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A Wind from the West: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Tolkien's Middle-Earth

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Abstract: *Explorations of Tolkien's latent theology abound, but very little focused scholarship proposes to discuss how Tolkien's legendarium portrays an understanding of the Holy Spirit, especially in light of Tolkien's Roman Catholicism. This essay explores three major features of Tolkien's work that provide insight into this ghostly person of the Trinity.* The Silmarillion *provides detailed insight as to the exact identity of the "Flame Imperishable," while its characters demonstrate the indwelling of this Flame. St. Paul explains the gifts of the Holy Spirit in his first letter to the Corinthians and Tolkien seems to mimic many of these gifts in the characters of the nine members of the Fellowship. Lastly, the Great Eagles represent the workings of the Holy Spirit, both as servants of Manwë and as agents of eucatastrophe.*

Tolkien's unofficial declaration to Fr. Robert Murray that "*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work" has resulted in a storm of criticism looking for hidden Christianity in Tolkien's publications (*Letters* 172).[1] In general, the search has been rewarded. Aided by his published letters and his Christian-tinged essay "On Faerie Stories," Tolkien's faith is now nearly as well-documented as that of his friend C. S. Lewis. Yet we do damage to Tolkien's work when we treat him like Lewis. Ralph Wood reminds us that Tolkien was neither as evangelistic nor as Protestant as his Oxford counterpart. Tolkien was easily Lewis' spiritual match, but in terms of depth rather than breadth. To a Roman Catholic Christian like Tolkien, "God" was not a mere one-dimensional figure, but a Trinity: a Divine unity composed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have known for some time where the first two have

been hiding, but a dedicated search through Tolkien's writings for the third Person of the Trinity does not exist.

Tolkien helpfully explains that Eru-Ilúvatar is "The One," that is, God the Father (*Letters* 204), and several scholars have uncovered Christological components in Eärendil, Aragorn, Frodo, Gandalf, and others (Kreeft, "Worldview"). Gunnar Urang and Colin Duriez provide models for what seems to have become the typical approach to the Christian elements of Tolkien's *legendarium*: Ilúvatar receives credit for providential events and cosmology—serving as an analogue to God the Father—while Gandalf and Eärendil, both of whom "die" and return to life, serve as analogues to Jesus Christ (Duriez 60**AUTHOR: NO REF. LIST ENTRY FOR THIS SOURCE**; Urang 122).[2]

We might grant that the surplus of studies seeking references to God the Father and God the Son stems largely from the surplus of references Tolkien himself makes to them. Tolkien's overt proclamation of the *evangelium* in "On Faerie Stories" presents an irresistible lure for critics on the scent of Jesus allusions. Even Tom Shippey concedes that readers have little choice but to see Ilúvatar as the Creator and Eärendil as a Savior (239). Fleming Rutledge, however, places this chase in a more balanced light by saying that while Gandalf's character arc certainly shares parallels with Christ's, Tolkien in no way means for Gandalf to "be" Christ in any sort of allegorical fashion (163). This is a timely reminder that while the furnishings of Tolkien's mind were richly populated with Christian narratives, the gospel story was rarely, if ever, a conscious thought as he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, at least not until he revised his manuscripts for publication. As Tolkien himself stressed, only in hindsight did Tolkien ever interpret his writings religiously (*Letters* 204). Rutledge's reminder will apply to our examination of the Holy Spirit in Tolkien's writings as well.

Tolkien's specific references to the Holy Spirit are much more subtle than those to the Father and the Son, but they certainly exist—if one looks carefully. Aside from Gandalf's invocation of the Secret Fire before the Balrog of Moriah in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, a handful of references also exist in the published version of *The Silmarillion*. Christopher Tolkien uncovered an even greater stock of references found in his father's drafts, which were published in volume ten of *The History of Middle-earth: Morgoth's Ring*.

Scholarship studying the Holy Spirit in Tolkien's writings is likewise scarce. Clyde Kilby made the well-known first claim by revealing that the "Secret Fire" which Gandalf serves actually refers to the Holy Spirit.

Regrettably, Kilby's declaration is only a passing reference to a conversation Kilby had with Tolkien, and no analysis attends the comment. Instead Kilby merely moves on to what has now become the typical theological approach (Kilby, *Tolkien* 59; "Myth" 132-33). Most critics, of course, never broach the subject. Certain scholars like Peter Kreeft, Anne Petty, and Ralph Wood seem to prepare the reader for such a discussion but never actually land on the topic (Kreeft 50; Petty 138-54; R. Wood, *Gospel* 12, 31). In fact, the entire fourth chapter of Petty's *Tolkien in the Land of Heroes* provides many useful insights on the Secret Fire's indwelling within the sentient creatures of Middle-earth, but she apparently does not recognize the country whose borders she explores. Jared Lobdell offers by far the longest discussion of the topic. Chapter 3 of his *The World of the Rings* provides several pages of observations concerning the Holy Spirit's function within *The Lord of the Rings*. Lobdell focuses almost exclusively on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with some references to Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, also called "the unpardonable sin," but overlooks other potential references such as the nature of the Secret Fire (Lobdell 52-57, 67). For a brief discussion of the Secret Fire as Holy Spirit from Tolkien's own Roman Catholic perspective, we may turn to Stratford Caldecott's *The Power of the Ring*. Tellingly, the previous edition of Caldecott's book was entitled *Secret Fire: The Spiritual Vision of J. R. R. Tolkien*, yet the book takes a rather catechistic approach which leaves less room for analysis than one would like. Still, Caldecott's emphasis on the creative role played by the Holy Spirit—and the Secret Fire—is valuable, and few critics contextualize Tolkien's Catholicism so well. Fleming Rutledge mentions the Holy Spirit on numerous brief occasions, the most notable of which is his connection of Gandalf's trial by fire and water with the Balrog to the Holy Spirit's work in Christian baptism (167). Rutledge also engages in a brief discussion of the Gifts of the Spirit, this time in the context of Galadriel's gifts to the Fellowship (39, 135). With numerous mentions—mostly thanks to Kilby—attended with little depth, one begins to acquire the impression that critics either have nothing at all to say concerning the Holy Spirit or have only brief flashes of insight without realizing the potential for full investigation. I aim to collect these brief flashes and assemble a coherent picture of how to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of Tolkien's *legendarium*.

Tolkien's idea of the person and work of the Holy Spirit manifests itself in three distinct ways. The first, and most obvious, is the Secret Fire, or Flame Imperishable, which proceeds from Eru Ilúvatar just as the Holy

Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son. The second demonstrates the presence of the Secret Fire in the lives of individual characters through the presence of Spiritual Gifts perceived in the enemies of Sauron (Wytenbroek 8). The last involves a sort of biblical word play. In the Bible, both the Hebrew and Greek words for *wind* may be translated *spirit* as well, representing an intermingling of the two concepts. Tolkien uses this interplay in his portrayal of wind, and extends it, by analogy, in his use of the Great Eagles as epic *machinery*.

Before we explore these regions, however, it will be most useful to pause and present a clear definition of the Holy Spirit as Tolkien understood it. The sources for Roman Catholic doctrine originate from both the Bible and from church tradition, so we will examine these briefly. We first hear of the Holy Spirit in the first chapter of Genesis, when the "Spirit of God" moves across the waters of the unformed planet (Gen. 1:2). In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God remains an impersonal force, referring to God's special outpouring of His power over the earth (Jeffrey 356). In the New Testament, however, the Holy Spirit becomes more personal. Christ makes perhaps the most important, and most famous, reference to the Holy Spirit when he promises a "Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring you to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26 KJV; Boles 28).[3] One chapter later, Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit will also be a guide to truth (John 15:26). Jesus' words reveal that the Holy Spirit is a sentient entity, divinely united with the Godhead, whose primary function is to unite with humans and to act as their spiritual guide and protector (Boles 29). In the book of Acts and in Paul's epistles, we discover that the Holy Ghost is also an indwelling spirit who takes up residence in believers and grants them gifts accordingly (Acts 19:2-6; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 2:4). These gifts may merely augment latent talents or may take shape as miraculous powers (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Here, then, are the most important Biblical functions of the Holy Spirit: Comforter, Guide, Indweller, and Giver—both of life and of gifts. All four of these functions occur in Middle-earth, but we can get even more specific.

Biblical imagery concerning the Holy Spirit reveals some interesting parallels with Tolkien's imagery. Only twice in the New Testament does the Holy Spirit reveal its presence in a way perceivable to the human senses. The first is at the baptism of Jesus. Three of the four gospel writers describe the Spirit "descending like a dove" to alight on Christ's shoulder (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; John 1:32). The only other sensory manifestation of the Spirit

is at the inauguration of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit reveals its presence with two sensory phenomena, the sound "as of a rushing mighty wind" and the appearance of tongues "like as of fire" above the heads of all who are present (Acts 2:2-4; Caldecott 105). Both of these occasions appear to have provided fuel for Tolkien's imagination. He, too, utilizes the imagery of fire, wind, and wing to represent the Spirit of Ilúvatar, as we shall see.

From a biblical survey of the Holy Spirit, we move to an examination of the Roman Catholicism with which Tolkien himself was most familiar. The heart of Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit flows from the Nicene Creed, which states, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is to be adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets" (Wilhelm). Certain phrases of this sentence reverberate with Tolkien's work.

The first of these is "Giver of Life," since the Secret Fire is a giver of life as well. Stratford Caldecott says that the phrasing of the *Valaquenta* mimics those opening verses of Genesis which establish the participation of the Spirit of God with the creation of the universe (Caldecott 73-74; see table 1). Tolkien further defines the Flame in *Morgoth's Ring,* saying that "it refers ... to the mystery of 'authorship,' by which the author, while remaining 'outside' and independent of his work, also 'indwells' in it, on its derivative plane, below that of his own being, as the source and guarantee of its being" (*Morgoth* 345). This quote does not suggest that Tolkien considered *himself* to be the Flame Eternal, instead it refers to Tolkien's concept of sub-creation. The word "author" functions in its sense of creator rather than merely writer. Tolkien's portrait of creation has a decidedly Augustinian tone, according to John Houghton. Augustine argued that the phrase "heaven and the earth" in Gen 1:1 refers to the *actual* creation of all angelic beings in heaven but only to the *potential* for creation of earthly creatures, who appear later as the passage progresses (Houghton 174). The *Ainulindalë* mimics Augustine's model by portraying the Ainur—the angels—as existent prior to the actual creation of Arda—the World. The very word *ainur* is a cognate of *aina,* the Elvish word for "holy," making the Ainur a collection of "holy" spirits (*Sil.* 355). Tolkien departs from Augustine by having the Ainur, not Ilúvatar, fulfill the potential creation by bringing into reality the Music of Ilúvatar, yet Ilúvatar has kindled the Flame Imperishable within each of them as an indwelling, and Ilúvatar himself remains in possession of the Flame as the

ultimate source of life (*Sil.* 5-16; Petty 140).

Table 1 (emphases mine)

from "Valaquenta"	Genesis 1:2
Therefore Ilúvatar gave to their vision Being, and set it amid the Void, and the *Secret Fire* was sent to burn at the heart of the World; and it was called Eä (*Sil.* 25).	And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the *Spirit of God* moved upon the face of the waters.

The next important phrase from the Nicene Creed, "proceeds from the Father and the Son," denotes the fountainhead of the Holy Spirit (McHugh and Callan 93). In other words, in order to work in the world of mankind, the Holy Spirit must advance from either the Father or the Son, a process the church fathers called "the *filioque*" (Maas). The term was coined in the fourth century in response to the heresy of Arius and others which claimed that the Spirit is the "primary creature" of God the Father (Aquinas Q27. A1). Jared Lobdell claims that the chronological setting for Middle-earth expresses the *filioque*. As a pre-Christian world, the Son has not yet been incarnated; consequentially, the Holy Spirit could not proceed directly from the Son and therefore remains unannounced and unnamed (Lobdell 53). By this admittedly elaborate rationale, Lobdell explains why no named character in *The Lord of the Rings* stands as an analogue to the Holy Spirit.

The last of the phrases from the Nicene Creed which we will examine is "who spoke by the Prophets." Concerning Tolkien's use of prophecy, much has been written by other critics, and I will say more below in the context of the Gifts of the Spirit.[4] For now, we may usefully establish that prophecy stems directly from the Holy Spirit, as generally agreed by both Jewish and Christian theologians. Old Testament writers often attribute the "Spirit of God" when referring to prophetic utterances. The Spirit comes upon Balaam, Saul, David, and many others just at the moment of their prophecies (Jeffrey 356; Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 11:6; 1 Sam. 19:23). St. Luke reiterates this function in the New Testament when Paul lays hands on a group of disciples, and "the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). A primary interpretation of the Greek word *prophētēs* is "one ... moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman," therefore any who utter a true prophecy may be said to be

under the Holy Spirit's influence (Orr 2463-4**AUTHOR: IS THIS THE ORELLI ENTRY IN THE REF. LIST?**; Thayer G3296). Julaire Andelin mentions that the source of prophetic utterances within the *legendarium* is the Music of the Ainur, the song sung by Ilúvatar and the Ainur upon which all of Arda was planned (544; *Sil.* 15). This may explain why prophecies in Middle-earth are often expressed in song. While it may be a mistake to view the Music of the Ainur and the Flame Imperishable as synonymous, both certainly proceed from the mind of Ilúvatar, and the procession of both imitates the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Music establishes the plan for creation; the Flame executes that plan by quickening the Void from which the Universe sprung. Characters who speak prophecies have been given divine access to the Music *through* the power of the Flame.

Having briefly surveyed its foundation in the Scriptures and in Roman Catholic theology, we now turn to the Secret Fire**.** This can be a difficult concept to grasp because Tolkien uses the phrase sparingly and shrouds its meaning with mystery. Hopefully, we have already cleared away much of the mystery, but now we will examine the multiple functions that the Secret Fire serves which parallel those of the Holy Spirit. For the sake of reference, I have cataloged Tolkien's direct expressions of both "Secret Fire" and "Flame Imperishable" (Table 2). By placing these passages side-by-side, certain insights immediately arise. First, nearly all the references are found in *The Silmarillion*, which comes as no surprise since this fits with the mythological tone of that volume. Next, the roles which the Secret Fire plays in the *legendarium* closely parallel the biblical roles we have already surveyed. The Flame is a principle of Ilúvatar himself and can give life, indwell within a creature, comfort those in need, serve and be served. The most interesting aspect of the Flame Imperishable, of course, is its interaction with the Children of Ilúvatar, which will occupy the remainder of my discussion.

Table 2
Mentions of the Flame Imperishable/Secret Fire[5]

Role	Source	Quotation
Giver (life)	The *Ainulindalë* (*Sil. 15).*	"And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will."

Role	Source	Quotation
Comforter	The *Ainulindalë* (*Sil.* 15-6)	"... for all shall then understand fully [Eru's] 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."
Principle of Godhead	The *Ainulindalë* (*Sil.* 16)	"[Melkor] had gone often alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame; for the desire grew hot within him to bring into Being things of his own. ... Yet he found not the Fire, for it is with Ilúvatar."
Indweller	The *Ainulindalë* (*Sil.* 20)	"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..."
Indweller	*Valaquenta* (*Sil.* 25)	"... and the Secret Fire was sent to burn at the heart of the world; and it was called Eä" (*Sil.* 25).
Giver (gift)	*Quenta Silmarillion* (*Sil.* 64)	"... and Fëanor grew swiftly, as if a secret fire were kindled within him."
Principle of Godhead	*Fellowship of the Ring* (392)	"I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor. You cannot pass."

As stated, the life-giving function of the Secret Fire emerges with the Music of the Ainur. Tolkien says in a note regarding the *Ainulindale*: "This appears to mean the Creative activity of Eru (in some sense distinct from or within Him), by which things could be given 'real' and independent (though derivative and created) existence" (*Morgoth* 345). For all sentient creatures within Arda, this "Creative activity" refers to the creation of their souls, which Tolkien calls *fear* [sing. *fëa*] (*Sil.* 17; *Morgoth* 218). In the *Ainulindalë*, Melkor lusts after this force, causing him eventually to separate himself from the other Valar and initiating the Marring of Arda (*Sil.* 16).

Tolkien defines the *fëa* as an "indwelling spirit," which alludes to the theological indwelling of the Holy Spirit and implies that the *fëa* depends upon the Secret Fire for its vitality (*Morgoth* 470). This was why Morgoth sought the Flame Imperishable, because he envied Ilúvatar's ability to "bring into Being things of his own," a task the One had reserved solely for himself (*Sil.* 16; *Morgoth* 9). Yet the *fëa* and the Secret Fire are not the same. While Tolkien invented the Elvish word, his theology is quite orthodox. St. Paul declares to the Thessalonians, "I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23, emphasis mine). The Greek words Paul uses here are *pneuma*, for "spirit"; *psyche*, for "soul"; and *sōma*, for "body." The passage appears to point to a trichotomy of human existence and has indeed given rise to such doctrines, but official Catholic doctrine follows Thomas Aquinas in asserting that only "two constituent parts of man" exist: "soul and body" (McHugh and Callan 121; *Summa* Q76.A4). Tolkien's own dichotomy for the Children of Ilúvatar abides by this structure very closely (*Morgoth* 336). All Men and Elves possess a *hröa*—a body—and a *fëa*, a soul given by the Secret Fire. Tolkien's *hröa* correlates with Paul's *sōma,* while *fëa* correlates with *psyche*. The Secret Fire, then, serves as *pneuma,* the spirit, but does not gain sufficient distinction to warrant a trichotomy. Instead the Fire quickens the *fëar* after the manner in which St. Augustine describes the creation of the soul: as an emanation beget by God, yet distinctly unique from Him (Maher and Bolland). Alfred Ely Day explains the contrast quite eloquently: "The 'spirit' (*pneuma*) is the outbreathing of God into the creature, the life-principle derived from God. The 'soul' *(psuchē* [sic]) is man's individual possession, that which distinguishes one man from another and from inanimate nature" (2837).

Tolkien said a great deal regarding the *fëar* which he ultimately left out of his primary published works but which Christopher Tolkien included in *Morgoth's Ring*. Tolkien calls created beings who possess *fëar* "incarnates," that is, *fëa* and *hröa* amalgamate into a spirit incarnate (*Morgoth* 349). *Mirröanwi*, the Elvish word for "incarnate," means "put into flesh" and refers explicitly to the Children of Eru but, like the word *fëa,* does not appear in *The Silmarillion* (*Morgoth* 350, 457). Tolkien also wrote at length on the Eschatology of Humans and Elves, whose fates differ greatly. An Elvish *fëa* may be separated from its *hröa* in a kind of death, and yet the Elf still "lives." Its *fëa* may either be summoned to the Halls of Mandos, or it may wander unbodied as a wraith. Elvish *fëar* who obey the summons may one

day be born again into a new *hröa*, the equivalent of reincarnation (*Morgoth* 217-19). In this sense, Elvish incarnation bears an added resemblance to the incarnation of Christ in that Elves may be resurrected from the dead. Human *fëar*, on the other hand, do indeed die when their *hröar* become separated from their *fëar* which depart Arda altogether to "dwell with Ilúvatar," a metaphor for heaven (*Morgoth* 331).

Apart from merely giving life to a *fëa*, the Secret Fire may also kindle an individual soul with particular brightness. The prime example is Fëanor, whose name (*fëanaro)* literally means "spirit-of-fire" (*Sil.* 330). At birth, the strength of his spirit causes the spirit of Míriel, his mother, to recede from his presence, and she becomes the first Elf to die (*Sil.* 63; *Morgoth* 216). The episode recalls the birth of John the Baptist, a figure steeped "with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. 3:11; White 121). An angel tells John's father that the boy "shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). Both stories end in tragedy, yet unlike John, Fëanor authors his own demise. Fëanor lives "as if a secret fire were kindled within him;" his eyes are "piercingly bright" and he is "driven by the fire of his own heart" to create the Silmarils, the jewels which were the pride and doom of the Noldor (*Sil.* 64, 66). Such was the power of his *fëa* that he invests into the Silmarils what appears to be *fëar* of their own; the crystal of the gems "was to the Silmarils but as is the body [*hröa*] to the Children of Ilúvatar: the house of its inner fire [*fëa*]" (*Sil.* 67). Through the transmission of the Secret Fire from Fëanor's own spirit to the creation of the Silmarils, no character of Tolkien's embodies the hierarchy and holiness of sub-creation more acutely.

The strength of an individual's *fëa* may also apparently wax or wane, as empowered by the Secret Fire under special circumstances. In scripture, such an increase in power or vitality is called being "filled with the Holy Spirit," just as we see with John the Baptist, and many biblical characters do great deeds under its influence, like the disciples at Pentecost and St. Paul when he preaches (Acts 2:4; 13:9). Light imagery sometimes highlights these events, as the tongues of fire do at Pentecost and as Stephen's glowing face does while preaching (Acts 6:15). As in the Bible, when such a quickening occurs, Tolkien augments the event with light imagery as well (Petty 140). For a most dramatic example, consider Fingolfin, Fëanor's half-brother and king of the Noldor in Beleriand. At the news of the loss of Dorthonion, a great rage comes upon him, and he gallops north to Angband "like a wind amid the dust," with eyes shining "like the eyes of the Valar" to challenge Morgoth in hand-to-hand combat (*Sil.* 153). During the epic battle that

ensues, Fingolfin gleams beneath the shadow of Morgoth "as a star," and he dodges Morgoth's blows "as a lightning shoots from under a dark cloud" (*Sil.* 153-54). The combination of fire and wind imagery added to the tremendous increase in Fingolfin's stamina and strength suggest that the Secret Fire has taken possession of him; that perhaps he is no longer merely the King of the Noldor but a chosen instrument of the Valar. Fingolfin dies at Morgoth's hand, becoming a martyr type, like Stephen, whose face shines with the fullness of the Holy Spirit just before he is stoned to death by the enemies of Christianity (Acts 6:15).

This illumination of empowerment occurs often, usually when characters perform deeds whose completion demands more strength than that available on their own (Petty 143). Tolkien writes openly of this empowerment when Lúthien confronts the wolf Carcharoth: "But suddenly some power, descended from of old from divine race, possessed Lúthien" (*Sil.* 180). She stands "radiant and terrible" before the wolf and he falls "as though lightning had smitten him" (180). Other examples abound. Light "falls about" Eowyn when she slays the Witch King's beast (ROTK 128); Gandalf glimmers "in the gloom" on the bridge of Khazad Dûm (FOTR 392); and with the assistance of the phial of Galadriel, Sam assaults Shelob with a "dreadful infection of light" (TT 400). From these examples, we may see that being filled or "baptized" with the Secret Fire occurs only for characters whose hearts are aligned with the holy purposes of Ilúvatar and the Ainur. This fact corresponds with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit promised to Christians (White 122). Twice Paul declares to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Boles 205). We must remember, however, that in the New Testament, the gift of the Holy Spirit is reserved solely for those who accept the Lordship of Christ, so that, according to church doctrine, those who are not yet believers in Christ cannot rightly be said to possess the Spirit (Acts 2:38). This is problematic if we want to illustrate an analogy between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Secret Fire, for in Middle-earth no Christ has come yet to claim as Lord. Jared Lobdell rescues the comparison by reminding us that Tolkien portrays Middle-earth as not only *pre*-Christian but, in many cases *pre*-fallen, so spiritual empowerment may proceed through an unblemished *fëa*'s fellowship with the Secret Fire. Specifically, Lobdell asserts that Aragorn and Legolas remain unfallen and hints that the races of Ent, Elf, and Hobbit have never been completely corrupted (56). Similarly, Stratford Caldecott offers a compelling account

of Tolkien's own attempt to describe Galadriel as "unstained," claiming that while perhaps not wholly immaculate, Galadriel as a marian image certainly echoes immaculacy (53; *Letters* 353).

The gift of the Holy Spirit should not be confused with the Gifts of the Spirit, which are special abilities, some miraculous, given to certain Christians for their enrichment. Paul lists these gifts in 1 Corinthians 7 as Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment, and Tongues—both speaking and interpreting. Fleming Rutledge takes the gifts of Galadriel to be analogous to Spiritual Gifts, yet this is problematic since Galadriel's gifts do not align with the list in 1 Corinthians, nor does Galadriel serve a pneumatological function (135). Instead, as Lobdell asserts, many characters display latent gifts which match Paul's list without needing to first meet with Galadriel (52).

Three spiritual gifts go together: wisdom, knowledge, and discernment entwine within the fabric of Middle-earth. Tolkien repeatedly demonstrates the spiritual benefits of the pair. The most powerful opponents of Sauron make up "the Council of the Wise" or "the White Council" (FOTR 72; Lobdell 52). Their knowledge and wisdom command such power that the Council, composed of Elrond, Galadriel, Gandalf, Saruman, and possibly Radagast, successfully drive Sauron from his citadel in Mirkwood (FOTR 301). Gandalf's intense study and the wise application of what he has learned permits him both to discern correctly the identity of the One Ring and to forbid its use against Sauron. Tolkien further demonstrates how Wisdom necessarily must accompany Knowledge with Saruman, who leaves "the path of Wisdom" in exchange for the lust for power (FOTR 311). He remains knowledgeable, but his deliberate abandonment of wisdom leaves him "withered altogether" (ROTK 293). Gandalf's final pronouncement to Saruman illustrates the point succinctly: "You have become a fool" (TT 222).

Tolkien places so much stress on the value of such "loremasters" in the opposition of evil that other characters who come in contact with them seek wisdom and knowledge and gain discernment for their efforts. Though castigated by his father as "a wizard's pupil," Faramir provides crucial wisdom to Frodo in Ithilian because of Faramir's relationship with Gandalf and the consequent studies of lore it inspired (ROTK 94; TT 330). Merry upbraids Pippin for not having spent his "time at Rivendell rather better" by taking advantage at the great learning there (TT 73). Later, Merry's memory of Elrond's maps guides the Hobbits when they are lost on the borders of

Rohan. Through each of these episodes, Tolkien illustrates how the gift of knowledge through wisdom serves as a guide—a primary function of the Holy Spirit.

Numerous characters also display the gift of Healing. Elrond, Ioreth, and the herb-master of Minas Tirith all heal, but Aragorn is the prime example (Petty 145; Lobdell 52). "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer," Ioreth says, and this gift proves to be one of Aragorn's chief tokens for the legitimacy of his claim to the throne (ROTK 152). But Aragorn's healing powers also make him a biblical type. The apostles healed the sick by the laying on of hands (Acts 3:7). Aragorn embodies the commission Christ delivered to his own disciples just before their first healing ministry. Wielding the Holy Spirit, they "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, [and] cast out devils," (Matt. 10:8). Aragorn heals the sick by delivering Frodo, Faramir, Eowyn, and Merry from the Black Breath; he raises the dead by calling forth the spirits of the Oathbreakers on the Paths of the Dead; he casts out devils when he drives away the Nazgûl at Weathertop. By investing Aragorn with this gift, Tolkien demonstrates the Sovereignty, or Divine empowerment, of Aragorn's reign, and reveals how correctly aligned with Ilúvatar Aragorn is (Rutledge 309).

Concerning the gift of prophecy, prophetic utterances so abound within both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* that one may nearly just thumb through pages at random to discover examples. Almost every major character, and several minor ones, utter at least one prophetic statement. This fact has spawned sufficient separate studies so that less need be said here. My key observation is that these prophecies are nearly always true. We may explain this as authorial foreshadowing, or interlacement, as Shippey calls it, which is certainly accurate, but Tolkien consistently makes the telling choice of placing his foreshadowings in the mouths of his characters (*Road* 167). We see Fëanor's "shadow of foreknowledge" inspire the creation of the Silmarils to preserve the light of the Two Trees before their destruction (*Sil.* 67). Gandalf correctly predicts that Gollum has been spared the death he deserves because "he has some part to play yet," which foreshadows Frodo's inability to destroy the ring himself (FOTR 86).

More to my point is Boromir and Faramir's dream vision of dark eastern skies and a voice ordering the brothers to Rivendell, uttering prophecies concerning "Halflings" and "Isuldur's Bane," and declaring that "Doom is near at hand" (FOTR 296). Jared Lobdell claims that of the Nine, Boromir alone does not display any of the Gifts of the Spirit, but this passage suggests

otherwise. Faramir has the dream twice and Boromir only once, however, which could be indicative of the spiritual weakness Lobdell implies (58). Nevertheless, we cannot escape the biblical tone of the vision, reminiscent of the dreams of Joseph, son of Jacob, or of Joseph, Mary's husband, commanded in a dream to fly to Egypt with the Christ-child (Gen. 37:5ff.; Matt. 1:20). Nor can we ignore its apocalyptic rhetoric, which resonates with Joel 2:28: "... in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and *your young men shall see visions*, and your old men shall dream dreams" (emphasis mine). J. R. Wytenbroek asserts that Armageddon is a theme of *The Lord of the Rings*. Boromir's dream confirms that assertion, while the passage in Joel confirms that an outburst of prophecy will attend such times. As for the Holy Spirit, we have already identified it as the source of all such prophecies, which explains the accuracy of Boromir's vision on all points.

The final gift covered here relates to Prophecy. Tongues, or *glossolalia* in the Greek Bible, refers to the miraculous ability to speak in a language one does not know, and it always signifies direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 19:6). In the context of Middle-earth, it's best to understand the gift of tongues not so much as a miraculous empowering—although that does occur—but as a general propensity for servants of Ilúvatar to acquire language. This goes beyond the obvious observation that everyone in Middle-earth seems to be multi-lingual, which, of course, comes from Tolkien's own "absorbing interest" in language (*Letters* 247). It's interesting to note that no schools or universities for the instruction of Quenya or Westron grace Middle-earth, as would be necessary for the broad dissemination readers witness.[6] The only characters Tolkien ever portrays in the act of actually *learning* a language are Hobbits; all others simply *know* them (FOTR 108). This fact stands at the core of *glossolalia* in Middle-earth; Tolkien, acting as Sub-creator, has "providentially" endowed his creations with his same delight and, more importantly, with his special abilities in linguistic skill.

The Hobbits, however, do warrant a closer look. Language plays a crucial role in what Lobdell calls their "progress toward spiritual awareness" (56). The Hobbits study language, like Tolkien himself. Bilbo and Frodo learn Quenya, the high Elvish tongue, while Merry and Pippen receive informal lessons in "Old Entish" from Treebeard (FOTR 110; TT 80). Sam remains largely ignorant of languages, so the most authentically miraculous instance of *glossolalia* significantly occurs through him. During his battle with Shelob, Sam cries out an Elvish song "in a language which he did not know."

Immediately the phial of Galadriel blazes "suddenly ... as if his indomitable spirit had set its potency in motion" and Shelob retreats in pain (TT 400). Sam's song invokes the name *Elbereth*, another name for Varda, the Vala of the Stars, a marian figure to whom the elves turn as an intercessor to Ilúvatar (TT 400; *Letters* 213). The episode is more evocative of Roman Catholic worship than any other within the trilogy. A supplicant in need sings in a holy tongue a prayerful hymn of intercession to the Virgin, he lights a lamp—which is also a kind of reliquary—and receives a miracle. The scene possesses tremendous spiritual power, but Sam is not its master. The power emerges through the words Sam speaks. Peter Kreeft says that Sam's gift may also stem from the naïve faith and child-like heart he exhibits, which allow him to be open to such literal Spiritual guidance (Kreeft, "Tolkien"). Perhaps such is the nature of *glossolalia*. As a side note, one might argue that the phrase "in a language he did not know" indicates that Sam had heard the words previously in Rivendell or Lórien, and he simply memorized them without knowing their meaning, much like an English choir singing a chant in Latin. In such case the event would not be miraculous at all. However, in a letter to Eileen Elgar, Tolkien reuses the phrase and clarifies its intent, stating that Sam "was 'inspired' to make this invocation," pointing out that the wording of the hymn was uniquely Sam's (*Letters* 278).

These are the personal interactions of the Holy Spirit displayed in Tolkien's work, but non-personal interventions also correspond with orthodox pneumatology. The writers of Scripture frequently invoke the Holy Spirit in elemental terms. Northrop Frye's survey of Biblical imagery shows the Holy Spirit at work "with birds, specifically the dove, with wind, and with lightning-like flame descending on the apostles and bringing the gift of tongues" (Frye 161; Acts 2:3). Tolkien employs a similar collection of imagery which likewise recalls the Holy Spirit. Our discussion of the Secret Fire and its attendant imagery speaks for itself, so now we shall examine wind and birds.

In the opening passages of Genesis, the "Spirit" of God moves over the waters of Earth, but the Hebrew word here, *rûac*, means both "wind" and "spirit" (L. Wood 30). Owen Barfield adds that this is also true for the Greek word *pnuema* and the Latin word *spiritus*. No discrepancy existed, for originally the two were interchangeable—wind was invisible and powerful, and seemed to dwell within humans in such a way that sustained life, just as their own spirits—and God's Spirit—seemed to do (Barfield 80). John 3:8 provides an excellent illustration of the principle: "The wind

[*pnuema*] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit [*pneuma*]." Here, at either of its locations, *pneuma* can be appropriately translated "breath," "wind," "soul," or "Holy Spirit," all of which add nuances of meaning to the passage. Because of this theological pun, the function of wind throughout the Old Testament can be interpreted symbolically: when God sends a "wind," for whatever reason, He is also sending His "spirit" (Jeffrey 358).

Tolkien explicitly probes this very association in his story "*Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth*." In it, the Elf Finrod and Andreth, a female human, discuss the metaphysics of Middle-earth. Part Socratic dialogue, part catechism, the conversation eventually turns to the nature of the *fëa*:

> "Among my folk men speak mostly of the 'breath' (or the 'breath of life')... "
>
> "That is but a guess," said Finrod, "and long ago he said things similar, but we know that the Indweller [*fëa*] is not 'breath' (which the *hröa* uses)..."
>
> "Maybe," said Andreth. "But among the people of Marach men speak rather of the 'fire,' or the 'fire on the hearth,' from whose burning the house is warmed, and from which arises the heats of the heart, or the smokes of wrath."
>
> "That is another guess," said Finrod, "and holds also some truth, I believe."
>
> "Doubtless," said Andreth. "But those who speak thus, of the 'breath' or of the 'fire,' do not think of it as belonging to Men only, but as the life of all living things." (*Morgoth* 353; parentheses are Tolkien's)

We find a similar correspondence between breath and spirit within *The Lord of the Rings*. The Nazgûl wield an evil version of this concept when they inflict "the Black Breath," a spiritual poison which gradually kills its victims without any apparent physical wound. Aragorn, as the Spiritually gifted healer, knows the antidote for this poison. He *breathes* on *Athelas* to activate its healing potency (ROTK 155). In the Scriptures, the Hebrew word *neshâmâh* can mean either "breath of God" or "spirit of Man" and is used in Genesis 2 when God breaths "the breath of life" into Adam (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "*neshâmâh*"). When Aragorn breathes on the leaves, he imparts his breath of life, or *neshâmâh*, upon the herb in order that it may work its healing upon Faramir (Hammond and Scull 581).

In the more universal context of *The Silmarillion*, the Valar Manwë embodies the intermingling of wind and spirit. Manwë is the "dearest to Ilúvatar and understands most clearly his purposes," but Manwë is also the

Lord of the air, and he expressly dominates winds and clouds by his thought (*Sil.* 26). With this in mind, it becomes compulsory to consider the winds of Middle-earth in a Spiritual light. Many times wind refreshes or brings about some change. The wind does not always bring good changes; both Sauron and Saruman are able to produce dark, noisome winds which have evil effects. Mt. Doom is Sauron's chief instrument for this purpose, and Saruman's snowstorm over Caradhras demonstrates his wind abilities well. Whenever good is brought about or heralded by the wind, however, the work has its source in Manwë, ultimate servant of the Secret Fire. Manwë can also communicate symbolically through the wind. When Sauron and Saruman meet their separate ends, their spirits hover momentarily over the scene before a sudden wind sweeps them away (ROTK 252, 334). Saruman departs in a particularly poignant manner, since his original task was to serve the Western Powers alongside Gandalf. When Hobbit archers slay Saruman, his spirit looms like a mist: "For a moment it wavered, looking to the West; but out of the West came a cold wind, and it bent away, and with a sigh dissolved into nothing" (334).

Rather than examining all wind events in Middle-earth, a close inspection of the chief of these will suffice to illustrate the point. In *The Return of the King*, Sauron begins the siege of Minas Tirith accompanied by an outpouring of smoke and ash from Mt. Doom to create a darkness which shadows his enemies' hearts and conceals his armies' movements. Yet almost before the great siege properly begins, the Wind inexplicably changes. Ghân-buri-Ghân, the Wild Man of the woods, first senses it (ROTK 120). Wídfara, one of Théoden's Out-riders, senses the change next and observes that "there is a sea-tang in it" (ROTK 121). The sea element brings us one step closer to discovering the true source of the Wind. Finally Merry feels the wind in his face (for the passage is written from his perspective), and he gains refreshment and hope at the sensation, as does the entire army of Rohan. The Lord of the Nazgûl perceives the change, and retreats from his confrontation with Gandalf at the gates of Minas Tirith to go to his destruction (ROTK 125). But we do not discover the source of the Wind until much later, when Sam and Frodo are traveling to Mt. Doom. Weary of the dark and terribly thirsty, Sam utters a prayer of sorts to Galadriel—who, in this passage, functions as a marian intercessor. We never know whether Galadriel hears the prayer or not, but the Hobbits receive an answer almost immediately, one that could not have come from Galadriel alone because her power does not extend so far. The clouds begin to clear and Sam

notices what must be called a Spiritual battle being waged high above the earth: "There was battle far above in the high spaces of the air. The billowing clouds of Mordor were being driven back, their edges tattering as a wind out of the living world came up and swept the fumes and smokes towards the dark land of their home" (ROTK 216). A few pages later, Sam sees a white star twinkling in the heavens and observes that the wind comes from the West: over the Sea from Valinor, the dwelling place of the Valar (ROTK 220-1). Manwë, Lord of the Air, and Varda, Lady of the Star, have heard Sam's prayer and have come to the aid of the Hobbits.

Aside from the wind, the Valar send other intercessors, or ambassadors, on their behalf. The Istari are certainly some of these, since Tolkien makes Gandalf's attachment to Manwë explicit (*Letters* 259). But after Gandalf, the most frequently deployed intercessory tool of the Valar are the Great Eagles. The eagles are the much-debated topic of an apparently gaping plot hole within *The Lord of the Rings*. Why, the argument goes, don't the eagles merely pick up Frodo and transport him to Mt. Doom, thereby avoiding a great deal of fuss (Hammond and Scull 622)? One can even watch an animated enactment of this alternative ending on YouTube. As the eagles fly the company home after instantly and effortlessly dispatching Sauron, one of the hobbits wryly comments, "Can you imagine what it would be like if we had *walked* the entire way!" (Baxter and Watson). The existence of the comical video indicates that fans have attended to Tolkien's repetitive use of the eagles but not connected their function with their limitations. We can begin to establish that connection by first examining the origins of Tolkien's eagles.

As Northrop Frye comments, many Biblical passages associate the Holy Spirit with birds, specifically the dove. The most famous of these, of course, takes place at the baptism of Christ, when the Holy Spirit descends in the shape of a dove (Luke 3:22). Considering the dual meanings of *ruac* and *pneuma*, it makes sense that creatures who ride the winds should be associated with the Spirit. King David demonstrates this blended association in a Psalm praising the attributes of God, "who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Psalm 104:3, 4). The parallelism of the verse mingles the imagery of wind, spirits, and fire, demonstrating precise attributes of God. Yet eagles do not share this specific association in Scriptures. Biblical writers limit their mention of eagles almost exclusively to metaphors and rarely compare God or His Spirit to eagles. The Hebrew word for "eagle" may actually refer to vultures

or other carrion birds, which partly explains why the Israelites were slow to compare them to God (Brown, Driver, and Briggs). So the Bible does not assist much in tying Tolkien's eagles to the Holy Spirit or in explaining his practice of inserting physical eagles into his narratives.

Critics often attribute the literary sources for Tolkien's eagles to the Norse Eddas. There, eagles may be found perched upon Valhalla, and Odin occasionally transforms himself into an eagle (Burns 100). However, none of the Eddic images depict eagles as characters, nor do the Norse eagles carry passengers or intervene in human affairs, preventing a truly satisfactory explanation for Tolkien's specialized usage of eagles. We do, however, find such an eagle in Chaucer's *House of Fame*. Emma Hawkins provides an excellent comparison of Chaucer's eagle with Tolkien's, finding that both are larger than normal eagles, both carry riders, both have human speech, and both serve as emissaries to God (60). Chaucer's eagle is also Roman Catholic, invoking the name of "Seynte Marye" and providing his rider with spiritual exhortation, which further suggests that Tolkien imitated the style and purpose of the device (Chaucer 355).

Casual readers will not be aware of this literary heritage, so to them, the eagles may seem merely to be helpful talking beasts rather than spiritual beings. However, *The Silmarillion* shows that on Taniquetil, the holy mountain, Manwë employs "Spirits in the shape of hawks and eagles [who] flew ever to and from his halls (*Sil.* 40). Their eyes see through deep water and solid rock, and they obey Manwë, who calls them "the Eagles of the Lords of the West" (*Sil.* 46). Their dwelling places reiterate their spiritual nature. Taniquetil is in Valinor, wherein no mortal may dwell, but later Manwë commands them to roost in the North of Middle-earth near the peaks of Thangorodrim in order to keep a watchful eye on Morgoth and to protect the elves from his evil servants (*Sil.* 110). As to the eagles' precise nature, Tolkien seems to have been a bit hesitant. He calls the Great Eagles "spirits," which suggests that they may be Maiar, like Gandalf, and therefore immortal (*Sil.* 40). Certainly they are not simply talking beasts. Tolkien never truly utilizes a so obviously "Narnian" device as talking animals with *fëar* of their own, since Tolkien's spiritual hierarchy was too rigid to accommodate "Children of Ilúvatar" in animal form (*Morgoth* 410). Yet the humorously chatty eagles found in *The Hobbit* gave Tolkien trouble. He vacillated between granting them status as Maiar who have deliberately assumed a bestial shape—as was the case for the spider-like Ungoliant, and possibly for Huan, hound of the Valar, and Thorondor, lord of the Great Eagles—or

categorizing them as beasts "raised to a higher level" by the Valar (411). Tolkien's chief objection to calling the eagles Maiar is that while a Maia may procreate (cf. Melian, Thingol's wife, mother of Lúthien), it cannot produce Maiar offspring, hence Tolkien's lament: "[Thorondor] could be Maiar ... but unfortunately in *The Lord of the Rings* Gwaihir and Landroval are said to be *descendants* of [Thorondor] (*Morgoth* 410; emphasis original). Tolkien seems never to have made a final decision on the matter.

Nevertheless, the spiritual function of the eagles corresponds to their origins with Manwë: they serve as guardians, they serve as watchful eyes for the Wise, they rescue those in peril, and they are a physical manifestation of the power of the Valar—and therefore of Ilúvatar Himself. We may not go so far as to call them a *theophany*—or physical manifestation—of the Holy Spirit, but we may safely claim that they, like Gandalf and Manwë, serve as emissaries of the Secret Fire. Several times in *The Two Towers*, Legolas discerns an eagle high in the sky, outside the view of Aragorn and Gimli, watching the three hunters as they seek Merry and Pippin (TT 30). Gandalf later discloses that the eagle was Gwaihir, the Wind Lord, sent by the White Council to "gather tidings" (TT 117). The eagle functions in the manner by which C. S. Lewis describes the Holy Spirit: "It will be there when you can't feel it. May even be operative when you can feel it least" (Lewis 401). Even the language of Thorondor's coming against Morgoth "like the noise of winds of Manwë" sounds very much like the Holy Spirit coming "as of a rushing mighty wind" on the Day of Pentecost (*Sil.* 154; Acts 2:2).

Most frequently, the eagles function as the catalyst for the climactic resolution of Tolkien's stories. Manwë sends eagles to answer the prayer of Fingon, an elf whose friend is trapped upon Morgoth's fortress (*Sil.* 110). Thorondor, the Lord of the Eagles, rescues Beren and Lúthien from the gates of Angband after they steal the Silmaril from Morgoth's crown (*Sil.* 182). Eagles rescue Thorin and Company twice in *The Hobbit*: once from the wargs and the goblins and again during the Battle of Five Armies (*Hob.* 109, 284). Twice the eagle Gwaihir delivers Gandalf from peril: first from the tower of Orthanc where Gandalf was imprisoned by Saruman and the second from the peak of Zirakzigil after his fight with the Balrog (FOTR 314; TT 125). And in the moments immediately before and after the destruction of the Ring, the eagles play a number of miraculous roles. An army of eagles, in imitation of the Battle of the Five Armies, appears as help unlooked-for to assist the Captains of the West in their hopeless attack on the Black Gates of Mordor (ROTK 251). Next Gwaihir bears Gandalf for the third time to Mt.

Doom to find Frodo and Sam (253). Lastly, Gwaihir, his brother Landroval, and Meneldor the Swift carry Frodo, Sam, and Gandalf out of the fiery ruin of Mt. Doom to safety (254).

Tolkien uses the device of the eagles often enough that he seems guilty of over-utilizing a convenient plot contrivance. In fact, critics usually write the eagles off as a *deus ex machina* and move on; the label is correct, but the spiritual significance of the term can be probed more deeply (Hawkins 64; Sookoo 21; Chance 179). Tolkien confessed that the eagles were a "dangerous 'machine'" that must be used carefully (*Letters* 271). Since he was aware of the error of excessive repetition, we must ask why he continued to use such machinery when other means for bailing out his protagonists were surely available. If we understand the eagles as spiritual emissaries of Manwë (and therefore of Ilúvatar), the conflict resolves itself. Like Gandalf and the rest of the Maiar, spirits from Valinor were forbidden to perform tasks apportioned to Men or to Elves (ROTK 417). Gandalf's emotional refusal to serve as the ring-bearer demonstrates this limitation (FOTR 87-88). It also explains why Frodo could not simply ride an eagle all the way to Mordor as depicted in the YouTube video. Instead, in form and function, the eagles are Spiritual intercessors and perhaps may best be understood using the words of Scripture: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: ... but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26; R. Wood 326). The interceding Spirits will not perform the deeds that are the individual's to perform, but will provide an assisting strength that permits the individual to succeed, especially when the strength of the individual seems at its lowest ebb. The eagles supply precisely this type of assistance to Gandalf, Sam, and Frodo.

This Spiritual function of the great eagles is what Tolkien considered to be the "highest function" of the fairy-story: Eucatastrophe, the "sudden, joyous turn" of events (OFS 68). Eucatastrophe, according to Tolkien, leads, in turn, directly to the *evangelium*, the gospel ingredient that he found present in all good fairy tales (OFS 71). Far from signaling a lack of creativity from Tolkien, the eagles may be viewed as an *incarnation* of eucatastrophe. They appear frequently because in the context of the mythology, this task of sudden rescue is uniquely theirs. The task is inherently eucatastrophic, ordained by Ilúvatar, so in this sense the eagles work as an embodiment of Ilúvatar's divine will, an expression of the Secret Fire itself. Tolkien illustrates this claim when an eagle comes to Minas Tirith after the fall of Sauron, "bearing tidings beyond hope from the Lords of the West" (ROTK

269; Hammond and Scull 630).[7] Here the eagle is a spiritual messenger from the Valar, a comforter for Faramir and Eowyn. The words "beyond hope," represent a truncated definition of eucatastrophe and unites the concept to the device (Shippey, *Author* 209). The eagle serves as the eucatastrophic emissary—Ilúvatar's *deus ex machina*—and the agent of redemption—Tolkien's *evangelium*.

In the end, despite so much discussion of the Holy Spirit and Middle-earth, it remains that Tolkien never once uses the term in writing to describe what he's doing. The sole mention cited by Clyde Kilby refers to a conversation, not a document, and cannot be absolutely verified (Kilby 59). However, this should not tempt readers into thinking that the preceding analysis is mere redaction. John Milton prosecutes a similar approach without falling under suspicion: no one questions the identity of the "heavenly Muse" who "Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread, Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss" (Milton I.20-21). Tolkien understood what Milton also understood: the Holy Spirit's function in literature should remain subtle, as it functions in reality.

But I think the most important message is this: whether he willed it or not, the Holy Spirit and doctrines surrounding it exert a pervasive influence over Tolkien's Middle-earth. Consequently, the *real* Lord of the Rings is Eru-Ilúvatar, not Sauron. Tolkien describes Eru as "that one present Person who is never absent and never named" (*Letters* 253). Ilúvatar kindles the Secret Fire at the heart of the world. Ilúvatar's Secret Fire irresistibly guides and comforts every character along the path of the story, though it utilizes a number of specialized tools to do so. No one, at any point, ever successfully thwarts the Divine plan. Neither Morgoth nor Sauron ever *really* have control, but neither do those who fight against them. Ultimately, in Middle-earth there are only willing and unwilling servants of the Secret Fire.

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NOTES

[1]This study uses the following abbreviations to reference Tolkien's works: *Letters* = *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*; OFS = "On Fairy-Stories;" *Hob.* = *The Hobbit*; FOTR = *The Fellowship of the Ring*; TT = *The Two Towers*; ROTK = *The Return of the King*; *Sil.* = *The Silmarillion*; *Morgoth* = *Morgoth's Ring*.

[2]This is certainly an oversimplification of Tolkien's Christology, but I must leave the details to the authors referenced here and hasten to my topic.

[3]Tolkien rarely quotes Scripture directly, but when he does, he uses the Authorized version (*Letters* 192, 338, 400). Additionally, Tom Shippey suggests that Tolkien's own writing style infers the influence of the King James idiom (Shippey, *Author* 209). For these reasons, quotations of Scripture in this paper are taken from the translation Tolkien himself appears to have favored.

[4]For more on Tolkien's use of prophecy, see Deirdre Greene, "Higher Argument: Tolkien and the Tradition of Vision, Epic and Prophecy," *Mythlore* (Winter 1996); Julaire Andelin, "Prophecy," *The Tolkien Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2007); Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 167-73; and Colin Duriez, "Providence," *The J. R. R. Tolkien Handbook* (Baker, 2004).

[5]The many volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* repeat several of these passages in various forms, but for brevity's sake, I limit this table to Tolkien's primary publications.

[6]In a letter to Richard Jeffrey, Tolkien describes Quenya as a "dead language" that must be learnt, like Latin, but still does not suggest an institution where such learning takes place (*Letters* 425).

[7]It is important not to confuse the phrase "Lords of the West" with "Captains of the West," a phrase Tolkien uses to signify Aragorn, Éomer, and Prince Imrahil (ROTK 242). "Lords of the West," instead, always refers to the Valar (*Sil*. 331).

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