

On the Mythology

of

Middle-earth

as told in Tolkien's

'The Silmarillion',

'The Hobbit'

and

'The Lord of the Rings'

by

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1. Introduction.

This is a paper on J. R. R. Tolkien's 'The Silmarillion', 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings', written for the last examination in literature for the BA degree in English at Copenhagen University.

Originally, the intention was to use 'The Lord of the Rings' as the basis of the paper. However, I quickly discovered that the true background for the Tolkien Universe was to be found in the vast (and unfinished) collections of tales about the creation and the ancient days of the Universe that Tolkien was working on throughout his adolescent and adult life.

After Tolkien's death, his son and literary executioner Christopher selected and arranged the tales to be published in 'The Silmarillion'. Later on, the remaining tales have been published in five large volumes. Due to the limited size of this paper, I have not taken these extra tales into consideration.

The mythology of Middle-earth has two levels. The first level is the one told about in 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings'. Elves and dwarves are beings that are part of traditional European mythology. But if these mythic creatures are considered 'real', then it can be discovered that they in turn have a mythology about the Father of the Universe called 'The One' and about the Dawn of Time. Furthermore, in the description of the First and Second Ages, can be seen that the Firstborn were more like the Secondborn in ancient time than they were at the time of the events taking place in 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings'.

In the grammars are said that you should use "who" about people and "which" about other living beings. In this paper, I am using the term "people" about beings who have their free will to decide whether to be good or evil - in other words about beings that have a soul. In the Tolkien Universe, God, the angelic spirits, Elves, Humans, Dwarves, Eagles and Ents are such beings. Since it is possible that the Ores are corrupted Elves, they are thought of as "people" too.

For this paper, I have been using

The Silmarillion, Unwin Paperback Edition, second edition from 1983, finished and collected by Christopher Tolkien, printed 1987.

The Hobbit, Unwin Paperback Edition, fourth edition from 1981 printed 1987.

The Lord of the Rings, Unwin Paperback Edition from 1974, printed 1975. Due to the new Unwin Paperback Edition from 1979 in other size, when referring to 'The Lord of the Rings' I have written page number for both editions in this way: [~~new edition~~/~~old edition~~] whenever possible.

2. Religion and Mythology.

When people are reading Tolkien's two most well-known works, 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings', they get the impression that the peoples of the Tolkien Universe are completely without religion. The hobbits in the Shire seem to be good pre-industrial Englishmen - but they don't go to church. Outside the Shire many tales and legends are told, but none of God or gods. However, if one scrutinizes the appendices of 'The Lord of the Rings', on page 385/280 someone called 'The One' is mentioned.

Tolkien being a devout Christian did not invent a non-religious Universe. This becomes obvious when reading 'The Silmarillion'. But how is the religion of Middle-earth. Obviously it is not *fully* Christian.

2.1 A Mythology for England.

As mentioned above, Tolkien had developed a strong interest in old, pre-Christian mythology. But unfortunately for him, the old mythology of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors has been forgotten. The oldest texts in what was to become the English language are poems written in the centuries after the

Christianization of England. Although moral is still pagan in a poem like Beowulf, no glimpse of original Anglo-Saxon mythology survives.

As a result of this, Tolkien decided to *create* a mythology for England. In doing so, he had to get inspiration from European mythology that has survived to the present. As his major source of inspiration, old Nordic mythology was chosen.

Nordic religion was polytheistic. It had six gods and six goddesses each representing a 'force of nature'. It had a great number of demigods and three Norns who determined the fates not only of human beings but also of the Nordic gods themselves. In the Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods, the Universe and the gods were to be destroyed. And in Gimle, new and better worlds were to be created - ruled by the resurrected Balder.

Being a devout Roman Catholic, Tolkien could not accept predestination. He had to believe in the free will of Man. He had to believe in the existence of one god only. And he could not accept a Christ-like figure like Balder before the time of Christ himself.

2.2 God.

As mentioned above, Tolkien could not accept the existence of the Son of God in a mythology, taking place before the time of Christ. Consequently, the Trinity that plays a major role in Christian Faith cannot exist either.

The mythology has an omnipotent God. Already in the very beginning of 'The Silmarillion', in the 'Ainulindalë' (page 17), this is shown in God's speech to the Angels:

"- Mighty are the Ainur, and mightiest among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Ilúvatar, those things that ye have sung, I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself

hath not imagined."

To emphasize it: Everything - including Evil - has its source in God.

The mood in which the people are in at the time of their death seems to be very important. After Boromir's failed attempt to get the Ring from Frodo, he dies while trying to defend Pippin and Merry. Gandalf's comment on that is that:

" - It was not in vain that the young hobbits came with us, if only for Boromir's sake. But that is not the only part they have to play. They were brought to Fangorn, and their coming was like the falling of small stones that starts an avalanche in the mountains."

This is clearly Christian. Although Middle-earth does not have an explicit eschatology, there has to be a Day of Doom, a Paradise and a Hell for otherwise the fact that Boromir dies like a good person should not count that much. Gandalf's repeated attempts to save Sméagol can be seen in the same direction

However, this quote gives rise to another question. Free will versus predetermination. Providence has brought the hobbits to Fangorn. Providence was the one that made Bilbo find the Ring in the first place. Providence is the one that does finally save Middle-earth, when Frodo fails. In 'The Lord of the Rings', King Théoden says

" - Strange powers have our enemies, and strange weaknesses!... But it has long been said: Oft evil will shall evil mar."

Without Sméagol's final fall, Middle-earth had been lost. Evil saves Good through Evil.

It seems as if the free peoples of Middle-earth have their free will, but that God foreknows their choices and fits them into his plans for the future, whatever these may be if this seems inconsistent, I will have to admit that I think so too. If God is omniscient also about the choices that the free peoples will make in the future, it seems to me that their fate will have to be predetermined.

The only person whose reactions God does not foreknow is God himself. Only God himself can change his plans. But his children's decisions, decisions that

God does not decide but foreknow, determine whether they are saved or damned.

Tolkien does not directly use Christian concepts in his mythology. He uses two names for God. The one of them is 'Eru' which means 'The One' in Quenya. This is an uncommon name for God in Christian contexts - but quite common amongst Jews. The other is 'Ilùvatar' meaning 'The Father of the Universe' which is a traditional name given to Odin. But though pre-Christian, or even heathen, in his description of a religion before the birth of Christ, this religion is clearly invented by a devout Christian.

2.3 Angelic Spirits.

But God was not alone. He created spirits to help him. He created Ainur and Maiar who were children of Ilùvatar themselves with free will to elect between Good and Evil. But what were these Ainur to Tolkien?

In 'Valaquenta' page 32, it is said that:

" - Though Manwë is their King and holds their allegiance under Eru, in majesty they are peers, surpassing beyond compare all others, whether of the Valar and the Maiar, or of any other order that Ilùvatar has sent into Eä."

Just afterwards it is said that:

" - With the Valar came other spirits whose being also began before the World, of the same order as the Valar but of less degree. These are the Maiar, people of the Valar, and their servants and helpers."

With the repeated use of the word 'order', Tolkien shows that the spirits he describes are parts of medieval Christian mythology. In this mythology, there were nine 'orders' of angels. Obviously, the spirits are angels.

In Christian mythology, Satan and his helpers are fallen angels. So are they in the Tolkien Universe. But since fallen angels are against God, they will not be discussed further in chapter 2.3.

2.3.1 Valar. Heathen Gods.

Above, I have mentioned that Tolkien as well wanted to make a mythology for England as to remain within certain Roman Catholic confines. As a result of this, the Angelic Spirits are not only angels - they are also heathen gods. And furthermore, they are actually called gods by the humans.

The Valar are the most powerful of the angels. Being spirits only, they are genderless. But as they know about Ilúvatar's plan, they want to disguise themselves as six males (Melkor excluded) and six females. The use of six gods and six goddesses seems to indicate an inspiration from Nordic religion with its six gods and six goddesses. As a matter of fact, the word 'Vala' itself is Danish Tongue (or "Old Norse" as the old common language of the Nordic countries is usually - and somehow misleading - called today). It means 'seeress' and may be related to the word 'valkyrie'.

The chief divinity is **Manwë**. He is the brother of Melkor, and his throne is placed in Ilmarin on Taniquetil where he can watch the Earth. To his aid he has the Eagles whom he has created himself. As the chief divinity he corresponds to Odin who is also sitting on a throne watching the Earth with the aid of his Ravens. Besides being King of the Valar, Manwë is the Lord of air, wind, clouds and the birds that fly in the air.

Varda is the spouse of Manwë, and is also sitting on his throne in Ilmarin. She is the mightiest of the female Valar, the so-called Valier, and is the Lord of the stars. She established the courses of the Moon and the Sun, and set Venus in the sky.

Mandos is the Doomsman of the Valar. His real name is Namo, and he is living in Mandos, whence his name. "Mandos" is Quenya meaning "prison fortress". This is also known as "The Houses of the Dead". He knows all fates with the exception of those fates where Ilúvatar changes his opinions. Mandos is inflexible and dispassionate.

To a great extent he seems to resemble the God of the underworld. Like Poseidon is moved to pity when hearing Orpheus' dirge, he is moved by Luthien's song. But unlike what happens in the legend about Orpheus and Eurydice, Mandos allows Luthien and Beren to reunite.

Mandos is the Lord of the Underworld. But he is so on the orders of God. He is not a Fiend like the Christian Satan. But since he is not Satan, his underworld is not Hell. Mandos is the place where dead Elves are brought - and a prison for angelic spirits whose wickedness have become greater than what can be accepted by Ilúvatar.

Ulmo is the second greatest of the Lords of the Valar. He is the god of the ocean and the movement of all waters. He often interferes with what happens in Middle-earth, helping Elves and Humans against the evil forces.

Aulë is the Smith and the Maker. He shaped the Earth, and made the vessels of the Sun and the Moon. He is humble and compassionate. He is the creator of the Dwarves.

Yavanna is the spouse of Aulë. She is the goddess of plants and the creator of the Ents.

It should be emphasized that although the Valar are a kind of heathen gods, they are also subordinates of the One, the True God, and the Father of the Universe.

2.3.2 Maiar. Heathen Demigods.

Like the gods in Nordic and Ancient mythology needed servants of demigods, so did the Valar. The Maiar are angelic spirits like the Valar, but of a smaller degree.

The only of the Maiar who will be mentioned here is Ossë (and his spouse Uinen). Ossë is the servant of Ulmo. The waters breaking on the shores of Middle-earth and of all islands are his allotted provinces. He is delighted in storms and could consequently be said to be the dread of sailors.

The interesting feature in Ossë is his relationship to Melkor. Since Melkor was unable to rule the Sea, he promised Ossë Ulmo's place and power if he joined him in his war. Ossë believed Melkor and raised tempestuous seas that ruined many coastal lands. However, his spouse persuaded him to go before Ulmo to confess all. As Ulmo pardoned him, Ossë resumed his former allegiance.

This is a clear example of how even angelic spirits were seduced. But it is also an example of how the Mercy of God may forgive Spirits who repent.

2.3.3 Istari. Good Wizards.

The wizards were sent to Middle-earth by the Valar at around the year 1000 of the Third Age in order to unite and counsel the Free Peoples against Sauron. It has been said by Tolkien that they were Valar "of a sort". Since Gandalf bore the name Olorin "in his youth in the West", and since Olorin is a name of the wisest of the Maiar, it is tempting to think that the Istari were Maiar. This conclusion is made more plausible by the equality of the power wielded by Gandalf and the fallen Maia, the Balrog, of Moria.

Three wizards are mentioned in Tolkien's work. One of them falls and consequently he, Saruman, will be discussed in chapter 2.4 - "Fallen Angels".

Radagast the Brown is the least important of these wizards. His name comes from that of a Slavonic god, Radagast or Radihost, who was associated with the Roman god Mercury who was further associated with the Greek god Hermes. Hermes was the god of alchemists. Alchemists were considered wizards - and it was for a wizard that Tolkien used the name.

Gandalf the Grey is the most important of the wizards. His name comes from the Prose Edda where it was among the names of mythical Dwarves that Tolkien adopted to name the Dwarves in *The Hobbit*. The name itself meant "Sorcerer-elf" in Danish Tongue. His Sindarin name, Mithrandir, means "Grey Pilgrim". His Dwarvish name, Tharkun, comes from Orkish "sharku" which means "quite

grey". Olorin, his name in the West, may come from Old High German "Alarûn" and Danish Tongue "Ölrun" meaning "a prophetic or diabolic spirit".

Gandalf can be paralleled to Malory's Merlin. Both spirits were powerful, prophetic, inscrutable and unexpectedly human. Each had the responsibility for the fortunes of a nation and its future kings; each had a dramatic sense of suspense and a childlike love of concocting surprises.

Both wizards had obscure beginnings and endings. Gandalf was sent by the Valar in the West - and returned to the West to an eternal life there. Merlin was divinely fathered in some accounts, and had probably himself been a Celtic god at one time. He too was supposed to have become immortal, hidden in a trance, in a mist or a cave or a tomb in which various named enchantresses immured him.

In 'The Lord of the Rings', Gandalf is Aragorn's councillor in much the same way that Merlin was King Arthur's. For instance, in the Last Debate, Aragorn counselled the Captains of the West to rely on Gandalf's experience in their war with the Fiend. Comparably, before the battle with eleven kings, King Arthur asked his barons to take the advice of Merlin in organizing their strategy.

The overall story of Gandalf, his mysterious advent and departure, has a significant parallel from Danish prehistory. The legendary King Scyld came as a foundling in a treasure ship and was sent away at his death in a richly laden funeral ship after a peaceful and prosperous reign. Evidently, Gandalf's influence for the welfare of Middle-earth was the greatest of anyone in his time. Although he was never himself a king, he was the major person behind the restoration of the Kingdom and the Peace in Middle-earth.

Like Gandalf, Odin was accomplished in magic, runes and incantations. He was known as the Old Gold. Odin had names like Sidskegg (Long-bearded One) and Harbad (Grey-bearded One). He was wearing a broad-brimmed and a blue cloak as Gandalf wore a blue cloak on his return from Gondor.

Gandalf's horse was Shadowfax. This is taken from an old Nordic tradition in naming mythic horses. Names like Hrimfaxi (Rimyumane) and Skinfaxi (Shinymane) are well known - the former from Oehlenschläger's poem "Guldhornene". The familiarity between Gandalf and Shadowfax is comparable to those known from many heroes and their steeds. Such horses could often speak with their masters or, like Shadowfax, understand human speech.

2.4 Fallen Angels.

In the very beginning, Evil does not seem to exist. All Ainur are children of Iluvatar - Melkor included. But soon Melkor tries to sing for himself; singing Iluvatar's song does not satisfy him.

Soon after, The One stops the song. He tells the Ainur that they are unable to do anything that does not ultimately come from him. They may think they are inventing something new, but even Malice comes from God. This means that Melkor is not the true source of malice in the Tolkien Universe.

But why is Evil needed. The answer seems to be that God cannot create people with a soul without giving them a free will. And you cannot give beings a free will without giving them the right to choose between Good and Evil.

2.4.1 Melkor. A Fallen Valar.

The first to fall for Malice is Melkor. Melkor is one of the Valar. As a matter of fact, he is the mightiest of the Valar and the one most beloved by Eru. Melkor seduces nobody but himself, if one does not consider the possibility of personalizing Malice as such. The major cause of his fall seems to be envy - envy against God. Why does God want to decide everything himself? Why can't I decide? Where is the Imperishable Flame? Should we not rebel against this Tyrant God?

A legend like that of Melkor's fall cannot be found in any heathen religion that I am aware of. It is part of Christian mythology. Melkor's fall to Morgoth is comparable with Lucifer's fall to Satan.

2.4.2 Sauron. Melkor's Lieutenant and Heir.

Originally, Sauron was one of Aulë's Maiar. Early in First Age, he was seduced by Melkor and became his lieutenant. He escaped from Melkor's first defeat, and created his own Realm of Evil. At Melkor's return to Middle earth, he acted as the loyal lieutenant, joining Melkor again. It seems strange that this Fiend from 'The Lord of the Rings' acts in such a way towards his superior.

After Melkor's second and final defeat, Sauron seemed to repent. But since he had to return to Aman to be judged by the Valar, his pride prevailed over his repentance, and he returned to Malice. Since then, he was the Fiend.

'Sauron' meant 'The Abominable' in Quenya. In 'The Lord of the Rings' he clearly is our Satan - as the name itself shows. But he never was our Lucifer; only Melkor can be said to be Lucifer in the Tolkien Universe.

2.4.3 Balrogs and Spiders. Fallen Maiar.

The **Balrogs** were Maiar like Sauron. They joined Melkor in his rebel against God immediately after Sauron. They were almost extinct after Melkor's defeat, though one of them survived in Moria. Here he fought with Gandalf.

The Balrogs did not seduce themselves, but were seduced by Melkor. After Melkor's defeat the survivors did not join Sauron; they remained independent creatures of Evil.

Spiders seem to be fallen Maiar too. It cannot be said whether Melkor seduced them or whether they corrupted themselves. Already at the time of Melkor's escape from Valinor, spiders like Ungoliant were independent creatures of Malice; unlike Sauron they felt no loyalty towards Morgoth.

In appendix 1 can be seen that Tolkien as a little child was bit by a tarantula spider in South Africa. To a scientifically educated European, spiders seem to be allies against our competitors whom we call vermin. But I will have to admit that many people consider predators like spiders to be extremely nasty creatures.

2.4.4 Saruman. A Fallen Wizard.

Saruman the White was the leader of the wizards. Curumir, his Sindarin name, meant "Man of Skill". The Old English name, Saruman, is more telling; it means "man of craft, devices and wiles" and could have either a good or bad connotation.

Saruman was partly seduced by himself, partly by Morgoth. He never becomes a loyal servant of Melkor; he remains himself.

To a great extent, Saruman exemplifies the industrial revolution. Early in his life, Tolkien learned to love rural England. He always disgusted new machines for their noise and pollution. Isengard is the old industrial and mine areas in Wales and Northern England.

3. Children of Ilùvatar.

In this chapter I shall discuss what is called *the children of Ilùvatar*. I will have to admit, that the title is slightly misleading; evidently the angelic spirits discussed above are children of Ilùvatar too.

3.1 Elves. The Firstborn.

In the Tolkien Universe, the Elves are not supernatural beings. They are beings like humans. They can be villains or saints (and everything in between). They are even able to die. However, elves are not mortal in the same way as humans are mortals. They do not die of old age. They do not die of diseases either. They can only die if they are killed - mostly on the battlefield.

In Quenya Silmarillion (and in the many tales published outside the works used in this paper) much is told about the Elves in First and Second Age. But the only issue that should be emphasized here is the fact that the Elves seem to change their character from the Old Ages down to the time of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins. At the time of the War of the Ring, they seem too good to be real. They have already begun the walk to fairyland.

Above, I have mentioned the two layers in Tolkien's work. All of it is mythology. But within the mythology of 'The Lord of the Rings' is the mythology of the peoples of 'The Lord of the Rings', namely that of Ilúvatar, the Valar and the creation of world. This mythology of the mythology was dealt with in chapter 2, though it should be admitted that parts of that chapter are essential parts of the history of the Ring War.

Elves are part of European mythology. They included not only the good and beautiful, but also the evil and grotesque. Tolkien has used two sources, a Celtic and a Germanic one.

The **Celtic** Elves, or the Sidhe, were the old gods of Ireland. They were tall and beautiful. They were generally immortal, though some could die.

The Sidhe were sometimes said to live on islands in the west - like the Blessed Realm in Tolkien's Universe. Sometimes they were said to live inside barrows, on the Earth, beneath the sea, or in secret places on the earth, like Tolkien's Lorien.

The **Teutonic** Elves, the Light Elves, were so long-lived that, when tricked into disclosing their ages, they turned out to be as old as the oldest forests and mountains. Like Tolkien's Elves, they loved music, singing and dancing. Also they had supernatural powers and great beauty.

A great figure in the Tolkien mythology is Eärendil. He brings one of the three Silmarils to Elvenhome, where he is appointed to sail the sky as an immortal, bearing the brilliant Silmaril as a symbol of hope to the peoples of Middle-earth.

The "star" thus come to existence is called by his name - we would call the planet "Venus".

This story may be found again in Nordic mythology. Here Eärendil is a sailor hero, who is rescued by Thor. On his way home with him, Thor finds out that Eärendil's toe is frozen, and Thor throws it up in the sky where it becomes a star named Eärendil. Tentatively, Jakob Grimm identified the star with Venus.

3.2 Humans. The Secondborn.

The human beings in the Tolkien Universe are us - or rather our ancestors an unknown number of years ago. Consequently, the humans have to fit more into Tolkien's Roman Catholic faith.

Unlike the Elves, humans are mortal beings. In the Tolkien Universe this is described as a special gift from the One to Man; we do not have and an endless, serial living. Nevertheless, there is a life after this. Boromir's death has already been mentioned, but clearer evidence is Aragorn's words to Arwen at his death: 'Behold! We are not bound forever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory'.

If the Elves were killed, they came to Mandos, where Namo ruled. But where did the humans go to *when* they died? This question is for obvious reasons never answered in the books on Middle-earth. Tolkien would never allow a mythology that was directly against his Christian faith. Elves might go to Mandos - humans might not. This is the reason for Elrond's grief about Arwen's marriage with Aragorn. She is choosing human mortality by marrying King Aragorn. Therefore, father and daughter will never meet again. However, some hope is given; it is not known what will happen after the Day of Doom.

Several societies are parts of the tales. Some of them seem to have parallels in European history and mythology.

Nûmenor is a lucky island or continent in the western ocean. It has the richest human culture of the world. Ships are sent to Middle-earth where colonies are

founded. But the proud race of Nùmenoreans degenerate; they are no longer satisfied by just living three times as long as other human beings. They want to become immortals like the Elves. An invincible Armada is sent to Aman to claim their rights to the Valar. The Valar, unable to doom the Nùmenoreans, lay aside their Guardianship and call upon Ilùvatar; Nùmenor sinks into the ocean. Only Elendil and his faithful people escape the disaster. He and his people found the two kingdoms of Middle-earth, Arnor and Gondor. Clearly, Tolkien is here inspired by the old legend about *Atlantis*.

Gondor is described as a kingdom that is smaller and less civilized than it was in the great past, when the great Nùmenorean kings ruled it. Nevertheless, it is still the country in Middle-earth with the highest urban culture. It clearly resembles the shrinking medieval Roman Empire that for a millennium withstood Arabs and Barbarians. The inspiration for Minas Tirith is Constantinople at the time of the Crusades.

The Éothéod were a primitive people of riders. In return for their help to Gondor in the battlefield, they received the land called **Rohan**. They remained loyal to Gondor, helping it in all its defence wars.

The Rohirrim clearly resemble the old, Anglo-Saxon society. Éothéod means 'horse lords' in Old English. The prefix 'eo' itself means 'horse'. The name of their king Théoden means 'prince' or 'king'. As a matter of fact, most of the names used in Rohan come from Old English.

3.2.4 Aragorn.

Aragorn is possibly the person that is most important in 'The Lord of the Rings'. His first appearance in Bree seems rather suspicious. He is known under the name "Strider". Later he becomes King Elessar (Elfstone).

In the book "The Hero" (page 174...175), Lord Raglan has listed twenty-two points about the mythical hero. Below, Aragorn's life is compared with Lord Raglan's points (Lord Raglan in brackets and italics).

Aragorn's mother, Gilraen, is a descendent of the last king of Arnor (and his son, the first chieftain of the Dunedain) [*The hero's mother is a royal virgin*]. His Father is the fifteenth chieftain of the Dunedain [*his Father is a king and*]. Consequently, his Father is a relative to his mother [*often a near relative of his mother, but*]. Because of the prophecy of Ivorwen, Aragorn's parents are married only four years before Arathorn's untimely death [*the circumstances of his conception are unusual, and*]. Elrond Halfelven adopts him [*he is also reputed to be the son of a god.*] because Sauron tries to have him killed [*At birth, an attempt is made, usually by his father or maternal grandfather, to kill him, but*]. He is secretly brought up in Rivendell. [*he is spirited away, and reared by foster parents in afar country.*] Tolkien does not inform us further about how he lived before he reached the age of twenty. [*We are told nothing of his childhood, but*] Under the name Thorongil, he serves some years as captain in Gondor [*on reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.*] During the War of the Ring, he is a major factor behind the defeat of the Fiend [*After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon or wild beast*]. He marries Arwen, an Elven princess and Elrond's daughter, and [*he marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and*] is crowned king [*becomes king.*] He rules his kingdom uneventfully [*For a time he rules uneventfully, and*], and after having decided how Middle-earth should be governed [*prescribes laws, but later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, is driven from the throne and city, after which*] he has a self-willed death at his 208th birthday in the House of the Kings [*he meets with a mysterious death*] on the hill of Minas Tirith [*often on top of a hill.*] His son, Eldarion, succeeds him [*His children, if any, do not succeed him.*] His body lies unburied for a long time [*His body is not buried, but nevertheless he has one or more holy sepulchres.*]

But Aragorn is not only an example of the Romantic Hero. He also resembles the medieval king.

Like King Arthur, and for the same reason, he was taken to a foster home. Like what was the case with Arthur's country, Gondor was a kingless state, until he took over power. And like Arthur, he received a famous sword and learned about his heritage when he came of age.

Like Charlemagne, he restored an ancient Empire. Like Charlemagne, he had to fight a war against an Eastern power; Charlemagne against the Lombards in Italy, Aragorn against Mordor. And like Charlemagne, he was crowned with a famous, ancient crown by the spiritual leader of his world.

And like many crowned heads, he was able to cure people. When King Valdemar I of Denmark travelled in Germany, parents brought their small children for him so that he could lay his hand on them. The English kings were said to have inherited their skills in this "profession" from Edward the Confessor. The French kings were said to have inherited them from Clovis or Saint Louis. Especially, Charlemagne, like Aragorn with the *athelas*, was said to cure people with a special herb.

In many primitive or early cultures, the well being of the king meant the well being of the nation. If the king were old or sick, the nation would have a downfall too. In order to prevent this from happening, the King should die while still being healthy in order to transfer his soul to his successor. Sometimes this even happened as a ritual sacrifice. As mentioned above, Aragorn died self-willingly before he became too old to reign.

This rises a curious point. As a devout Roman Catholic, Tolkien could not accept suicide. This is most clearly shown in "The Return of the King" [page 116/112], at Denethor II's suicide:

"Authority is not given to you, Steward of Gondor, to order you the hour of your death", answered Gandalf. "And only the heathen kings, under the domination of the Dark Power, did thus, slaying themselves in pride and despair, murdering their kin to ease their own death."

However, in the same book [page 425/308] Aragorn at the time of his self-willed death is saying to Arwen:

"Lady Undómiel," said Aragorn, "the hour is indeed hard, yet it was made even in that day when we met under the white birches in the garden of Elrond where none now walk. And on the hill of Cerin Amroth when we forsook both the Shadow and the Twilight this doom we accepted. Take counsel with yourself, beloved, and ask whether you would indeed have me wait until I wither and fall from my high seat unmanned and witless. Nay, my lady, I am the

last of the Nùmenoreans and the latest King of the Elder Days; and to me has been given not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift. Now, therefore, I will sleep."

To Tolkien, one person has been allowed to decide the time of his death, to commit suicide: Strider, Aragorn, King Elessar of Gondor and Arnor.

3.3 Halflings.

The Hobbits are not mentioned in "The Silmarillion" before on the very last pages of "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age" [page 365...367], but in the prologue to 'The Lord of the Rings', Tolkien reveals to us, that [The Fellowship of the Ring, page 13-14]:

“Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people ... It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives to ours; far nearer to us than Elves.”

For this reason, I have counted them among the children of Ilùvatar, being most comparable to humans.

But the hobbits are not only human beings. In many ways, in the Shire they represent the rural England that Tolkien loved. No large and polluting industries exist in this world of peasants and gentlemen.

But the hobbits do not only resemble Merry Old England. They also resemble human children. They are small, at about the same size as ten-year-old human kids. They have six meals a day (plus snacks in between). They go to a lot of birthday parties where a lot of presents are received and given. No serious work seem to be necessary, nobody gets sick, they are officially said to be children till the age of 33 - life just seem to be fun. Clearly, they are invented for the juvenile book 'The Hobbit'.

However, the hobbits were more than children. If they were put into great danger, they would grow with the task, as old Bilbo, Frodo, Sam, Pippin and Merry. And their natural resistance against temptation seem to be stronger than what was the case of other beings.

Four of these hobbits became Ring-bearers, the first of them being Sméagol who is better known as 'Gollum'. He was the person who had the Ring for the longest time. Nevertheless, it was not until the very end that he was ultimately lost.

This is most clearly described on the stairs of Cirith Ungol [The Two Towers, /287]:

"Gollum looked at them. A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo's knee - but almost the touch was a caress. For a fleeting moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friend and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing."

Although Sméagol has been a Ring-bearer for ages, still there is something good in him. But Sam wakes up. He does not understand the emotions in Sméagol and calls him 'Stinker'. The moment has passed.

But there is a 'but'. Most of the characters in the book that are tried are able to withstand the temptation of the Ring. Gandalf, Aragorn, Elrond, Galadriel, Faramir and Samwise do so. But Frodo fails. As he is standing at the Cracks of Doom, he puts on the Ring claiming it to be his. Only because of Gollum's reaction to the danger for the Ring (he has just discovered that the purpose of the whole expedition is to throw the Ring into the Cracks) saves Frodo and Middle-earth. He bites off Frodo's ring finger, gets back the Masterring - and falls down the cracks. The Ring, Gollum and Sauron are annihilated.

Above, King Théoden's words 'Oft evil will shall evil mar' have been quoted. Only through Sméagol's ultimate fall is Middle-earth and Frodo saved. Had Gollum been saved at the stairs of Cirith Ungol, Middle-earth had been lost.

In the last part of the work, namely 'The Scouring of the Shire', Tolkien's dislike of industrialism is seen again. Saruman has revenged his loss of power.

Factories are being built in the Shire. But our brave young Hobbit boys bring back order to the Shire.

4. Children of the Valar.

According to the mythology of Middle-earth, only Ilùvatar had access to the Imperishable Flame that made it possible to create beings with their own free will, with a soul. But Aulë, the Smith and Maker, had the opinion that it took too long time before the Firstborn of Ilùvatar's non-spiritual beings came into existence. Consequently, the Maker tried to make them himself.

4.1 Dwarves. Children of Aulë.

The Maker made seven Dwarves. They were meant to be the Elves, but were not beautiful at all. Instead, they were short, stocky and strong. They were good craftsmen and miners and worked wonders with stone, metal and jewels. Their greatest flaws were a tendency towards wrath, possessiveness, and a lust of gold.

But the Dwarves were not part of Ilùvatar's plans. He got angry with Aulë and asked him whether he wanted to have dolls that only moved when he ordered them to move, and spoke what he ordered them to speak. Repenting, Aulë turned around to smash them, but Ilùvatar used his Imperishable Flame thus giving them a soul. But the Elves were not to be taken away their right as Firstborn; consequently the seven progenitors were put to sleep until the Elves had been awoken. The progenitors woke up in different places; ever after the dwarves were divided into seven different tribes. Nothing is told about how female dwarves came into existence, so I do not know how they were able to breed.

In Germanic mythology, Dwarves were smiths and miners in caverns and mountains. They were ugly, dark and misshapen. They made magnificent underground palaces for themselves - like those in the Kingdom under the Mountain from "The Hobbit" or Moria from "The Lord of the Rings". And

unlike what is the case of the Tolkien Dwarves, they reached maturity in three years and were greybeards at the age of seven. Tolkien's Dwarves lived about 100 years and married at the age of 100. As it will be remembered from "The Hobbit", these hobbits cannot possibly have been greybeards at the age of seven; the very first dwarf to join Bilbo Baggins in Bag End, Dwalin, had a blue beard ["The Hobbit", page 18].

Nothing is said about a life after death. The Elves said that there were nothing after the death of a dwarf, but that was not their own belief. As it is said in Quenta Silmarillion ["The Silmarillion", page 51]:

“Aforetime it was held among the Elves that dying the Dwarves returned to the earth and the stone of which they were made; yet that is not their own belief. For they say that Aulë the Maker, whom they call Mahal, cares for them, and gathers them to Mandos in halls set apart; and that he declared to theirs progenitors of old that Ilùvatar will hallow them and give them a place among the Children in the End. Then their part shall be to serve Aulë and to aid him in the remaking of Arda after the Last Battle.”

Clearly, this is a species that has a soul although they are not children of God. But since Aulë the Maker is himself a kind of child of God, they may be said to be *grandchildren* of Ilùvatar.

4.2 Ents. Children of Yavanna.

However, when Aulë told his spouse Yavanna, goddess of everything that grows in the soil and flies in the air, what he had created, she did not like it. And even less did she like it when she was told that the children (and grandchildren) of Ilùvatar would have dominion over other beings on Earth. She went to Manwë who after consulting Eru allowed her to create the tree herds, the Ents, to protect the plants which, unlike the birds, could not escape the ravage of the children of Ilùvatar. They were to wake up at the same time as the Elves.

"Ent" is an Old English word meaning "giant". When looking at actual mythical beings from Europe, they mostly seem to resemble the huge, wild, hairy wood sprites of Germanic mythology. Like Ents, they were guardians of the woods

and they hated tree-cutters. They were vastly old and strong, and left hand- and seat-prints in stone.

At a more personal plan, they seem to show lots about Tolkien's love of trees. Therefore, it may seem strange that nothing, just nothing, is said about the ultimate fate of the Ents. The children of Ilùvatar will have a life after the Day of Doom. The children of Aulë at least believe that Aulë will take care of them. Does Yavanna not even *care* about *her* children?

4.3 Eagles. Children of Manwë.

When Yavanna complained to Manwë over Aulë's creation of the Dwarves, Manwë was considering what to do. Since she was the goddess of both plants and birds, she was given the choice whether to create beings that would guard plants or (exclusive or!) the birds. She elected the plants.

But since Manwë felt a need for beings with a soul in the air, after consultation with Ilùvatar he and Yavanna also created the Eagles, the children of Manwë. These birds are helping King Manwë with supervising the Earth, thus being comparable with Odin's ravens, and are intervening at crucial moments in the history of Middle-earth.

Like what was the case with the Ents, nothing is said about their ultimate fate.

5. Children of Melkor.

But the Valar was not the only spirits that wanted to create other beings. The fallen Vale Melkor whom the Elves call Morgoth, wanted to do it too. But since he did not have access to the Imperishable Flame, he could not give them a soul. He could not give them the ability to choose between Good and Evil, and probably he did not want to give them this choice either. The children of Morgoth could only do what was evil. And no matter what the wise said about Melkor's ability of creating beings that could breed like the children of Ilùvatar [The Silmarillion, page 58 as quoted below], they were able to multiply.

Trolls were beings of evil created by Morgoth in the First Age from some unknown stock, perhaps in imitation of the Ents. Like what was the case of the Ents, in many ways they resemble giants from Germanic myth. But whereas the Ents resemble the benevolent and treelike in these myths, the thralls take on all the characteristics that were malevolent and stone like.

One special characteristic about trolls in Germanic mythology was their dread of daylight. If they were surprised by dawn they became stone [Grimm, Teutonic Mythology vol. II, page 533]. As it will be remembered, this was the fate of the three trolls, William, Bert and Tom, who captured Bilbo and the Dwarves in *The Hobbit* [page 42].

Dragons too were beings of evil. Melkor created them when he returned to Angband with the Silmarils. The greatest among them were Glaurung who had an important role in "Quenta Silmarillion", until he was killed by Turin.

The most famous of them is Smaug from "The Hobbit". He is typical for the mythical European dragon; he is a four-legged, winged fire-breather.

In "The Lord of the Rings", dragons are completely absent. The fact that they have been used for ages in European literature has given them a too childish and stereotyped appearance to be used for an ethical quest. Here, Tolkien had to develop adversaries that were new and untried in literature. Adversaries like, for example, the Balrogs.

5.1 Orcs. Corrupted elves.

Above, it was said that Melkor could not create beings that had a soul. But this limitation did only hold if they were children of Morgoth only. If they had genes in them from other species, it was otherwise.

In Quenta Silmarillion, it is said about the Elves that were captured by Melkor in First Age [The Silmarillion, page 58] that:

" - Yet this is held true by the wise of Eressëa, that all those of the Quendi

who came into the hands of Melkor, ere Utumno was broken, were put there in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves, of whom they were afterwards the bitterest foes. For the Orcs had life and multiplied after the manner of the Children of Ilúvatar; and naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion in the Ainulindalë before the Beginning: so say the wise."

This leads to the interesting conclusion, that the Orcs were still having their free will, were still having a soul. Melkor's genetic manipulation had changed them; they were no longer Elves. But they were still able to do both Good and Evil. The reason for their malice seems to lie in their education. But besides their malice, Sauron also seems to have inculcated in them a firm loyalty to himself that would be reckoned a virtue if turned in a better direction. Also, they have evidently been taught that the Elves are rebels against their rightful Lord, Sauron. The Uruk-Hais at Helm's Deep are courageous fighters. They even have achieved considerable esprit de corps. In Aragorn's warning to the enemy [The Two Towers, page 180/127], he even includes these Orcs.

But nevertheless, throughout all of Tolkien's work, no Orc is redeemed. But to dismiss them as ultimately irredeemable would go against the grain of the whole story.

6. Conclusion.

The tales of Middle-earth are more complex than what might be thought at first glimpse. They have traces back into European mythology and medieval literature. Tolkien is a true successor both of the people who wrote works like 'Le Morte D'Arthur' and 'The Fairie Queene' - and of the Romantic poets and authors from last century.

Many of the beings in his Universe have been taken from European mythology - and changed to fit his purpose. But in the overall design of his Universe he has remained a Christian.

The invented Tolkien Universe is a monotheistic world. The One, The Father of the Universe, Ilúvatar, God is omnipotent and omniscient. But the beings that he has created have got a free will to elect between good and evil.

The fact that Tolkien is a successor of the Romantic authors from last century with its Romantic Hero has caused a lot of criticism from the critics. In this prosaic age of ours many people think that literature should be about society. That literature should be socialist realistic. Tolkien does not agree with these people. Other people think that literature should be about serious emotions within the individual human being - like known from novels like E. M. Forster's 'Maurice'. In this Tolkien does not agree either.

Tolkien's work should not be judged by what it is not. It should be judged for what it is: Romantic literature and the first masterpiece in this century of the fantasy genre.

Appendices.

Appendix 1. The Author.

John Ronald Rued Tolkien was born 3 January 1892 in Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State in the present South African Republic. A few weeks later he was christened in the local Anglican Church, the church of his parents.

The only experience he had from South Africa that may have influenced his later work was that he was bit of a tarantula spider. A nurse who sucked out the poison saved him. Although he later said that he had no special dislike of spiders, in his stories he wrote more than once of monstrous spiders with venomous bites.

1895, Ronald Tolkien, his mother Mabel and his younger brother Hilary visited England. It was the intention that his father should join them later. Instead they received a telegram from South Africa saying that he had suddenly died. The small family stayed in England.

At an early age, Mabel began to educate her sons. At the age of four, Ronald was able to read, and his mother began teaching him Latin and French. This he seemed to like, though he was more interested in the sounds of the words than in the meaning of them. This interest continued for the rest of his life.

1900, Mabel Tolkien converted to the Roman Catholic religion. This had an immense influence on Ronald. The rest of the kin were strongly Protestant and strongly anti-Papist, so no further financial help from his parent's families could be expected. Both boys were brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. This faith was immensely strengthened as their mother 1904 died of diabetes. Their love of their mother could not be distinguished from the Catholic religion.

At school, Ronald Tolkien's major interest was language. He bought a 'Primer of the Gothic Language', and taught himself Gothic. He began inventing new words and even new languages. These interests continued at the Oxford University for which he had got a scholarship. As a college boy he spent more time on inventing and refining his languages than on preparing his lessons. Nevertheless, he was awarded First Class Honours in his final examination.

At college, he specialized in Germanic languages. After a short break during World War I {where he served as a lieutenant in France, though he was fortunately spending most of the war in hospital with 'trench fever'}, he began working as a free-lance tutor at Oxford. 1920 he was appointed Reader in English Language at Leeds, 1924 he became Professor, and 1925 he was elected Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. He kept the former appointment until 1945 he was elected Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford.

But his schoolboy and college boy interest in inventing languages continued. He not only invented languages, he also invented plausible history of languages. But soon he had discovered that you couldn't invent a plausible history of languages without inventing a history and mythology of the peoples who spoke these languages. This gave rise to legends in 'The Silmarillion' and eventually also to the 'Ring' tale.

During the 1930s he became the father of three boys and one girl. He began telling them fairy-stories of his own invention. Mostly he carried them in his head, but eventually many of them were partially written down. This was how 'The Hobbit' came into existence.

1936 Susan Dagnall of Allen & Unwin read the manuscript of 'The Hobbit'. Susan Dagnall suggested Tolkien to finish the book. The proposal was accepted and the book issued 1937. The success of this juvenile book was great, and Tolkien was asked to write a sequel.

1949 'The Lord of the Rings' was finished. But it was no longer just a sequel to a juvenile book; it had swelled up to a work in six books for adults. Unfortunately, now Tolkien also wanted the publishers to issue 'The Silmarillion' {which he always considered his major work}. Due to this 'The Lord of the Rings' was not issued till 1954...55.

The critics were divided. Either people liked the work - or they hated it. A reviewer called the Tolkien Universe a boys' world; the hobbits were just ordinary boys. The humans had reached Fifth Grade but had not yet had any experience with girls. Even the Ents and the Elves were boys! It seems as if the reviewers who preferred tender boy-and-girl stories like those written by E. M Forster could not endure Middle-earth.

But the work became a best seller. Now the publishers were interested in issuing 'The Silmarillion' too. But due to Tolkien's slow speed of working, the work was not published till after Tolkien's death. And then his youngest son and literary executioner Christopher (who had to select and arrange the tales) became the one to publish it. The remaining and often unfinished tales (many of them versified) have been issued later on, but have not been used in the preparation of this paper.

In the 1960s the interest in the book exploded. In the United States a 'campus cult' evolved. It became part of the ideology of the adolescent revolt. Still today in 1988 it is possible to go into most city bookstores in Copenhagen and buy 'The Hobbit', 'The Ring of the Lords' and 'The Silmarillion'. Still it is possible

for a college kid reading it in the bus to be forced into a conversation about the book. I have had the experience myself.

1973, John Ronald Rued Tolkien died full of days.

Appendix 2. Account of the Story.

Besides the ring-story itself, 'The Silmarillion' gives the prerequisites in the lore of Middle-earth. As 'The Silmarillion' is not a story in itself, but rather a collection of old legends about the creation of the Universe (Ea) and about the struggle between Good and Evil in the past, no synopsis shall be given of this major part of Tolkien's work.

The Hobbit.

The prelude of Tolkien's 'Ring' begins in the Shire. The Shire is the native country of the hobbits that are small people at about half our height and without beard - like human children. The Shire itself is described in a way that puts one in mind of 'Merrie Old England' - England in the 1700s, just before the industrial revolution.

Bilbo Baggins is a prosperous and very respectable hobbit that lives in a village named Hobbiton. A day he is visited by a wizard, Gandalf, and thirteen dwarves (not dwarfs, Tolkien insists!). They want to hire him as a burglar on an adventure to the Mountain. This mountain is the old home of the dwarves that was conquered from them by a dragon, Smaug. Now they want to recapture it and its treasures.

Of course they succeed. With Bilbo Baggins' aid, the dwarves regain the treasure and their lost kingdom. Bilbo receives a mithril-coat, worth more than the entire Shire.

But what is most important for the tale is that Bilbo finds the Ring. As they go through a high pass of the Misty Mountains, they are assailed by Orcs. It so

happens that Bilbo is lost in the mines under the mountains, and as he grips in vain in the dark, he put his hand on a ring lying on the floor of a tunnel. Later in the tunnels he meets a creature, Gollum, who seems to have had the Ring for ages. Gollum challenges Bilbo to the Riddle-game. If Gollum wins the game, he will eat Bilbo. If Bilbo wins the game, Gollum will lead him to a way out of the mines. Bilbo wins, but as Gollum discovers that the Ring is missing, he guesses that Bilbo has it. Bilbo takes on the Ring that makes him invisible. Crying 'Thief, thief! Baggins! We hates it for ever!' Gollum unwillingly leads Bilbo out from the mines.

The Fellowship of the Ring.

In the first volume of 'The Lord of the Rings' itself, we are back in the Shire. Bilbo has adopted his nephew, Frodo Baggins, and is now celebrating his one hundred and eleventh birthday. At the same day, Frodo attains the age of 33. This means that from this day Frodo is no longer a child. He can take care of himself.

Bilbo wishes to use the day to revisit the old places he knew when he was a young man in his 50s. The wizard Gandalf the Grey has become suspicious on the Ring; he thinks that it might be one of the great Rings that are dangerous to possess for mortals. Consequently, he persuades Bilbo to give the Ring to Frodo - though it seems tremendously difficult for Bilbo to give it away.

A couple of decades later, when Frodo is in his 50s, Gandalf's suspicion has grown greater. Now he suspects the Ring to be the Master Ring that Sauron has created ages ago. And he is right. This is the Ring that can bind all other magic rings and make the true owner omnipotent.

Gandalf tells Frodo to leave the Shire with the Ring. Sauron has come back to Middle-earth, and he greatly desires it - but he must *not* get it. Gandalf will return to the Shire within half a year to help Frodo to come to the land of Rivendell where Elrond's Council would decide what to do with it.

Unfortunately, the leader of his wizard order, Saruman the White, who has turned into a traitor, traps Gandalf. But eventually, and after many hardships, both Gandalf and Frodo (together with three young lads, Sam, Pippin and Merry) reach Rivendell.

At the meeting in Elrond's Council it is decided to destroy the Ring. But this can only be done in the Crack of Doom in the land of Mordor - Sauron's land - itself. Frodo accepts to throw the Ring in the Crack of Doom, and Gandalf, the three young hobbit boys, the dwarf Gimli, the elf Legolas, Strider whom the hobbits have met between the Shire and Rivendell and Boromir, heir to the ruling steward of Gondor, accept to join him.

Unfortunately, the fellowship of the Ring has to pass the mines of Moria, where Gandalf is lost. Later on their voyage they have a disagreement about whether to bring the Ring to Gondor or to the Crack of Doom. Boromir tries to use violence against Frodo to get the Ring, but Frodo escapes. Together with Sam he will go to the Crack of Doom. The fellowship of the Ring has ended.

The Two Towers.

After Frodo's and Sam's escape from Boromir, the rest of the fellowship is attacked by a gang of Orcs (or hobgoblins). Boromir is killed, and the two remaining hobbits are caught by the Orcs who know they are wanted by Sauron and Saruman.

Gimli, Strider and Legolas who have been away looking for Frodo, send Boromir's corpse down the great river Anduin, and take up the pursuit of the Orcs as soon as having ascertained that Frodo and Sam have gone towards Mordor. But they don't succeed. The riders of Rohan discover the Orcs first and kill all of them. However, the small hobbits escape and meet Treebeard who is the leader of the Ents, treelike creatures in the Fangorn forest. He incites the Ents to go to war against Saruman.

Meanwhile, Strider, Gimli and Legolas meet Gandalf again. Now he is Gandalf the White, the leader of his order instead of Saruman. Together they incite king Théoden of Rohan to war against Saruman. The Ents and Rohan prevail, and the friends meet again in the ruins of Isengard, Saruman's castle.

Unfortunately, Pippin gets hold of a *palantir* that is thrown out from the tower of Orthanc, where Saruman is hiding himself. A palantir is a stone, which was used for communication between the King of Gondor and his viceroys in old days. Today, Sauron controls all of the palantirs. He immediately sends a Nazgûl to Isengard to find out what has happened. Obviously, Saruman has found a hobbit - has he also found the Ring? Gandalf decides to go to Gondor with Merry, and Strider who is the heir of the old kings, claim the right to use the stone.

Frodo and Sam are going to Mordor. They meet Gollum, and they tame him. They meet Boromir's younger brother, Faramir. And as a result of Gollum's treason, Frodo is almost killed by a monster, Shelob. Sam, who thinks that Frodo is dead, takes the Ring and decides to fulfil the task. But as he realizes that Frodo is not killed at all, he knows that his proper job will be to rescue Frodo.

The Return of the King

In Minas Tirith, the capital of Gondor, the ruling Prince-steward is getting mad when he is told that his oldest son and heir is dead. The armies of Mordor besiege the city, and everything seems lost. Gandalf saves the city, but is unable of saving the Prince who commits suicide. And the siege continues.

Strider whose real name is Aragorn, and who is heir of the old Númenorean Kings (and thereby also through Isildur heir of the extinct Kings of Gondor) comes with the Army of the Dead, oath-breakers who cannot have peace before they have fulfilled their oath to Isildur's heir. They destroy Mordor's reinforcements and Aragorn and his fellows continue to Minas Tirith. The Ri-

ders of Rohan also come to the battlefield, and together they break the siege. King Théoden is killed on the battleground.

King Aragorn whom his new subjects call King Elessar, the new King Éomer of Rohan and the other leaders decide to go against Mordor with their army. They know that they are not strong enough, but they consider it necessary in order to distract Sauron's attention from Frodo's important mission.

At the Black Gate of Mordor, the Lieutenant comes out as a messenger from Sauron. He gives them Frodo's mithril-coat and Sam's sword. Now they know that everything is lost. Bravely they prepare to die in the last battle against Evil.

But Frodo and Sam are not dead. Sam succeeds in freeing Frodo (but the coat and Sam's sword are lost), and the two hobbits reach the Crack of Doom. Frodo prepares to throw the Ring into the Crack - but puts on the Ring instead claiming it to be his and claiming to be omnipotent.

Gollum, who has followed them since his last treason, goes to attack. He only senses that Frodo will destroy the Ring. He bites off Frodo's ring finger, and accidentally falls into the Crack. The Ring, and Gollum, is annihilated.

Since all the power of Sauron was build on the Ring, Sauron's empire is destroyed too. Sauron himself is annihilated, and Good had won the war.