

## RELEVANCE AND LEGACY OF “THE LORD OF THE RINGS”

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### Abstract

*The paper discusses the importance of J.R.R. Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings' and its influence on present-day lives. Among main topics highlighted there are politics, spirituality, Christianity, evil and good.*

**Keywords:** J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Lord of the Rings', fantasy, Middle-Earth politics, spirituality, evil and good, christianity.

### Анотація

*У тезах розглядається важливість твору Толкіна «Володар перснів» і його вплив на сьогодення. Основними темами, розглянутими тут є: політика, духовність, християнство, добро і зло.*

**Ключові слова:** Толкін, «Володар перснів», фантастика, політика середньозем'я, духовність, християнство, добро і зло.

The Lord of the Rings is one of the greatest pieces of literature ever produced. It defined the fantasy literature genre; few works since have been able to reproduce the detail and vastness of his worlds. The book was written during World War II. J.R.R. Tolkien describes a conflict between the various races of Middle-earth, all of whom have been stirred into violent unrest by the tempting power of the One Ring.

Though those events happened in Middle-earth some 6,000 years ago, The Lord of the Rings tackles troubles facing humanity even today. Tolkien's story deals with intrinsically human themes, such as good and evil, power, love, loss, courage, duty, and companionship, while invoking deep-seated religious, mythological, and philological symbols. Tolkien was inspired by Norse mythology and, as an academic and a speaker of many languages, he invented a language, Quenya, and various different alphabets for his Middle-earth tales, adding them onto the book.

### Politics in Middle-earth

Politics concerns the distribution of power over people. Political philosophy concerns how best to achieve that. The question is how should Middle-earth be ruled? Dark Lord Sauron takes it upon himself to be the one who decides how things should be. While pursuing his goal, he manages to gather huge terrifying armies. Democracy isn't really a thing here anyway.

The issue is that the One Ring, which was forged by the Dark Lord Sauron, is corruptive. All who don't care for power and just want to exist aren't safe from trouble, for they have nowhere to hide amidst a great war. All who possess ideas of how things ought to be are lured by the power the Ring confers: with it they would be able to set Middle-earth right for their own people (as Boromir of Gondor thought). But common people just desire of comfort and safety. There's a lot stake for the people of Middle-earth. So, promises of better lives of riches, of new lands, etc. – are alluring.

People protect their own kind; and they only react to the troubles when their communities are under threat. Born of ill or righteous will—who can say? But we can surely respect their duty. As Faramir, standing over a dead Haradrim soldier, solemnly remarks:

'His sense of duty was no less than yours, I deem. You wonder what his name is, where he came from, and if he was really evil at heart ... what lies or threats led him on this long march from home, if he would not rather have stayed there ... in peace. War will make corpses of us all.'

Desire for power is a source of great trouble here. People see the prospect of using this power for the good of their own kind. But it is always Sauron's. With no trace of compassion, Sauron is able to enslave lands under false promises of sharing his ultimate power, which brings them self-served pain and doom.

The Ringbearer, Frodo Baggins, and his companions decide to destroy the One Ring and rid the world of its evil once and for all. Destroying it will disarm Sauron, banish evil and restore peace to Middle-earth.

### **Spirituality**

Tolkien was a devoted Catholic. This was no mystery: he declared this work fundamentally Christian and like any talented writer, he was able to link his values with the objects of his stories. Through symbols he conveyed messages and meanings for our interpretation. While Tolkien steered clear of using deliberate allegory in his work, an underlying religious nature was absorbed into the story and expressed in the characters' journeys, languages, and moral ideals. Some examples will help.

The free people of Middle-earth long for the return of a king. Aragorn—who even looked like traditional depictions of Jesus Christ—as the rightful heir to the throne, is eventually able to give them one who can deliver the peace and justice they crave.

Tolkien was also drawn to religious terminology. He took particular inspiration from a set of Christian, Anglo-Saxon poems which used 'Éarendel' alongside 'middle-earth'. Like in *The Lord of the Rings*, 'middle-earth' denotes an inhabited place of men, whilst 'Éarendel' (or 'Eärendil' in Quenya) is an Old English term for 'ray of light'. The latter signifies John the Baptist's 'bright morning star' and is a word whose 'great beauty' Tolkien was struck by.

Frodo is gifted water from a fountain which held the light of Eärendil's star by Elf Queen Lady Galadriel. The glowing water comes in handy later in his quest and is given to the hobbits along with bread ('lembas'), which is similar to fulfilment in The Eucharist, and drink from a common cup in a farewell ritual. Angelic music is played in Lady Galadriel's lands. Later Aragorn kneels over a dead Boromir and performs a gesture which is similar to making the sign of a cross.

Religious themes are thoroughly woven into the story elsewhere. The War of the Ring represented a battle between good and evil and Tolkien's philosophical point was that Christian values should prevail. On one side we have the Fellowship of meek peace-making, pure-hearted hobbits, uncharacteristically righteous men, a wise and benevolent elf, a courageous dwarf, and a pope-like wizard, who leads with no claim to rule over a land and even crowns Aragorn. On the other we have a parasitic evil which starves the lifeblood of Good.

### **Manifesting Evil Symbolism**

Malicious Dark Lord Sauron rules from the realm of Mordor and casts Shadow with fiery fumes, torture, plague, smoke, and disease. The Nazgûl even seem to mirror the Four Horsemen, who traditionally symbolise death, war, famine, and conquest. His power is spread by ugly, instinct-driven legions of soldiers who possess no greater interests than those which serve their immediate desires. Through the One Ring Sauron enslaves Middle-earth, a growing evil impact even the Fellowship's moral values. For example, in his writing, Tolkien literally invigorates evil by capitalising certain words, such as 'Shadow', as personifications of Sauron. Sauron's ominous evil pushes Frodo to say, 'The days are growing darker'. Conversely, Théoden rejuvenates when he wiggles away from the turned hand of his evil sidekick, Gríma, and is illuminated by the words of the wise Gandalf the White.

### **Christianity**

The Lord of the Rings is a work of literature that is deeply rooted in Christian theology, and the theme of redemption is one of its most prominent and compelling aspects. The book reflects the Christian concept of the Fall and its effects on the world and its inhabitants, and it presents a vision of hope and redemption that is both complex and nuanced. The journeys of the various characters in the book reflect different aspects of this theme, and they are all interconnected in a way that reflects the interconnectedness of sin and redemption in Christian theology. Ultimately, The Lord of the Rings is a story of hope, sacrifice, and redemption that continues to resonate with people as a result.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of The Lord of the Rings, along with Tolkien's works in general, has not solely affected the production of later literature, but it has also found its way in a number of different media. From music and the radio to the stage and visual art, Tolkien's influence has reached many various forms of entertainment, with a particular success in regards to cinema and television, especially during the last decades.

Perhaps the overwhelming response to the films thus far and to the book is due to the fact that this epic story touches something deep in our humanity as created in the image of God—showing us something of how life is to be lived—fighting against the domination of evil forces, sacrificing comfort, a finger, or even life, if necessary—ordinary characters doing extraordinary acts of courage.

Humans adore stories. Stories push us to fight for a nation or a cause; stories invite us to build bonds within a community; stories entice us to create new things and to shape the world around us; stories provide us with values and ideals; stories convey fundamental truths about the human condition.

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