

‘And one white tree’:

the cosmological cross and the *arbor vitae* in J.R.R. Tolkien’s

The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion

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Does the cross of Christ appear in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*? The answer to this question is complicated. Certainly, Tolkien would have expressed impatience with the allegorical implications presented by the argument that the cross does appear, however subtly. Though Tolkien conceded that his heroic epic remains, “a fundamentally religious and Catholic work,”¹ he insisted that, “the Third Age was not a Christian world.”² The tree, for the inheritors of medieval Christian doctrine and typology, is (though not exclusively so) a Christian symbol. For this reason and because Tolkien had spent so much of his time working closely with early “germanicised” Christian texts, one can argue that a number of images in *LotR* ought to be read within an early Christian framework or may in fact correspond (both for its readers and for its author) to Christian symbols. Such a correspondence, I argue, does exist in the appearance of the White Tree of Gondor.

The image most cohesively appears towards the end of the novel [*Return of the King*, Book VI, chapter 5 “The Steward and the King”]. Aragorn, with Gandalf’s assistance, enters a hallowed space, recovers a sapling of the then withered White Tree and plants it in the Court of the Fountain. Knowledge of the sapling is delivered by Gandalf:

‘Verily, this is a sapling of the line of Nimloth the fair; and that was a seedling of Galathilion, and that a fruit of Telperion of many names, Eldest of Trees. Who shall say how it comes here in the appointed hour.’³

Within a few months, the sapling grows swiftly and by June, “it was laden with blossom.”⁴ That the sapling signifies the future fecundity of Aragorn’s reign, and of the Fourth Age more generally, is foreshadowed earlier in the chapter in the last two stanzas of an eagle’s triumphant song:

Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West,
for your King shall come again,
and he shall dwell among you all the days of your life.

And the Tree that was withered shall be renewed,
and he shall plant it in the high places,
and the City shall be blessed.

Sing all ye people!⁵

Tom Shippey astutely recognizes in this eagle-song echoes of specific Biblical Psalms, which endow the lines with a double meaning. The lines are at once about the coming of Christ and NOT about that at all, but about a situation entirely void of Christian elements.⁶ Images and characters in *LotR* are open to numerous though not innumerable interpretations. Even a quick glance search through the Douay-Rheims Bible, however, makes evident the close parallels between that text and the stanzas of the eagle’s song. The Psalms contain a number of pronouncements to sing for joy while Ezekiel 17 contains a combination of images that loosely resembles the final scenes at Minas Tirith: there are eagles, and tender twigs of a young vine that are planted on a moun-

tain high and eminent. A footnote reads the tender twig as Christ.

Beyond the passage on the sapling, the White Tree appears on the surcoats of the Guards of the Citadel along with many pointed stars, calling to mind the phrase emerging from Middle-earth folklore: “Seven Stars, Seven Stones, and One White Tree.”⁷ In the chapter “Minas Tirith,” in Book 5 of *Return of the King* Pippin recalls these words of Gandalf as he sees for the first time the remains of the dead Tree of Gondor:

A sweet fountain played there in the morning sun, and a sward of bright green lay about it; but in the midst, drooping over the pool, stood a dead tree, and the falling drops dripped sadly from its barren and broken branches back into the clear water. (25)

The power of the scene derives from the evocative description of the tree; it literally hangs there, broken and dead. Droplets of moisture fall from its head to pool at its feet. The spectacle itself calls for the tree’s interment; however, it remains standing for all to see, an image of grief.

The White Tree most closely associated with Gondor’s history specifically and the Second and Third Ages of Middle Earth more generally, is Nimloth, the sacred tree of Numenor, the land from which Elendil and his sons Isildur and Anarion fled. A history and interpretation of the White Tree would be better illuminated in the light of the source material Tolkien drew upon. As a practising Catholic, Tolkien would have been familiar with those texts in the Bible that spoke of the image of the divine tree. As a medievalist, this familiarity would have become a professional necessity. Located by the fountain of the shining white city of Minas Tirith after the coming of Aragorn, the new king, the rebirth of the White Tree resonates with Christian scripture and with influential and informative medieval texts, both Christian and pagan. Much of this material concerns the cosmological nature of the cross and its traditional link to the world pillar and *arbor vitae* (the Tree of Life). These texts are full of images of the sacred tree whose branches stretch out into the heavens and whose roots reach into the world’s centre. The tree’s very presence signifies a community’s faith in the presence of the divine within the materials of the earth. It suggests abundance, fecundity, and regeneration.

The Tree of Life is a central image in the Old and New Testaments. Genesis 2:9 describes the Tree of Life that stands at the center of the Garden of Eden: “*produxitque Dominus Deus de humo omne lignum pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave lignum etiam vitae in medio paradisi lignumque scientiae boni et mali*,” [The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil].⁸ Likewise, a great tree appears in King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 4: 8-9 and is recognized as an image of the

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king himself:

magna arbor et fortis et proceritas eius contingens caelum aspectus illius erat usque ad terminos universae terrae, folia eius pulcherrima et fructus eius nimius et esca universorum in ea. [The Tree was great and strong, and the height of it reached the heavens and it was visible even to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were most beautiful and its fruit exceeding much, and in it was food for all.]⁹

Here, and again in Isaiah, a tree is interpreted as a king, usually Christ. In Isaiah 11: 1, the symbolic reference is to a rod that emerges from the root of Jesse: “*et egredietur virga de radice Jesse et flos de radice eius ascendet*” [And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root]. Root in this case denotes a familial branch. The messiah was to come from the family of David¹⁰.

Similar trees appear in John’s New Testament vision of New Jerusalem (Revelations 22:2):

in medio plateae et ex utraque parte fluminis lignum vitae adferens fructus duodecim per menses singula reddentia fructum suum et folia ligni ad sanitatem gentium. [In the midst of the street thereof, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations].

I do not wish to spend much time on the symbolic readings available in these passages. What seems to be most significant is the connection made between the nourishing fruit and or leaves of these trees and the health of the community. In the New Testament, this fruit is read as Christ. His birth and rebirth bring salvation to the world. A *LotR* correspondence is found in (Isildur-whose health returned with the blossoming of Nimloth’s Scion, and) in Aragorn-whose restoration initiates the appearance of the sapling and the marriage of Gondor’s king to Arwen.

Medieval English legends concerning the early history of Christ’s cross most likely familiar to Tolkien make associations between the Tree of Life in Paradise and the beam of wood used to crucify Christ. One legend extant in Old and Middle English manuscripts recounts how Adam’s son Seth buried his father along with seeds from the Tree of Knowledge in the spot [usually considered the center of the earth] where Christ would be hung. The tree that would grow from those seeds would eventually yield the very beam of wood used for Christ’s cross. The irony of this history was not lost on medieval Christians. Ninth through to eleventh-century hymns influenced by the sixth-century cross hymns *Pange Lingua*, *Vexilla Regis*, and *Crux benedicta Nitet* of Venantius Fortunatus often recognized that the Tree that initially condemned humanity and banished Adam and Eve eventually became the very “Tree” on which the Christian saviour would be suspended. *Pange Lingua* [or Sing, my Tongue] explains:

*De parentis protoplast fraud fact condoles,
quanta poi oxalis mortem moors corrupt,
ipse lignum tunic nativity, adman ligni at solve ret* [4-6]
[Grieving at the harm done, to the first born of the creator, when he fell in death by the bite of the harmful apple, He (Christ) himself even then honoured a tree in order to undo the damage caused by a tree.]

And concerning the divine nature of this tree *Vexilla Regis* [Standard of the King] announces:

Impleta sunt que cecinit, David fideli carmine
dicendo nationibus: ‘regnavit a ligno deus.’ [13-16]

[It has happened as he told, David, in faithful song, saying to the nations: ‘god ruled from a piece of wood.’]

Crux Benedicta Nitet [The blessed Cross Shines] speaks of the cross as a sweet and noble wood [*dulce et nobile lignum*] (9) whose leaves shine with a brilliant light:

*to plantata micat, secus est ubi cursus aquarum,
spargis et ornatas flore recente comas.
appensa est vitis inter tua brachia, de qua
dulcia sanguineo vina rubore fluunt.* [15-18]

[Planted near where waters flow, you shimmer, and you spread wide your foliage adorned with fresh flowers.

Between your branches the vine hangs, from which comes sweet wines, red as blood.]

From the inclusion of these hymns into the liturgy, the cross came to be known as that Tree from which Christ, the salvific fruit, was hung.¹¹ Latin hymns were not the only source of inspiration, however. The Anglo-Saxon church historian, the Venerable Bede, supplied analogous Christian material concerning the cosmological nature of cross, its centrality. He wrote in his description of specific holy places (*De Locis Sanctis*) concerning the restoration of a man’s soul by the cross in the center of Jerusalem. At the site of this resurrection stands a column, which casts no shadow on the summer solstice:

*Unde putant ibi mediam esse terram et historice dictum:
Deus autem rex noster, ante saecula operatus est salutem
in medio terrae.*¹²

[From this they reckon that the centre of the earth is at that spot and that literally true is the saying, but God our king, before the ages, effected salvation at the centre of the earth.]

The image persists in vernacular texts as well. The canonical Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood* in its display of germanicised Christianity, depicted Christ’s cross as a shining tree in its opening lines.

*puhte me pæt ic gesaw syllicre treow
On lyft lwdan, leohte bewunden,
Beama beorhtost.* (4-6)¹³

[I thought that I saw a wondrous tree,
spreading aloft, wound with light,
a most brilliant beam.]

The poem is a dream vision in which the cross appears as a shining tree that speaks to the dreamer concerning Christ’s Passion. The poet uses Old English words for tree (*treow*, *beam*, and *wudu*) to refer to the cross nine times. What is most striking about the poem is its display of affective piety. As the dreamer looks on, he notices the blood issuing from the tree. When the rood-tree speaks, it speaks of its torment, its wounds given at the time of Christ’s crucifixion: “Me those valiant men left to stand covered with blood; I was thoroughly wounded by sharp points” (61-62). Likewise, the tree is buried and at a later point retrieved. The rood experiences Christ’s suffering at the time of the crucifixion and the dreamer by extension does the same.

One of the eighth-century riddles recorded in the eleventh-century *Exeter Book*, *Riddle 28* shifts ambiguously between images of a tree branch and the cross. I give the riddle in full as it appears in Craig Williamson’s edition:

1 *Ic eom legbysig, lace mid winde,
bewunden mid wuldre, wedre gesomnad,
fus forðweges, fyre gebysgad,
bearu blowende, byrnende gled.*



The stairs of Cirith Ungol

Lorenzo Daniele

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5 *Ful oft mec gesipas sendap æfter hondum
pæt mec weras ond wif wlonce cyssað.
ponne ic mec onhæbbe, ond hi onhnigap to me
monige mid miltse, pær ic monnum sceal
ycan upcyme eadignesse.*¹⁴

1 [I am troubled by fire, played with by the wind,
wrapped with glory, united with the storm,
ready for the journey, agitated by fire,
the blooming grove, the burning ember.

5 Very often friends pass me from hand to hand,
exultant men and women, in order to kiss me,
when I raise myself, and they bow to me,
many (people) with joy, there I shall for the men
increase the up-swelling of happiness.]

The riddle's presence underscores the popularity of the tree/cross image in medieval church culture. Moritz Trautman argues that the riddle first refers to a branch (lines 1-4) and then the cross (lines 5-9), and I am inclined to agree with him.¹⁵ The fecundity embraced in the imagery provides a sense of the cross's transformation from a tree, harassed by the elements, to a cross, worshipped with joy (*monige mid miltse*), and ultimately ensuring the fertility of the earth (*ycan upcyme eadignesse*) and the health of the community. The health of the land as well as the salvation of souls was the jurisdiction of the *arbor vitae*.

Images from pagan Scandinavia analogous to the Christian *arbor vitae* image were influential as well. The most well-known is that of Yggdrasil, the great ash tree which stands at the centre of the world. Appearing in the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), Yggdrasil was a divine tree that (as with the tree that grew from Adam's mouth) emerged from the cosmological centre of Middle-Earth:

The ash is the best and greatest of all trees; its branches spread out over the whole world and reach up over heaven. The tree is held in position by three roots that spread far out; one is among the Æsir, the second among the frost ogres, and the third extends over Nifheim.¹⁶

Like the rood, Yggdrasil was known for bearing the weight of the god Odin who discovered the power of runes while suspended from the tree. Lastly, the Kalevala presents an image of an immense though evil oak tree whose high and thick branches cover the light of the sun and moon:

Then the branches wide extended, and the leaves were thickly scattered,

And the summit rose to heaven, and its leaves in air extended.

In their course the clouds it hindered, and the driving clouds impeded,

And it hid the shining sunlight, and the gleaming of the moonlight.

Runos II, [81-89]

Interestingly, a great hero who emerges from the sea dressed all in copper armor wielding a great axe cuts the tree:

Six the stones on which he ground it,

Seven the stones on which he whet it. [Runos II, 163-64]

The warrior ground and sharpened his axe against seven stones before felling the majestic tree. Perhaps through his Cauldron of Story this very passage made its way into Tolkien's Numenorean folklore.

The last pagan image relevant to this subject is the Irminsul. The Irminsul was a holy pillar, often made of oak, thought to

symbolize Thor's power and that of the sky. One saga in the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Landnámabók* tells of a great tree that washed ashore when a settler prayed to Thor for a "high-seat" pillar for his hall in Iceland. These pillars supplied luck and protection to the hall and bestowed on the community the power of the sacred grove. Such a tree-pillar appears in the *Volsunga Saga*, which Tolkien so greatly appreciated. After the birth of his fair children, Sigmund and Sigli, King Volsung built a hall for himself:

So says the story that King Volsung let build a noble hall in such a wise, that a big oak-tree stood therein, and that the limbs of the tree blossomed fair out over the roof of the hall, while below stood the trunk within it, and the said trunk did men call Branstock.¹⁷

The cosmological cross and its Scandinavian analogues, like the sapling discovered by Aragorn, invoke the fecund powers of the earth and promote the growth of the community. A closer investigation into Tolkien's masterpiece will allow us to recognize the interesting parallels between it and the texts on the *arbor vitae*.

The history of the image within Tolkien's mythology goes something like this. It first appears in the *Silmarillion* when the goddess Yavanna engages in the sacred act of creation. Through her song, two shoots spring from the earth growing quickly into the two sacred trees of Valinor. Of the two [one shining gold, the other silver], it is the future and function of Telperion, the silver, that concerns us here. The Tree enjoys an a priori position as sacred object from the beginning of time:

Telperion was the elder of the trees and came first to full stature and to bloom; and that first hour in which he shone, the white glimmer of a silver dawn, the Valar reckoned not into the tale of hours, but named it the Opening Hour, and counted from it the ages of their reign in Valinor.¹⁸

It is hard not to hear a distant echo of Genesis even at this early stage. A second version of the White Tree appears a short while later in the Elven city of Tirion atop the green mound Tuna. Yavanna offers it as a gift to those first children of Iluvatar newly arrived in Valinor:

And since of all the things in Valinor they loved most the White Tree, Yavanna made for them a tree like to a lesser image of Telperion, save that it did not give light of its own being; Galathilion it was named in the Sindarin tongue. The tree was planted in the court beneath the Mindon and there flourished, and its seedlings were many.¹⁹

Tolkien continues to strongly associate the White Tree with the highest and most central court of each realm as we see here in Tirion; it becomes the center of each society. Its presence marks the degree of devotion to the gods and the height of a realm's glory. This is true of the human kingdom of Numenor as well.

From Celeborn planted in Tol Eressea, one of Galathilion's many seedlings, comes Nimloth to Numenor. The seedling is giving to Elros, the first king of Numenor, by the Eldar as a gift, and Elros plants the Tree in the King's court at Armenelos, "the fairest of cities"²⁰

And the Tree grew and blossomed in the courts of the King in Armenelos; Nimloth it was named, and flowered in the evening, and the shadows of night it filled with its fragrance²¹.

Interestingly, Armenelos is located at the foot of the great mountain Meneltarma, "the Pillar of Heaven". Meneltarma is

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the cosmological centre of Numenor and thus of the world of men. It is a hallowed site, "And it was open and unroofed, and no other temple or fane was there in the land of the Numenoreans."²² The care Nimloth receives is a direct indication of the degree of faithfulness of the Numenorean kings²³. Ar-Gimilzor, the twenty-second king, was the greatest enemy of the Valar and of the Faithful residing in Numenor. When mentioning the king, Tolkien quickly associates his rebellion with the Tree's abandonment.²⁴ Ar-Gimilzor's son, Inziladun, [adopting the Elvish title Tar Palantir], re-establishes the Tree's care and, "prophesied, saying that when the Tree perished, then also would the line of the kings come to its end."²⁵ During the reign of Ar-Pharazon, the twenty-fourth and last king, Nimloth meets this end for in bad judgment he had demanded that Sauron be seized and brought from his tower, Barad-dur, to the Isle of the Sea Kings, a move that Sauron was very willing to make. Very slowly Sauron successfully persuaded the elderly Ar-Pharazon that the Eldar and Valar had no intentions other than to keep men from enjoying the beauty and immortality of the Undying lands. Once the king was convinced, the Tree was in jeopardy despite the prophecy relating the Tree's health to the line of kings. However, before Sauron could persuade the king to cut down the White Tree, Amandil, leader of the Faithful, spoke to his son Elendil and his two sons Isildur and Anarion. His identity disguised, Isildur took the initiative, quietly entered the forbidden ground, and stole a fruit from the Tree. Having brought the fruit to his grandfather, Isildur collapsed. At this time, Tolkien makes a point to associate the health of the Tree with the life of the Faithful. Isildur was brought back to health, avoiding death when the scion of Nimloth was planted and began to blossom:

But when its first leaf opened then Isildur, who had lain long and come near to death, arose and was troubled no more by his wounds²⁶.

Remarkably, the Tree is bound to the life of mortal men and displays potent salvific powers. Its blossoming restores the king's health.

The fate of Nimloth itself serves as a register of men's devotion to the gods. The king's decision to cut it down serves as a useful metaphor for the severing of loyalties, the triumph of irreverence exemplified in Sauron's very presence. The cut trunk of the White Tree was thrown first into the altar fires of the new temple to Sauron's Lord, Morgoth, which was set up in its place²⁷. Tolkien tells us only that, "men marveled at the reek that went up from it, so that the land lay under a cloud for seven days, until slowly it passed into the west."²⁸ Numenor for all intents and purposes had become a nation of rebels and wicked tyrants. When Ar-Pharazon disregarded the Ban set against sailing to the Undying Lands and marched his soldiers to the base of Tuna itself, Numenor was condemned. The destruction was terrible and complete as the sea opened up to engulf the Island in a passage reflective of the legend of Atlantis and sharing a thematic resemblance to the first great destroying flood. In fact, Tolkien suggests as much in his letter to Robert Murray written in 1954. Referring to it as, "a kind of Noachian situation," Tolkien muses on the religious attitudes of the remaining Numenoreans. Very few escaped; only Elendil and his sons together with nine ships of faithful soldiers managed by the grace of Iluvatar to make it to Middle

Earth, and as we might expect, "in the ship of Isildur was guarded the young tree, the scion of Nimloth the Fair."²⁹ Perhaps the tree is a suitable metaphor for those who were to inherit, in Tolkien's words, "the hatred of Sauron, the friendship of the Elves,(and) the knowledge of God." Speaking of the 'hallow' of God, Tolkien remarks:

It later appears that there had been a 'hallow' on Mindolluin, only approachable by the King, where he had anciently offered thanks and praise on behalf of his people; but it had been forgotten. It was re-entered by Aragorn, and there he found a sapling of the White Tree, and replanted it in the Court of the Fountain³⁰.

"Only approachable by the king," must mean that the Aragorn as "the King Returned" had entered a space in which the dimensions of the divine and material worlds overlapped.

The Scion of Nimloth was planted at Isildur's citadel, Minas Ithil, as a "memorial of the Eldar and the light of Valinor in 3420."³¹ When Sauron took the citadel in 3429, he destroyed the Tree once again, but not before Isildur [in a repeat performance] carried away yet another fruit. In 3440, Anarion was killed during the siege of Barad-dur; Sauron was defeated the following year. Elendil and Gil-galad were both slain. This marked the end of the Second Age.

Two years into the Third Age, Isildur planted the fruit of the Tree at the court of Minas Anor; he then traveled North with his new heirloom, Sauron's ring³². Anarion's offspring became more closely associated with the White Tree and the Court of Gondor once Isildur and his three oldest sons were killed on their way to Eriador. His fourth son, Valandil remained in North and became King of Arnor eight years later. The line of Anarion continued from Meneldil to Earnur who in 2050 was challenged, betrayed and captured by the Lord of the Nazgul, never to be seen again. During the reign of Anarion's line, the Tree does die during the Great Plague [1636-37] as does the King Telemnar and his two sons. Tarondor, the twenty-seventh King [1636-1798] planted a seedling of the Tree in the Court of the Fountain in 1640, and perhaps is responsible for the planting of the sapling Aragorn discovers. Despite the death of the last king in 2050, the White Tree does not die immediately. The relationship is not a tight one-on-one comparison. What is certain is that the Tree's fate continues to be connected to that of the kings. Appendix A tells of the Tree's fate in 2852:

When Belecthor II, the twenty-first steward, died, the White Tree died also in Minas Tirith; but it was left standing 'until the King returns', for no seedling could be found³³.

With the return of the king to Gondor, the fate of the Tree will be resolved; restoration and fertility joined. The mournful presence of that dead Tree remained until that cold afternoon when Aragorn found its sapling. As seen in the passage from *The Return of the King*, the sapling's discovery at the 'hallowed' ideological center of Middle-earth is concurrent with the restoration of the King, the re-establishment of a kingdom faithful to the Valar and friends to the Eldar, the recovery of religious knowledge and the renewal of the earth. *The Silmarillion* covers the event in a similar manner:

Thus peace came again, and a new Spring opened on earth; and the Heir of Isildur was crowned King of Gondor and Arnor, and the might of the Dunedain was

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lifted up and their glory renewed. In the courts of Minas Anor the White Tree flowered again...and while it grew there the Elder Days were not wholly forgotten in the hearts of the kings³⁴.

The Tree symbolizes all that Tolkien considers virtuous in humanity. Its life connotes reverence and a perceptive understanding of not only the potential for humans to perform acts of goodness, but of their destiny within the scheme laid out by the Valar. Commitments made long ago are remembered as is the glory of humankind. Through its repeated deaths, the suffering of the world is made manifest. With its rebirth, wounds are healed and salvation is brought to Middle-earth.

Conclusion

I'll wrap up this argument with another passage from Tom Shippey who captures the appropriate and precise process of Tolkien's sub-creation. Referring to Tolkien's deliberate avoidance of undeniable Christian imagery, Shippey writes:

"Tolkien did right normally to avoid such allusions, to

keep like the author of Beowulf to a middle path between Ingeld and Christ, between the Bible and pagan myth. The care with which he maintained this position (highly artificial, though usually passed over without mention) is evident, with hindsight, on practically every page of *The Lord of the Rings*.³⁵

The tree/cross conflation was well established in the Middle Ages and, as a medievalist, Tolkien would have been very familiar with that. The White Tree is Yggdrasil, the Icelandic Irminsul, Volsung's Branstock, and a brighter version of the Kalevala's mighty oak. Maintaining an artful balance between the Biblical tradition and original fairy-story, Tolkien gives us an image that begs for Christian interpretation. The White Tree, as a cosmological artifact, supplies visible traces of attributes associated with the most significant Christian symbol. The White Tree is the world pillar of Middle-earth and register of one's faith in God. It shines brilliantly, resides at the cosmological centre of the community, and supplies the kingdoms with bounty and salvation and the promise of years of peace.

Notes

1. Letters 172.
2. Letters 220.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, *Return of the King* (1955; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983) 250.
4. Ibid.
5. *Return of the King* 240.
6. Tom Shippey. *The Road to Middle-earth*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003) 200-01. A second example of this occurs with the date of Sauron's defeat. Tolkien chooses the twenty-fifth of March which was widely recognized as the date of the Crucifixion. Tolkien would remind us, however, that Sauron is not exactly the devil. March 25th is about the crucifixion and not about it.
7. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. (Ed.) Humphrey Carpenter. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) # 163.
8. All Latin biblical citations are taken from Jerome's Vulgate version, *Biblia sacra: iuxta Vulgatam versionem* 2 vols. 2nd ed. B. Fischer et al. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975.
9. The image of the Tree in Daniel appears in the Anglo-Saxon manuscript Junius 11 in an Old English translation.
10. I need to thank Matthew Dickerson of Middlebury College for bringing the image of "the root of Jesse" to my attention.
11. See Inge Milfull's *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) and A.S. Walpole's well-known *Early Latin Hymns* (London: Routledge, 2000).
12. Bede, "De Locis Sanctis," *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965) 251-80b.
13. Michael Swanton ed., *The Dream of the Rood*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000. The translation is my own,

though I found S.A.J. Bradley's translation [Anglo-Saxon Poetry, London: Everyman's Library, 1982] an invaluable guide.

14. Williamson, 85.
15. Numerous other critics have concluded the riddle's answer to be a ship, a cup, a log, and a harp...
16. Jean I. Young, *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson*, (Berkeley: U of California P, 1964) 42-43.
17. William Morris. *Volsunga Saga* (New York: Collier Books, 1962) 91.
18. Christopher Tolkien, ed. *Silmarillion*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1977) 34.
19. *Silmarillion* 62.
20. *Silmarillion* 324.
21. Ibid
22. *Silmarillion* 322.
23. Claudia Finseth. "Tolkien's Trees." *Mallorn* 35 (1997 September) 42.
24. *Silmarillion* 330-31.
25. *Silmarillion* 332.
26. *Silmarillion* 337.
27. *Silmarillion* 338.
28. Ibid.
29. *Silmarillion* 342.
30. *Silmarillion* 206
31. *Silmarillion* 362.
32. That Isildur leaves the White Tree at Minas Anor is perhaps an indication of the power of the ring already at work. A reader will quickly notice that Isildur has had a long history with the Tree and seemed always to associate it with his reign.
33. *Return of the King*, 334.
34. *Silmarillion* 377-78.
35. Shippey 201.

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