and become a part of it: “those of you that will may go down into it” (Tolkien, 9). It is important to notice that the world, as created, has no inhabitants. They are part of Ilúvatar’s scheme, but they do not come into the world immediately. In the earliest days of the world, its sole dwellers are the Valar and the Maiar:

[I]t was their task to achieve [the world], and by their labours to fulfil the vision which they had seen. Long they laboured in the regions of Eä, which are vast beyond the thoughts of Elves and Men, until in the time appointed was made Arda, the Kingdom of Earth. Then they put on the raiment of Earth and descended into it, and dwelt therein. (Tolkien, 15)

Those of the Ainur that choose to do so thus come into the world. The greater of these spirits become the Valar – the “powers of the world” – and the lesser ones are called the Maiar, “servants and helpers” of the Valar (Tolkien, 21). The Bible also has different ranks of angels, including arch angels such as Gabriel, as well as seraphim and cherubim. Accordingly, a similar hierarchy is found in *Paradise Lost*, where Milton’s heavenly beings appear in the forms of seraphim, cherubim, angels etc. In Tolkien’s mythology, fourteen of the Ainur come to the world as Valar; seven male and seven female. In order of importance they are: Manwë the wise Elder King and his Queen Varda; Ulmo the sea-god; Aulë the smith and Yavanna the “Giver of Fruits”. There are also Nienna the goddess of pity, Oromë the hunter and Vána the bringer of spring; Mandos the doomsman and Vairë the weaver who records dooms. Finally there are Lórien the inspirer, Estë the healer, Tulkas the fighter and Nessa the dancer. A fifteenth Vala is Melkor, but due to deeds that are described later on in *The Silmarillion*, “Melkor is counted no longer among the Valar, and his name is not spoken upon Earth” (Tolkien, 16).

It is obvious that the inspiration for these characters does not originate in the Christian teaching, but rather resonates of many other mythologies and religions. For example, Tulkas clearly resembles the Scandinavian thunder-god Thor, and many of the Valar’s names, such as Aulë and Manwë are linguistically reminiscent of the nomenclature of Norse mythology. As a Professor of Anglo-Saxon, it is hardly surprising that Tolkien was very familiar with these myths, but many have found it strange that he, as a devout Roman Catholic, chose to employ so much of it in his own universe of Middle-earth. Indeed, it has even been questioned how Tolkien could stray from the Christian doctrine as much as he in fact did. David Harvey comments on this in his book *The Song of Middle-earth*: “[Tampering with biblical themes] is not possible of [sic] Tolkien, a deeply religious person” (Harvey, 35). I do not agree with this, since it is my opinion that although Tolkien employed other religions and “tampered” with biblical ones to create his own mythology, it does not automatically mean that the finished text strayed from the fundamental, underlying themes of Christianity. I am more inclined to side with Ralph Wood, and his argument that “Tolkien the Catholic is confident that the sacramental and missional life of the church will convey the Gospel to the world without the assistance of his own art” (Wood, 6), although I do believe that Tolkien wanted to convey his

faith with his text. Being comfortable in his own beliefs, as it were, allowed Tolkien to write a text that Debbie Sly describes as “a creative struggle between religious orthodoxy and aesthetic imperatives” in her article “Weaving Nets of Gloom” (Sly, 109). With this in mind, Tolkien allows himself to be inspired by other cultures than just Christian ones, but still remaining faithful to the themes and messages of the Bible.

In fact, I would argue that the non-Christian elements that can be found in Tolkien’s text are not there as religious symbols but rather as literary devices. I do not believe that Tolkien, as a devout Catholic, held religions such as the worship of the Aesir or the gods of ancient Greece as ‘valid’ religions, but rather as crude and primitive attempts to find the universal truth. Although Tolkien regarded the symbols and imagery these pagan beliefs employed to make sense of the world as erroneous, he still had a respect for the symbolism and recognised that it allowed non-Christian cultures to see glimpses of the truth. With his work, Tolkien instead reshaped these symbols, to fit into his theological view of the world and our existence, placing them in context with his vision of the universal truth. As Humphrey Carpenter puts it, *The Silmarillion* “does not contradict Christianity, but complements it” (Carpenter, 91). Other authors have utilised pagan symbolism in a similar way, for example Tolkien’s friend C. S. Lewis, who uses the lion Aslan as a figure of Christ in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. Yet Tolkien himself exemplifies the delicate balance of either viewing the Valar as divinities or not: “The Great among these spirits the Elves name the Valar, the Powers of Arda, and Men have often called them gods” (Tolkien, 15). Note the choice of words; “called them gods”, it does not necessarily mean that they *are* gods.

Tolkien’s Valar are human in many ways, for instance in that they display feelings and intellect, just like the biblical angels: “Likewise, I say unto you, there is *joy* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke, 15: 10, my italics). Angels are spirits, without corporal form, but just like Tolkien’s Valar, they can appear in human guise if they so choose: “And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground” (Genesis, 19: 1). However, unlike angels, the Valar form matrimonial relationships in some cases. Manwë and Varda, for instance, are described as spouses. As Richard Purtill writes in his book *J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion*, “the notion of angelic beings as male and female and as paired off in something like marriage is a departure from Judeo-Christian angelology” (Purtill, 97). *The Silmarillion* contains many such departures and deviations.

The Creation of Light

One could easily bring up a profuse number of incidents, characters or themes from *The Silmarillion* which at the same time borrow and deviate from the Bible. However, since the scope of this essay is limited, I have chosen to focus this section on an important part of all creation myths; namely how light came to be.

In the Bible, the Lord creates light on the first day, a rather straightforward and uncomplicated act:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis, 1: 3-5)

The biblical source of light is from the very beginning the sun. Thus, the initial light that God creates endures until the end of times. This is not the case in *The Silmarillion*, in which light is subjected to both creation and destruction several times. Such cyclical existence fits well into Tolkien's narrative, in which evil and good are never fully defeated by each other, but returns over and over again. As Ralph Wood remarks, "Tolkien never lets us forget that no battle is finally won, no victory permanently achieved – not in this world at least – just as every triumph creates a host of new perplexities" (Wood, 16). The most noticeable difference from the Bible is perhaps the absence of an explicit creation of light itself, perhaps implying that good, just as evil, is an inherent part of the world as created. The presence of light is hinted at in Ilúvatar's realisation of Arda, which is described as "a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame" (Tolkien, 9). If anything, it is interesting how similar the name Ilúvatar is to the word 'illuminate'. With Tolkien's careful use of nomenclature in mind, this is a powerful symbolic representation of good versus evil, light versus darkness, Ilúvatar versus Melkor. The latter, who has come into the world as a Vala, continues his rebellion against Ilúvatar, which eventually leads to darkness:

He began with the desire of Light, but when he could not possess it for himself alone, he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness. And darkness he used most in his evil works upon Arda, and filled it with fear for all living things. (Tolkien, 23)

While Melkor is soon temporarily subdued by the Vala Tulkas, the darkness that he has brought remains. As a result, the Valar create the first source of light in Arda: "Aulë [...] wrought two mighty lamps for the lighting of [...] Middle-earth" (Tolkien, 27). Melkor hates the light that shines from the lamps, and he surfaces again with his eyes on destroying them. His success is described as "he assailed the lights of Illuin and Ormal [i.e. the lamps], and cast down their pillars and broke their lamps" (Tolkien, 29). Darkness falls again, and the Valar

leaves Middle-earth to found a new land in the west where they will dwell; Valinor, the Undying Lands. Here the Vala Yavanna creates new light in the form of two trees:

The one had leaves of dark green that beneath were as shining silver, and from each of his countless flowers a dew of silver light was ever falling, and the earth beneath was dappled with the shadows of his fluttering leaves. The other bore leaves of a young green like the new-opened beech; their edges were of glittering gold. Flowers swung upon her branches in clusters of yellow flame, formed each to a glowing horn that spilled a golden rain upon the ground; and from the blossom of that tree there came forth warmth and a great light. (Tolkien, 31)

It is interesting to note that although the sun and moon have not yet been created, they are foreshadowed in the lamps as well as the trees. In both cases there is a duality with two lights, and the trees are even described as “silver” and “golden” respectively. However, the light of the trees is also destroyed by Melkor, this time with the aid of his evil accomplice Ungoliant, who appears in the form of a giant female spider:

Melkor sprang upon the mound; and with his black spear he smote each Tree to its core, wounded them deep, and their sap poured forth as it were their blood, and was spilled upon the ground. But Ungoliant sucked it up, and going then from Tree to Tree she set her black beak to their wounds, till they were drained; and the poison of Death that was in her went into their tissues and withered them, root, branch, and leaf; and they died. (Tolkien, 80)

Thus, again the need rises for a new source of light. Darkness falls again, but the two trees bear one final fruit before they die, and these are made into the sun and the moon: “Aulë and his people made vessels to hold them and preserve their radiance: as it is said in the *Narsilion*, the Song of the Sun and the Moon” (Tolkien, 109). The imagery of the sun and moon as vessels travelling across the sky is reminiscent of non-Christian religions, such as in ancient Egypt, where the sun-god Ra was thought to cross the sky in his boat. But above all, Tolkien’s mythological creation of light suggests a view of the world which focuses on birth and rebirth. Debbie Sly writes that “Tolkien’s account of the creation of light is complex, unorthodox, and, like the rest of the narrative, cyclical” (Sly, 112). This is an interesting observation, which I agree with, and will elaborate on later in this essay. It describes the creation as an ongoing process, which fits well with Tolkien’s text in the sense that once the world has been realised by Ilúvatar, it is not by any means finished. It is the task of the Valar to achieve the world according to Ilúvatar’s plan, and “by their labours to fulfil the vision which they had seen” (Tolkien, 15). So, again, although he diverges from Christian orthodoxy in one sense, Tolkien remains true to the idea of creation as continuous, which in fact appears in the Old Testament – “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,¹⁰

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah, 46: 9-10) – and the New: “Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John, 5: 17). Ralph Wood argues the same, stating that “[t]he cosmos as Tolkien envisions it is not a solitary and finished act but an ongoing communal process” (Wood, 11). This is a central idea throughout *The Silmarillion*. But, although Tolkien remains faithful to the encompassing biblical themes, any significant deviations from Christianity are of course the reason why so many have questioned Tolkien’s Catholicism in relation to his own, created mythology. Looking at the role religion has to play in Middle-earth, however, further explains how Tolkien’s “straying” was possible, and what effect it has on the interpretation of his text in relation to the Bible.

Religion and Worship in Middle-earth

The Silmarillion is very much influenced by religion in general and Christianity in particular. I have no doubt that readers of this text at some point recognise at least some connection between *The Silmarillion* and the Bible. This fact probably makes the realisation that Tolkien’s text contains no, or at least very little, worship or practicing of religious rites or prayers more striking. Tolkien’s invented world and mythology contain no churches or temples, marriages are not made ‘in front of God’, there is no holy scripture to speak of, and figures such as priests, monks or nuns are nowhere to be found. Yet many critics argue that *The Silmarillion* is a profoundly religious work. Brian Rosebury, for example, describes it as “Augustinian in its theology” (Rosebury, 95) and Rolland Heim in his book *Christian Mythmakers* labels Tolkien as “a Christian writing a Christian work” (Heim, 197) . Nevertheless, religion as a formal, concrete part of everyday-life is clearly absent in Middle-earth. Ralph Wood acknowledges that “the hobbits do not pray, although the Númenoreans pause before meals. Neither do the Shire-dwellers [hobbits] build temples or make ritual sacrifices” (Wood, 3). There are, however, a few exceptions. Most notably, in *The Lord of the Rings*, a few of the characters sometimes summon the aid of a superior being of sorts. Interestingly though, when this occurs the cry for help or strength is not directed to Ilúvatar – the One – but to one of the Valar instead. An illustrating example is that when Frodo is trapped in Shelob’s lair, he invokes the name of Elbereth, the elvish name for Varda, to escape the ordeal. But in spite of such exceptions, Ilúvatar and his intermediaries have relatively small parts to play, although they admittedly are mentioned more often in *The Silmarillion* than in *The Lord of the Rings*. The question then, is why Tolkien chose not to include the practice of religion in his stories. One suggested answer is given by Richard

Purtill: “Theologically, [Tolkien] was concerned not to show his wise and good characters worshipping false gods of any kind; he solved his problem rather drastically by removing *all* worship from his imagined world” (Purtill, 93).

While I agree with this, I would also argue that there was more behind the omission of religious practice than just avoiding having characters “worshipping false gods”. My opinion is that the omission *itself*, somewhat paradoxically, makes *The Silmarillion* more religious. In fact, it could be argued that because of the apparent lack of worship or practice of religion in Tolkien's universe, it becomes possible for the invented mythology to exist alongside the Christian teaching without overshadowing it. Purtill makes a similar approach, however more from an aspect of accepting Tolkien's myth as ‘real’: “[H]is stories have been more widely accepted, more influential for good *because* the religious element is not explicit but is embodied in the story” (Purtill, 93). Ralph Wood's argument is more in line with my own, claiming that Tolkien “makes the mythical world of Middle-earth non religious, among other reasons, in order that we might see Christianity reflected in it more clearly if also indirectly. [...] Tolkien's work is all the more deeply Christian for not being overtly Christian” (Wood, 4). In other words, the underlying themes of Christianity that make up a considerable part of Tolkien's mythology are never pushed out of focus by the ‘beliefs’ of the invented mythology, much due to the fact that there is no practice of ‘pagan’ worshipping. “[I]ts staying power resides in its *implicit* Christianity” (Wood, 2, my italics). A similar, but more biographical viewpoint is offered by Rolland Heim, who says that “Tolkien felt that one must look beyond the every day sameness and discover new perspectives from which the familiar look odd. [...] Myth enables us to see the world with fresh attention, prompting us to cease taking things for granted and discover their full integrity” (Heim, 161). Tolkien thus gave his readers a fresh perspective of Christianity, by *not* including any practice of religion or worship in his text.

A further understanding of why religious practice was left out can be reached if one treats *The Silmarillion* and the other tales of Middle-earth as an allegory. Tolkien purists, as well as the author himself would frown upon such an approach, but it is a practical way of making my argument more clear. If one views Tolkien's created mythology as an allegorical conveyance of his Christian beliefs, it would have been ruined if the author had included elements from that which the allegory is about. As Carpenter's comments on Tolkien's text; “to set his stories ‘realistically’ in the known world, where religious beliefs were explicitly Christian, would deprive them of imaginative colour. So while God is present in Tolkien's universe, He remains unseen” (Carpenter, 91). Using C. S. Lewis' Aslan as an example again, it would have been impossible for the lion to function as a symbol of Christ if he had actually

referred to Jesus. Similarly, Tolkien's text could not have conveyed the Christian themes if had incorporated them so explicitly as to have characters pray to God. The two need to be on different levels if they are to work together.

However, there is an exception, although one that still fits with my argument. The fourth section of *The Silmarillion* is called Akallabêth, and tells the story of the downfall of the Númenóreans, i.e. those men who had remained faithful through the dark years of the First Age, which are recounted in the book's third section, the Quenta Silmarillion. These men are deceived by Sauron, Morgoth's servant and follower, and lured into worshipping the Dark Lord:

Then Ar-Pharazôn the King turned back to the worship of the Dark, and of Melkor the Lord thereof, at first in secret, but ere long openly and in the face of his people; and they for the most part followed him. [...] But Sauron caused to be built upon the hill in the midst of the city of the Númenóreans, Armenelos the Golden, a mighty temple [...] [and] there was an altar of fire in the midst of the temple, and in the topmost of the dome there was a louver, whence there issued a great smoke. [...] Thereafter the fire and smoke went up without ceasing; for the power of Sauron daily increased, and in that temple, with spilling of blood and torment and great wickedness, men made sacrifice to Melkor that he should release them from Death. And most often from among the Faithful they chose their victims[.] (Tolkien, 327)

All of a sudden, there are several references to religious worship. A temple and an altar are mentioned explicitly, and even sacrifices. But the beliefs that are expressed through the Númenóreans' worship are not 'true', they are the heresy of worshipping Melkor. In essence, Sauron is the real evil behind the heresy, acting as a demon carrying out the Devil's bidding: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians, 11: 15). The worshipping in Númenor thus becomes of the kind which is forbidden by the first of God's ten commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus, 20: 3). In a way, Tolkien thus uses the contrast of worshipping and not worshipping as a parallel to evil and good. The free peoples of Middle-earth do not engage in such activities, and are pure, in the sense that they all conform to the underlying, Christian theme. Others are deterring examples of what happens when you choose the path of evil, by joining the Dark Lord.

Melkor and Lucifer – Morgoth and Satan

Insurrection of Iron, Fire, and Darkness

In the Bible and *The Silmarillion* alike, evil plays a significant role. Tolkien's Dark Lord, Melkor, borrows much from the biblical Lucifer, and plays a similar role throughout the narrative. In *The Silmarillion*, it does not take long before evil enters the story. Melkor's rebellion begins already in the beginning stages of Creation itself: "[I]t came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself" (Tolkien, 4). The subsequent struggle between Ilúvatar's and Melkor's themes is continuously described as a war in the text, which serves as a reminder of the biblical Lucifer's rebellion against God, described in the following way in the Bible:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelations, 12: 7-9)

From this rather short excerpt, many parallels can be drawn to Melkor in *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien's 'war in heaven' is not described in such concrete terms as the Bible's, but the struggle is acted out as a struggle between different musical themes. Nonetheless, in both cases there appears a division of the enactors, fighting on either side of good or evil. In Tolkien's text, not only do some of the Ainur begin to "attune their music to [Melkor's] rather than to the thought which they had at first" (Tolkien, 4), but eventually they rally to his side to become servants of evil: "For of the Maiar many were drawn to his splendour in the days of his greatness, and remained in that allegiance down into his darkness; and others he corrupted afterwards to his service with lies and treacherous gifts" (Tolkien, 23). Such "lies and treacherous gifts" compare Melkor with Lucifer as a deceiver of the world.

However, the most interesting comparison between the two dark lords is that they are both not only described as initially good beings, but also as the mightiest of their kind. "Manwë and Melkor were brethren in the thought of Ilúvatar. The mightiest of those Ainur who came into the world was in his beginning Melkor, but Manwë is dearest to Ilúvatar and understands most clearly his purposes" (Tolkien, 16). In the Bible, we find the following description of Satan:

Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the

sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. (Ezekiel, 28: 12-15)

Thus, both Melkor and Satan are angelic or spiritual beings who were good to start out with, but who have eventually fallen from God's grace. When Melkor defies Ilúvatar by trying to gain mastery of Creation through his own music, Ilúvatar tells him that "thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite" (Tolkien, 5-6). In a similar way, the biblical Lord makes it clear that rebellion against God's legislation and sovereignty is not tolerated, as he tells Satan:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah, 14: 12-14)

But whereas the Bible plays out the struggle in heaven, and ends it with having Satan thrown down to earth, Melkor is not punished before he can go into the world of his own will, and continue to rebel against the plan of Ilúvatar. His fall continues as he becomes the adversary of the Valar, who are working to achieving the vision of Ilúvatar on earth. Everything that they build, he destroys: "[V]alleys they delved and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down" (Tolkien, 12), ending with the destruction of the two lamps. Melkor is frequently mentioned along with words that are often associated with the biblical Devil. I have already quoted his descent "through *fire* and *wrath* into a great *burning*, down into *Darkness*" (Tolkien, 23, my italics), which echoes of the biblical "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (Revelations, 20: 10). Similarly, Milton's Satan is

Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky
 With hideous ruin and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
 In adamant chains and penal fire,
 Who durst defy the omnipotent to arms. (Milton, I: 45-49)

In addition, the Dark Lord in *The Silmarillion* is also often associated with iron, which is a more interesting use of symbolism. The most notable example is when "Morgoth forged for himself a great crown of iron, and he called himself King of the World" (Tolkien, 86). In the Bible, Satan is not symbolised by iron, but he *wants* to be. Jesus Christ is associated with iron

on more than one occasion; “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Revelations, 12: 5) and “out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelations, 19: 15-16). Jesus Christ is thus destined to rule the world, something that Satan covets for himself. With such biblical analysis as a background, Morgoth’s forging an iron crown becomes a strong symbol of his contempt and mockery of Ilúvatar’s vision and rule.

Evil as Part of the World

But why is it that evil is never destroyed? Melkor is at a fairly early stage of *The Silmarillion* captured by the Valar and “cast into prison in the fastness of Mandos, whence none can escape, neither Vala, nor Elf, nor mortal Man” (Tolkien, 49). Eventually he pleads for pardon and is then allowed to “go freely about the land, and it seemed to Manwë that the evil of Melkor was cured [but] Manwë was free from evil and could not comprehend it” (Tolkien, 66). Not long after, however, the text arrives at the point where Melkor and his accomplice Ungoliant destroy the two Trees of Light. Tolkien’s description of Manwë not comprehending evil hints at an opinion that evil cannot be cured, it is in evil’s nature to be evil, as it were. However, Tolkien never lets evil be defeated, although he may let the Dark Lord be imprisoned for a time. In fact, Tolkien *could* not let evil be defeated. David Harvey observes that “such an act would be an act of vengeance and if vengeance rested with anyone, it was with Ilúvatar. To destroy would put them [the Valar] on the same level as Evil, because Evil is the antithesis of creativity” (Harvey, 59). No, evil itself endures, and this seems to be a significantly important aspect of the theme that Tolkien wanted to convey in his invented mythology.

Since Melkor’s rebellious musical theme is woven into Ilúvatar’s own rather than stamped out when the world is created, his malevolence does have an impact on the the Creator’s original plan after all. Evil is woven into the weave that will become the world. A closely related analysis appears in Jonathan Evans’ article “The Anthropology of Arda”, which reads: “Tolkien portrays evil as originating not within the human world but in a time before time, in the fall of angelic beings” (Evans, 205).

In this way, Tolkien tells us that the world as created has evil in it, but it is a part that was not intended by the Creator. As Heim puts it, the Dark Lord’s “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" (Heim, 177). However, the notion that evil is part of the world does not make the world evil per se; it only introduces the *possibility* of evil. In slightly different terms, Harvey claims that "[t]he World has within it, subcreatively introduced, evil, rebellions and discordant elements of its own nature when 'Eä' was spoken" (Harvey, 37). The possibility of evil must therefore entail an element of choice; we have the freedom to choose between good and evil. Somewhat paradoxical, it is this element of choice that has the most potential to cause harm. Ralph Wood argues that "Tolkien repeatedly demonstrates that evil often springs from the best of things rather than worst" (Wood, 53), and Edmund Little appears to be on the same track as he writes that the free peoples of Middle-earth "appear to have a choice, because, whereas none of the bad people become good, several of the good fall into evil" (Little, 30). In that sense, free choice is a double-edged sword, a blessing and a possibility for doom, or "the tragedy and inconsolable grief that are endemic to mortal life" (Wood, 12).

I would argue that this notion of free will is a central part of Tolkien's own moral values and beliefs. It plays an integral role in how the theological concept of the Fall relates to *The Silmarillion* and to the free peoples of Middle-earth, which is the subject matter for the following sections of this essay. It is my opinion, and Charles W. Nelson's as expressed in his article "The Sins of Middle-earth", that "[b]y depicting the vices and virtues of his characters, Tolkien encourages his readers to adopt a new awareness of right and wrong so that by the end of the books, their understanding is very different from when they started" (Nelson, 94). Each and everyone must make their choice to side with either good or evil.

The Fall of the Elves

Creativity and Sub-creativity

The Elves is a people which often fascinates readers of Tolkien. Those who have only read *The Lord of the Rings* – or have only seen the films based on it – tend to view the Elves as a perfect, flawless race. *The Silmarillion*, however, paints a darker picture of sin and disobedience, which gives a much deeper understanding of what is said and what happens in *The Lord of the Rings*. I believe that Tolkien used the various peoples of Middle-earth in order to convey a viewpoint of Man as a fallen creature, in the sense of fallen from God's grace. Elves and Men in Middle-earth are attributed their own, respective falls, as different aspects of the biblical fall of Man. This has been the subject of much analysis and debate among critics, where different opinions range from the Elves symbolically being "Man before the

Fall which deprived him of his powers of achievement” (Humphrey, 93) to the opposing argument that “the Elves, unlike Adam and Eve, would appear to be created *fallen*” (Sly, 113). While I am more inclined to agree with Humphrey in this matter, a closer examination of the concept of sub-creativity is necessary before my analysis can continue.

The fall of Melkor is attributed to his unwillingness to subject himself to Ilúvatar’s supremacy, and to his desire to rule the world alone:

In the powers and knowledge of all the other Valar he [Melkor] had part, but he turned them to evil purposes, and squandered his strength in violence and tyranny. For he coveted Arda and all that was in it, desiring the kingship of Manwë and dominion over the realms of his peers. (Tolkien, 23)

Melkor was not content with the mere ability to sub-create, or act as a channel of Ilúvatar’s creativity, he greedily wanted the power of initial creation for himself, to alone possess the Flame Imperishable. To make the nature of this sin more clear, Tolkien actually allows another of the Valar to commit a similar sin by trying to create something on his own. Aulë, the smith, creates the Dwarves, “for so greatly did Aulë desire the coming of the Children [Elves and Men], to have learners to whom he could teach his lore and his crafts, that he was unwilling to await the fulfilment of the designs of Ilúvatar” (Tolkien, 37). The deciding difference between Melkor and Aulë, however, is that the latter does not create for his own sake. Confronted by Ilúvatar, Aulë explains that he does not desire any lordship, and is willing to redeem his sin by destroying the Dwarves. Aulë’s intentions are pure, and therefore Ilúvatar lets the Dwarves exist. He puts them to sleep, so that they will not precede the Elves as the Firstborn, which is Ilúvatar’s plan: ““But when the time comes I will awaken them, and they shall be to thee [Aulë] as children; and often strife shall arise between thine and mine, the children of my adoption and the children of my choice”” (Tolkien, 38). Melkor wanted to create his own beings so that he could command them, but this is impossible for him: “[N]aught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion in the Ainulindalë before the Beginning” (Tolkien, 47). Accordingly, since he cannot create new life, all the evil races of Middle-earth only come to existence through the perversion of others. Orcs are originally Elves who “by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved” (Tolkien, 47). The difference in Aulë’s creation, then, is that his intention is to create in the glory of Ilúvatar. As Purtill writes, “making or remaking can have good motives, the desire to teach and communicate, or bad motives, the desire to dominate and be worshiped” (Purtill, 89). Rolland Hein argues that “[t]he power of high art is frustrated when it is appropriated for self-serving ends. The proper response to its power is a renunciation of all personal ambitions in its regard, of self-abnegation in its presence – in short, humility”

(Hein, 175). Closely related to this is Ralph Wood's interpretation that "Tolkien holds that the essential task of all people is to set their loves in order; to love the triune God first and last, and to love all other things in right relation to him" (Wood, 38). These traits – humility and love – are central in the story of Fëanor and the Silmarils, in which the fall of the Elves is depicted.

Fëanor's Sin and Fall

When the Elves awaken in Middle-earth, they are met by a world of hazards and evil. The Valar therefore bid them to cross the sea into the west and join them in the land of Valinor, because the Valar "feared for the Quendi [Elves] in the dangerous world amid the deceits of the starlit dusk; and they were filled moreover with the love of the beauty of the Elves and desired their fellowship" (Tolkien, 49). Some of the Elves decline this offer and choose to remain in Middle-earth; they become known as the Avari (The Unwilling). Those who join the Valar in Valinor become known as the Eldar, and are subdivided into three kindreds; the Vanyar, the Noldor and the Teleri. Fëanor is an Elf of the Noldor race, which is accounted the greatest of the Elves in matters of lore and craft. He is described by Tolkien as someone out of the ordinary, who is more skilled than anyone in his craft: "He became of all the Noldor, then or after, the most subtle in mind and the most skilled in hand" (Tolkien, 64). In this respect, he is reminiscent of Melkor, who is also described as the most powerful of his kind. Fëanor creates things of great beauty and discovers

how gems greater and brighter than those of the Earth might be made with skill. The first gems that Fëanor made were white and colourless, but being set under starlight they would blaze with blue and silver fires brighter than Helluin [Elvish for the Dog Star, or Sirius]; and other crystals he made also, wherein things far away could be seen small but clear, as with the eyes of the eagles of Manwë. Seldom were the hands and mind of Fëanor at rest. (Tolkien, 64-65)

Going back to the notion of sub-creativity, the beauty of Ilúvatar is clearly mediated through Fëanor's craft. There is even an echo of the Flame Imperishable in his description, "as if a secret fire were kindled within him" (Tolkien, 64). Fëanor's craft is thus far blameless, since it is an example of sub-creation.

The sub-creation of the Elves, represented by Fëanor's jewels, becomes a matter of great envy to Melkor, who wants the ability to create for himself: "Then he looked upon their glory and their bliss, and envy was in his heart; he looked upon the Children of Ilúvatar that sat at the feet of the Mighty, and hatred filled him; he looked upon the wealth of bright gems, and

he lusted for them” (Tolkien, 66). Melkor’s greed and envy grows even bigger when Fëanor perfects his art, and creates the Silmarils, of which *The Silmarillion* gets its name.

And the inner fire of the Silmarils Fëanor made of the blended light of the Trees of Valinor, which lives in them yet, though the Trees have long withered and shine no more. Therefore even in the darkness of the deepest treasury the Silmarils of their own radiance shone like the stars of Varda; and yet, as were they indeed living things, they rejoiced in light and received it and gave it back in hues more marvellous than before. (Tolkien, 68)

The Silmarils become a symbol of light and purity, and Varda blesses them so that “no mortal flesh, nor hands unclean, nor anything of evil will might touch them, but it was scorched and withered” (Tolkien, 69). These events take place before the Trees of Valinor are destroyed by Melkor and Ungoliant, and once this happens, the Valar realise that their light still resides in the Silmarils. But Fëanor, who fails to show humility, refuses to give away his creations so that they can light the world. Admittedly, Fëanor is poisoned by the words of Melkor, who has sown the seed of evil in him, but in Ralph Wood’s words; “[t]his act was not prompted by Melkor but by Fëanor’s own selfishness – the perennial source of all evil” (Wood, 54). Fëanor suspects that the Valar are only trying to take the Silmarils of their own greed: “This thing I will not do of free will. But if the Valar will constrain me, then shall I know indeed that Melkor is of their kindred” (Tolkien, 83). Fëanor fails to love his creations in proper relation to Ilúvatar; “[t]he heart of Fëanor was fast bound to these things that he himself had made” (Tolkien, 69), and therein lies the origin of his fall from grace. As Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew, 6: 19-21)

Rolland Heim writes on the inability to show humility, remarking that “all sacrifices must be made. Renunciation is a principle found throughout the Bible, from Abraham’s renouncing his homeland to make a journey into the unknown to Christ’s humiliation and death” (Heim, 177). Charles W. Nelson writes in his article “The Sins of Middle-earth” that “possessiveness is one of the worst of transgressions [...] Adam and Eve lived happily in the garden; there was no strife for worldly goods because all things were held in common and no one wanted what he did not have” (Nelson, 85). Fëanor expresses possessiveness for the Silmarils, just as Melkor coveted the world for himself.

However, Fëanor’s fall is not isolated to his refusal to give up the Silmarils. Melkor manages to steal the jewels, killing Fëanor’s father Finwë in the process, which eventually

leads to the Elves' self-imposed exile from paradise. "Then Fëanor rose, and lifting up his hand before Manwë he cursed Melkor, naming him *Morgoth*, the Black Foe of the World; and by that name only was he known to the Eldar ever after" (Tolkien, 83). The Noldor, led by Fëanor, decide to leave Valinor and return to Middle-earth in order to reclaim the stolen jewels from Morgoth. Their sin is made worse and hereditary when Fëanor and his seven sons swear not to rest until the three Silmarils are in their hands, and to make war on any who withholds them; an oath which will have an enormous impact of the race of the Elves:

Then Fëanor swore a terrible oath. His seven sons leapt straightway to his side and took the selfsame vow together, and red as blood shone their drawn swords in the glare of the torches. They swore an oath which none shall break, and none should take, by the name even of Ilúvatar, calling the Everlasting Dark upon them if they kept it not[.] (Tolkien, 88-89)

In order to return to Middle-earth, the Noldor need to acquire the ships of the Teleri. When their lord Olwë refuses to submit the ships, Fëanor leads an assault that becomes known as the Kinslaying, in which the blood of many of the Noldor and the Teleri is spilled. Fëanor's sin is here made even worse, as he commits the same crime as Cain of the Bible; he kills his own kin: "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Genesis, 4: 8). Like the biblical Adam is the source of man's fallen nature and hereditary sin, Fëanor's sin is disobedience rooted in pride. To follow Wood's argument: "all love that is not ordered to the love of God turns into hatred" (Wood, 57). Because of their sin, Fëanor and the other proud elves are devoured by inexorable fate.

Because of Fëanor's sin, the Noldor return to Middle-earth. Leaving Valinor, the Undying Lands, is therefore an effective symbolical equivalent to man's sense of paradise lost. Although the Elves' exile is a march out of paradise rather than an expulsion, Fëanor's free will and subsequent choice has led to them being denied the right to dwell in paradise, as mirrored in the biblical text:

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis, 3: 22-24)

Expelled from paradise, the Elves and biblical man both end up with a spiritual blindness and an irrevocable propensity to commit evil. Fëanor's oath leads to much strife and suffering among the Elves, and when he himself is killed, his sons continue the blasphemous quest of

repossessing the Silmarils. When other Elves successfully conquer one of the jewels from Morgoth, Fëanor's sons wage war against them, thus continuing the Kinslaying. This one Silmaril is subsequently brought out of their reach, but once Morgoth is finally defeated at the end of Middle-earth's First Age, Maedhros and Maglor, the only two remaining sons of Fëanor steal the Silmarils from the camp of the victorious host. At this point, the price to pay for their sin is revealed to them, as the evils they have committed have made them unworthy of touching the Silmarils, which scorches their hands:

But the jewel burned the hand of Maedhros in pain unbearable; and he perceived [...] that his right thereto had become void, and that the oath was vain. And being in anguish and despair he cast himself into a gaping chasm filled with fire, and so ended; and the Silmaril that he bore was taken into the bosom of the Earth.

And it is told of Maglor that he could not endure the pain with which the Silmaril tormented him; and he cast it at last into the Sea, and thereafter he wandered ever upon the shores, singing in pain and regret beside the waves. (Tolkien, 305)

The rebel Elves have compounded their disobedience with slaughter, theft, and treachery against fellow Elves – the same crimes they deplore in Morgoth. Maedhros appears to be figuratively cast into hell for his sin, while Maglor ends up as a remorseful figure, symbolically reminiscent of the biblical man, who has been expelled from paradise, and is doomed to dwell in a world of insecurity and without bliss. Jonathan Evans notes that Tolkien, as well as Milton in *Paradise Lost*, “sought to render a literary vision of humanity at the level of all-encompassing cosmic scope that would explain the most difficult philosophical problem, perhaps the deepest source of human disquietude and ‘all our woe’: the sin of Man” (Evans, 205). Like Milton, Tolkien explores the faults of humanity through his text, and it continues with the sin and fall of Men in Middle-earth.

The Fall of Men

Paradise Gained – The Gift

The coming of Men into Middle-earth coincides with the rising of the Sun, at about the same time as the Noldor return to Middle-earth to wage war against Morgoth: “[a]t the first rising of the Sun the Younger Children of Ilúvatar awoke in the land of Hildórien in the eastward regions of Middle-earth; and the opening eyes of Men were turned towards it, and their feet as they wandered over the Earth for the most strayed that way” (Tolkien, 115). Unlike the Elves, men are not created fully as graceful and skilled in their arts, nor are they immortal. Again, at

first glance this may appear as a great disadvantage, but Tolkien does not paint such a gloom in his description of death:

What may befall their [Men's] spirits after death the Elves know not. Some say that they too go to the halls of Mandos [the Doomsman of the Valar]; but their place of waiting there is not that of the Elves, and Mandos under Ilúvatar alone save Manwë knows whither they go after the time of recollection in those silent halls beside the Outer Sea. (Tolkien, 117)

From this point of view, Tolkien conveys a message of death as being a sort of blessing, in which Man is finally able to see the whole purpose of God's creation, the universal truth. Nelson reminds his readers that in *The Silmarillion*, "the Valar perceived that the Elves' immortality was no gift in a Middle-earth that was itself mortal" (Nelson, 89). Ironically, while Men themselves fail to see death as a blessing, the Elves are envious of it. David Harvey notes that

[u]pon a man dying, his soul would return to Ilúvatar. This happens regardless of any error into which Man may have fallen. Thus, Ilúvatar can be seen as totally benevolent and totally forgiving. It was within the Plan of Ilúvatar that the desires and fate of Men should extend beyond the pre-ordained pattern of the Ainulindalë. (Harvey, 36)

Thus the Elves, the undying people, have forsaken their paradise in the Undying Lands and are left to dwell in a world not initially intended for them; Middle-earth. Men have not lost their paradise, it is within them, or at least ahead of them in the guise of death.

However, Men as a race in Tolkien's universe subsequently gain a more concrete earthly paradise, namely the island of Númenor. The Akallabêth section of *The Silmarillion* tells the story of the Númenóreans; those of the race of Men who had remained faithful to the forces of good through the War of the Jewels.

To the Fathers of Men of the three faithful houses rich reward was also given. Eönwë [a mighty Maia] came among them and taught them; and they were given wisdom and power and life more enduring than any others of mortal race have possessed. A land was made for the Edain [the faithful men] to dwell in, neither part of Middle-earth nor of Valinor, for it was sundered from either by a wide sea; yet it was nearer to Valinor. It was raised by Ossë [another Maia] out of the depths of the Great Water, and it was established by Aulë and enriched by Yavanna [...] That land the Valar called Andor, the Land of Gift; and the Star of Eärendil shone bright in the West as a token that all was made ready, and as a guide over the sea; and Men marvelled to see that silver flame in the paths of the Sun. (Tolkien, 310-311)

Númenor, the Land of Gift, can be seen as a paradise gained for those Men who have chosen not to side with evil. Being not a part of Middle-earth, Númenor is isolated from the insecure world around it, much like the biblical Garden of Eden. Mythologically, Númenor is also

reminiscent of Atlantis, being the place of a superior, more enlightened culture. Tolkien further enhances the image of a blessing from the Lord when he lets the Star or Eärendil guide Men to their newfound paradise; a symbol clearly inspired by the Star of Bethlehem signalling the birth of Christ. Like the Elves who were offered to dwell in the Undying Lands, Men are with the gift of Númenor given the opportunity to live in bliss. However, just like the Elves, they are bound to sin and fall from divine grace.

Paradise Lost – The Flood

Once the kingdom of Númenor has been established, the Númenóreans rise to the greatest height of any culture of Men in the whole of Tolkien's invented mythology. They are in contact with Elves from Valinor, who teach them much in craft and art. The Númenóreans are even blessed with longer life than other men. "But they did not thus escape from the doom of death that Ilúvatar had set upon all Mankind, and they were mortal still, though their years were long, and they knew no sickness, ere the shadow fell upon them" (Tolkien, 311). However, the preternatural gifts awarded to the Númenóreans come with one condition; that they must not sail westward out of sight of their island toward the Undying Lands:

But the Lords of Valinor forbade them to sail so far westward that the coasts of Númenor could no longer be seen; and for long the Dúnedain [Númenóreans] were content, though they did not fully understand the purpose of this ban. But the design of Manwë was that the Númenóreans should not be tempted to seek for the Blessed Realm, nor desire to overpass the limits set to their bliss, becoming enamoured of the immortality of the Valar and the Eldar and the lands where all things endure. (Tolkien, 313)

This is a parallel to the biblical tale of Adam and Eve, who are allowed to live in the Garden of Eden, as long as they do not eat the forbidden fruit: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis, 2: 16-17). Paradise comes with its boundaries.

But of course, just as in the Bible, the temptation eventually becomes too great for the Dúnedain. Sauron, who has now taken his place as a dark lord following his master Morgoth, deceives the king of Númenor, and stirs in Men an envy of the immortality of the Elves. Like Milton's Satan, Sauron acts as the deceiver who prompts the sin of Man:

[...] close at the ear of Eve;
Assaying by his devilish art to reach
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams,
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint

The animal spirits that from pure blood arise
 Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise
 At least distempered, discontented thoughts,
 Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires
 Blown up with high conceits engendering pride. (Milton, IV: 800-809)

For all their gifts and blessings, the Númenóreans cannot perceive death as a gift, only as a curse. And so, the fall of Men comes when they decide to rebel against the Valar, and make war against Valinor: “they broke the Ban of the Valar, and sailed into forbidden seas, going up with war against the Deathless, to wrest from them everlasting life within the Circles of the World” (Tolkien, 333). The punishment comes when the king sets foot in Valinor; then the Land of Gift is taken away and sinks beneath the waves forever.

Númenor went down into the sea, with all its children and its wives and its maidens and its ladies proud; and all its gardens and its halls and its towers, its tombs and its riches, and its jewels and its webs and its things painted and carven, and its laughter and its mirth and its music, its wisdom and its lore; they vanished forever. (Tolkien, 334-335)

Like Atlantis, the high culture of Númenor thus sinks into the sea. Furthermore, the imagery is reminiscent of the biblical flood, with which God washes away mankind which has fallen to evil: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis, 6: 13).

Tolkien seems to be bent on showing us that for all the wonders of God’s creations, his children appear destined to fall. Indeed, the word Akallabêth itself means “the Downfallen” (Tolkien, 376). As Jonathan Evans puts it, “Tolkien’s use of the word ‘fallen’ is not accidental – we may be certain he means it in its fullest sense as a theological term describing the moral condition of human imperfection” (Evans, 203). Indeed, Tolkien lets both the Elves and Men fall in his mythology, again a reminder of his view of sin and evil as something inherent and reoccurring. The two ‘falls’ in *The Silmarillion* could perhaps be said to represent two of the faults Tolkien saw in humanity; lack of humility before God (as in the story of Fëanor) and disobedience (as in the Númenóreans’ rebellion). Debbie Sly makes a similar argument, claiming that “all stories must reflect what for him [Tolkien] is the essential truth about humanity: it is fallen” (Sly, 118). However, although the nature of humanity as fallen is impossible to circumvent – Evans claims that “the imperfection of the world and the fallen human condition are *givens*” (Evans, 208) – there is still room for choice to do right, and the possibility of enjoying God’s everlasting love and forgiveness.

While the other Númenóreans fall from grace as they break their ban, there is a small group that is not deceived by Sauron’s promises of eternal life. Like Noah of the Bible,

Elendil, his sons and his followers has prepared for the disaster and taken ship. When the island sinks, they are driven back across the seas to Middle-earth. “There [on his ship] he was protected by the land from the great draught of the sea that drew all towards the abyss, and afterwards he was sheltered from the first fury of the storm” (Tolkien, 335). Similar to how Noah’s ark landed on the mountain of Ararat, Elendil’s ships return to Middle-earth, where the survivors begin to rebuild the culture of Men. Expelled from their paradise however, their new kingdoms Arnor and Gondor become only a dim reflection of the glory of Númenor at its height. Tolkien thus shows us his view of mankind, as a fallen race which as such must endure the hardships of this world because our right to paradise is forfeit. As Brian Rosebury writes, the overall thematic content of *The Silmarillion* is “the ubiquity of sin, the readiness with which created beings are deluded and corrupted, the tenacious power of pride, cupidity, and resentment, and the depths of cruelty and blasphemy to which they lead” (Rosebury, 95). But Tolkien also reminds us that although Man is fallen, we still have the ability to sub-create, and in that we retain God’s grace nonetheless. Jonathan Evans writes: “For postlapsarian men, to *be* is to be *fallen*, to be conscious is to be conscious of ourselves as already corrupt, and to write – to compose poetry or mythology in which, as it must be, the Fall is a central theme – is to do so with tools of craftsmanship already tainted by it” (Evans, 216).

Apokatastasis Pantou – The Final Restoration of All Things

In the beginning of *The Silmarillion*, the creation of the world originates in Ilúvatar’s vision of it. This vision is proposed to the Ainur to elaborate on, after which the One brings it into being. Some of the Ainur go into the world as Valar, and it becomes their task to achieve it. However, beginning with Melkor’s introduction of disharmony, the world as created strays from Ilúvatar’s original vision. It is the rebellion of Melkor that brings evil into the world, in discordance with the vision of creation “in which Erú intended that everything should be good” (Nelson, 83). As Ralph Wood writes, “Ilúvatar’s once-unharmful creation has been marred by an evil that corrupts not only the moral life of free creatures; it also lays waste to the natural order” (Wood, 21). This marring begins with the evil introduced by Melkor, and continues throughout the myth. The destruction of the lamps, the destruction of the trees, the rebellion of Elves and Men – all contribute in the marring of Arda, the corruption of Ilúvatar’s initial vision of the world. When the Númenóreans break their ban, the sinking of their island is not the only consequence: “Thus in after days, what by the voyages of ships, what by lore and star-craft, the kings of Men knew that the world was indeed made round” (Tolkien, 337-338). The world has been reformed, made round so that Men will never be able to reach the

shores of Valinor. The secret of how to reach the Undying Lands is revealed only to the Elves, so that they may eventually return to their home, as is told in *The Lord of the Rings*. In David Harvey's words: "The Flood is more than just a retribution. It marks an ending of the cosmogonic myth of the Creation of Arda. The Final shape of the Earth is settled; Paradise is a place apart; the boundaries of Middle-earth are defined" (Harvey, 42). The final form of the world is thus a marred creation, with the fact that "some of the harsher and uglier aspects of the material universe may not have been in God's original design" (Purtill, 95).

However, although the vision of Ilúvatar failed to be achieved as intended, Tolkien's myth still has the element of hope and longing for a day when it will be. Already in the *Ainulindalë* there is a passage that signals the awareness of how all things one day will come to an end and be replaced with a better world:

Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar by the choirs of the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased. (Tolkien, 4)

Tolkien tells his readers that there will be a time when the universal truth is revealed to us all, and when a new and better world will be made. It is interesting to note how not only the Ainur shall be part of the creation of the new world, but also the Children of Ilúvatar; Elves and Men (and presumably also Dwarves). The theme shall be played aright, and lead to the creation of the world as God intended it. As David Harvey notes,

[t]he End will not be a Ragnarok or a Gotterdamerung [sic] and, unlike the Aesir, the Valar will not perish. All the Children shall survive to sing in the new song and be present at the remaking of Arda. Arda must be remade for it is *marred* and needs to be restored to its former beauty, as it was before the depredations of Morgoth. (Harvey, 34)

Although Tolkien presents his readers with a view of mankind as fallen, the notion of a better existence to come also gives them a sense of hope. Not surprisingly, it is the same message that can be found in the last book of the Bible:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the

throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (Revelations, 21: 1-5)

Thus, the end of this world heralds the coming of a perfect one. Comparing *The Silmarillion* to the Bible, we find the same pattern in both texts; creation, the fall of an angel, resulting in disharmony and evil in the world, and finally the end of days and a final restoration to all things.

Conclusion

In his life-long creation of Middle-earth and its mythological history, Tolkien arguably succeeded in creating the mythology that he felt that his native country lacked. Or perhaps it would be better to say that he sub-created his mythology, since it stemmed greatly from the biblical text and Christian beliefs that were so deeply rooted in Tolkien as a person. *The Silmarillion* is a deeply compelling work, through which Tolkien conveyed his approach to the ever-asked question *why is there evil in the world?* His portrayal of the world initially intended as a perfect, utopian place signifies his faith in the undying love of God, yet the marring of the world by the forces of evil bears testament to Tolkien's view of mankind as fallen.

The intertextual relationship between *The Silmarillion* and the Bible is intricately woven, with the understandings of the two texts clearly affecting each other. At first glance, the biblical themes appears to influence readers of *The Silmarillion*, but as this essay has tried to demonstrate, the way Tolkien reforms the stories and incorporates non-Christian elements makes the reader re-evaluate his or her interpretation of the biblical text. By using his mythological narration as mode and the biblical themes as his model, Tolkien successfully relays his vision of the nature of God, Man, sin and evil, and how the universal truth will someday be revealed.

The Bible and *The Silmarillion* are related, although the stories found in the two books are often quite different from each other. But the similarities surface when one looks past the details and finds a deeper layer that runs through the texts. In my opinion, the Bible should not be used to find details or specific quotes in order to discover absolute and unquestionable answers, but rather as a text that conveys general ideas, ideology and moral values. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was inspired by the Holy Scripture in his literary endeavours, and although his stories sometimes differ in detail when compared to the Bible, the underlying layer remains the same, and conveys the same universal truth. Tolkien's text has often been labelled as escapism, but by embedding the Gospel, he never lets us escape from questions

and thoughts that are central to mankind. The themes of *The Silmarillion*, and indeed of *The Lord of the Rings*, have an element of universal appeal, with a symbolism that effectively touches us all. Perhaps this is why his mythic tales are so enduring, and remain so popular into the 21st century. Tolkien reminds us that paradise is not *entirely* lost, since it lives on within humanity and in our art. The Flame Imperishable burns in all of us, as a reminder of how we all belong to and are loved by God.

Primary Sources

Tolkien, J.R.R. 1999. *The Silmarillion*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.

Secondary Sources

Bennett, Andrew & Royle, Nicholas. 1999. *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.

Buchanan, George W. 1994. *Introduction to Intertextuality*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.

Carpenter, Humphrey. 1977. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. London: George Allen & Unwin Publishers, Ltd.

Eden, Bradford Lee. 2003. "The 'Music of the Spheres': Relationships between Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Medieval Cosmological and Religious Theory", in: Chance, Jane (ed). *Tolkien the Medievalist*. London, Routledge, 183-193.

Evans, Jonathan. 2003. "The Anthropology of Arda: Creation, Theology and the Race of Men", in: Chance, Jane (ed). *Tolkien the Medievalist*. London, Routledge, 194-224.

Harvey, David. 1985. *The Song of Middle-Earth: J.R.R. Tolkien's Themes, Symbols and Myths*. London: George Allen & Unwin Publishers, Ltd.

Heim, Rolland. 1998. *Christian Mythmakers: C.S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, J.R.R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, G.K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, John Bunyan, Walter Wangerin, Robert Siegel, and Hannah Hurnard*. Chicago, Illinois: Cornerstone Press.

Little, Edmund. 1984. *The Fantasts – Studies in J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis Carroll, Mervyn Peake, Nikolay Gogol and Kenneth Grahame*. Amersham, England: Avebury Publishing Company.

Milton, John. (Fowler, Alastair ed.) 1998. *Paradise Lost*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited.

Nelson, Charles W. 2000. "The Sins of Middle-earth: Tolkien's Use of Medieval Allegory", in: Clark, George & Timmons, Daniel (ed). *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 83-94.

Peck, John & Coyle, Martin. 2002. *Literary Terms and Criticism*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.

Plett, Heinrich F. 1991. "Intertextualities", in: Plett, Heinrich F. (ed). *Intertextuality*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 3-29.

Purtill, Richard, L. 1984. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Rosebury, Brian. 1992. *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: The MacMillan Press Ltd.

Sly, Debbie. 2000. "Weaving Nets of Gloom: 'Darkness Profound' in Tolkien and Milton", in: Clark, George & Timmons, Daniel (ed). *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 109-119.

Wood, Ralph C. 2003. *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Internet Sources

Moyise, Steve. "Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review". *Verbum et Ecclesia* 23, 2002. April 16 2004.

<<http://www.ucc.ac.uk/theology/html/MoyiseVerbumetEcclesia.htm>>

The Bible, King James Version. 2004. Christ Unlimited Ministries. 7 April 2004.

<<http://www.bibleontheweb.com/Bible.asp>>

The Encyclopeida of Arda. 2004. 10 May 2004. <<http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/>>