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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**EUCATASTROPHE AND EVANGELIUM: A CHRISTIAN
VISION OF THE HEROIC IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS***

BA thesis

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TARTU
2024

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the concept of heroism in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, specifically focusing on the characters Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf, and Sam from the Fellowship of the Ring. The analysis is conducted in relation to the Christian belief expressed in the Gospels, which states that the greatest act of love is sacrificing one's life for others. Tolkien's high fantasy novel contains a eucatastrophic tale that highlights the themes of death, resurrection, and true immortality, having numerous parallels to the accounts of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection in the Gospels.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction gives background information on the epic fantasy tale of *The Lord of the Rings*, provides information on Tolkien's worldview and highlights the Christian nature of the moral qualities of the tale's heroes. The introduction also includes the aim of the thesis. The first main chapter is a literature review that provides an overview of the protagonists Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf, and Sam as the archetypal figures of Christian heroism in *The Lord of the Rings*, as discussed in literary criticism, and death and immortality as the main themes, along with eucatastrophe that acts as a resolution for the tale. The second main chapter analyses the theological virtues of faith, hope and love as the compelling forces of the protagonists in *The Lord of the Rings*. The chapter is divided into two subchapters that focus on the theological virtues and their transformative effect on the protagonists, respectively. The conclusion summarises the main findings of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

J.R.R. Tolkien is renowned as one of the greatest writers of the fantasy genre, and *The Lord of the Rings* (TLR) was voted to be the greatest book of the 20th century by a reader's poll conducted by Britain's Channel 4 and Waterstone's bookstore chain (Foden 1997: para. 2). The tale told in the book is of a land called Middle-earth, where a hobbit named Frodo inherits a seemingly simple gold ring, unaware that it contains the malevolence of the Dark Lord Sauron and holds the key to his power. Frodo joins a fellowship of hobbits, men, elves, and a dwarf. Together, they undertake a quest to destroy the ring in the fires of Mount Doom, the only place it can be unmade. Facing perils along each step of the way, the Fellowship must find the courage to complete their task in order to restore peace to Middle-earth.

Tolkien, the author of the tale, was a devout Catholic, and the divinity of Christ in the evangelium, the gospels, is what inspired Tolkien's worldview and laid the foundation for TLR's heroic tale (Hartley 2012: 95). In Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-Stories*, he writes: Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from reality... The peculiar quality of the "joy" in successful fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. In the "eucatastrophe" we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater—it may be a far-off gleam or echo of evangelium [gospel, good news] (Tolkien 1947: 87, 99).

'Secondary world' refers to the created, fantastical world that houses the story and narrative of TLR. Eucatastrophe, or a "good catastrophe" is a term Tolkien (1947: 67, 68) coined in the aforementioned essay, where he asserts that it represents the pinnacle of a fairy tale's purpose and genuine expression. Tolkien claims every complete fairy tale must include it. It

is the happy ending to the tale and acts as a "consolation" for the trials and tragedies encountered on the journey of the quest. It serves as an unexpected and extraordinary grace, not to be relied upon to happen again (Tolkien 1947: 69). Commenting on the effect the eucatastrophe has on a fairytale, Kreeft argues that the triumph is so valuable because, in the midst of the battle, the prospects of salvation appear to be so remote. He suggests that the eucatastrophe in TLR unveils the ultimate grace, which is precisely "true immortality, or heaven" attained through self-giving and self-denial (Kreeft 2005: 142, 197).

Tolkien does not depict God, and he writes about events in some ancient part of our world, called Middle-earth, that occurred before the Incarnation; hence, there is no portrayal of Christ. However, there are characters that symbolise or represent Christ: Christ figures (Chausse 2001: 30). TLR can be assigned into multiple different genres, such as a modern epic, a genre that deals with "great actions, great in their physical extent and in the personal spiritual quality demanded of the chosen hero" (Levitin 1970: 6). Still, the primary genre under which TLR is allocated is fantasy, concerning a world where fantastic and magical events occur (Levitin 1970: 4). C.S. Lewis (1954: 130) referred to Tolkien's creation of a fictional universe with its own languages and species as mythopoeia. He asserted that TLR carries with it an undeniable mythic quality that has the potency and ability to reveal to the reader "that the real life of men is of that mythical and *heroic* [italics mine] quality" (Lewis 1954: 131). Thereby, TLR can be called a work of myth-making, and philosopher Peter Kreeft proposes that a myth inherently possesses religious connotations (2004: 67). Tolkien writes on the same issue in *On Fairy-Stories*; he argues that mythology occasionally reveals a concept that is of great importance: divinity, which refers to the entitlement to power rather than its actual possession, and the corresponding adoration, commonly known as "religion" (1947: 25).

According to Kreeft, Tolkien was a moral absolutist, meaning Tolkien believed that

there are "absolute principles that must be obeyed no matter the consequences" (Kreeft 2005: 171). The main protagonists of the Fellowship of the Ring throughout TLR, as is fitting for Christian heroes in a Christian epic, reject the moral relativist or utilitarian notion which claims that 'the end justifies the means' (Kreeft 2005: 173). In Gandalf's counsel we find the heart of Tolkien's ethics: "To cast aside regret and fear. To do the deed at hand" (Tolkien 1994: 507). The virtue of courage in abnegation, self-donation, or its complete lack in TLR, is closely linked with what Tolkien claims to be the most important theme of the entire book: death and immortality (Tolkien, Carpenter 1981: 246). True immortality and glory in TLR are for the virtuous, and a permanent state of corruption and degradation is for the characters who lust for the power that the Ring offers (Ellison 2001: 24). The prime example of a character who lusts after the Ring, is Gollum, the guide to the protagonists Frodo and Sam on the latter end of their quest, who once was a hobbit, but since his yielding to the malevolence has undergone a "gradual reduction to his final state", becoming an 'ex-hobbit' (Ellison 2001: 26), having been thoroughly corrupted by the lust for his 'Precious', the golden ring of the enemy, Sauron.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the theme of heroism in TLR, as portrayed by Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf, and Sam of the Fellowship of the Ring, in light of the Christian belief that claims "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 13). Considering TLR to be a Christian epic of the fantasy genre, with Christ as the ultimate ideal and the Platonic archetype of the hero, the heroes of the tale are referred to as 'Christ figures'. These four characters are chosen for analysis, as they can be seen in the book most prominently, to varying degrees, as symbols of Christ (Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf), or what it entails to be a true disciple (Sam). Each of the characters participates in the sacrificial giving of oneself, undergoing a symbolic death and resurrection, a self-donation for the good of others, as exemplified by Christ in the gospels.

The thesis intends to show how the heroism of these main protagonists plays an instrumental part in bringing about the ‘eucatastrophe’ of the story.

The literature review delves into the body of research done on the theme of heroism, particularly Christ-like heroism, emphasizing the protagonists as Christ figures who undergo apparent death and resurrection, ultimately attaining true immortality in the eucatastrophic tale of TLR. Although these themes have been discussed in different literature in relation to TLR, I intend to add to the conversation in the empirical part of the analyses by examining the reasons that compel the protagonists to heroic acts in TLR, focusing on the divine attributes of love, faith, and hope as the main compelling forces.

1 THE CHRISTIAN HERO, RESURRECTION, AND THE EUCATASTROPHIC TALE IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*.

According to Flannery O'Connor, a Christian novel is not simply a story about Christianity, Christians, or a Christian world, but "one in which the truth as Christians know it has been used as a light to see the world by" (O'Connor 1962: 173). In a very similar manner, Edith Crowe (1983: 5) proposes that it is Tolkien's Christian faith that is the light that suffuses TLR. Parallels to these statements can be drawn from the description of the enchanted Elvish forest, Lorien in TLR, where the Fellowship comes to rest after a tumultuous and wearisome episode in their journey (Tolkien 1994: 349). Frodo and Sam reflect on the "magic" of the forest and muse "If there's any magic about, it's right down deep, where I can't lay my hands on it...You can see and feel it everywhere," said Frodo. "Well," said Sam, "you can't see nobody working it" (Tolkien 1994: 351). The effect of Tolkien's Christian faith on TLR can therefore be said to act as a "Light from an invisible lamp", as one person in a letter to Tolkien described it (Tolkien 1984: 413). Furthermore, Crowe claims that the Christian character of Tolkien's secondary world is most evident in the nature and attitude of the protagonists in TLR (Crowe 1983: 6).

TLR's subject matter is not religious; it does not revolve around religion. However, Tolkien states in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, "TLR is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work. The religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. I have deliberately written a tale that is built on or out of certain 'religious' ideas but is not an allegory of them" (1981:201, 283). Consequently, it can be concluded that TLR is a Christian epic. Courage for the protagonists to fight the battle that is before them in the story and willingness to give up their own lives for the good of their friends is, therefore, an essential component of heroism and a Christian virtue, which is intrinsically part of the Christian moral law and worldview (Glover 1971: 40). Tolkien, in another letter, professes,

”The greatest examples of the action of the spirit and of reason are in abnegation” (1981: 246). As a result, it can be argued that Tolkien’s moral absolutist Christian worldview holds Christ as the epitome of a hero, an archetype of humility and heroic surrendering and self-donation of one’s life for the good of others. Chausse (2001: 30) claims that Christ figures in the tale of TLR all reflect Christ’s heroism in similar manner.

G.K. Chesterton, contemplating Gethsemane, the garden where Christ sweated drops of blood before his crucifixion, and Calvary, the hill Christ was crucified on, says this: “Alone of all creeds, Christianity has added courage to the virtues of the Creator. For the only courage worth calling courage must necessarily mean that the soul passes a breaking point and does not break.” (Chesterton 2006: 113). This statement resonates with Joseph Campbell’s definition of a hero as ”the man of self-achieved submission” (Campbell 1983: 6). Furthermore, Tolkien asserts that the well-being of the world is contingent upon the conduct of an individual in situations that require them to endure and suffer to a degree that is ”far beyond normal”(Tolkien 1984: 234). These conditions necessitate a level of physical and mental fortitude that the individual lacks and ”demand a strength of body and mind which he does not possess” (Tolkien 1984: 234). This kind of heroism, though, is not a call to pacifism, but rather a beckoning to lay down one’s life for the good of others. Faramir in TLR declares, ”War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all” (Tolkien 1994: 656). Kreeft (2005: 168) argues that Tolkien’s unique contribution to the philosophy of war lies in his remarkable feat of restoring a sense of the glory of just war.

A common criticism launched against TLR by some critics, is to see the tale as morally ”simplistic”, as a ”white versus black, good guys versus bad guys” story (Kreeft 2005: 157). In what the Tolkien Society (Bratman 2018: para. 1) calls ”the most infamous” negative review on TLR, the notable 20th-century literary critic Edmund Wilson (1956: para.

6), called the high-fantasy tale “juvenile trash”, asserting that the characters are too one-dimensional and stereotypical, and stating that the story overall suffers from “an impotence of imagination” (1956: para 4). Eminent poet Edwin Muir (1955: para 5) wrote in *The Observer*, “All the characters are boys masquerading as adult heroes...and will never come to puberty...the individuals are stock characters”. Kreeft (2005: 155) counters these criticisms, by asserting that Tolkien’s moral optimism, rooted in his belief in divine grace and the ultimate victory of good over evil, is a source of profound offence for “the modern secular critic”. Clark (1997: 16) points out how every character in the story of TLR is susceptible to the allure of evil. Moreover, Kreeft argues that in TLR, the conflict extends beyond the exterior battle between “the white and black chess pieces”, it permeates every individual piece on the board, even while there is an “external war” between two sides that symbolises, albeit imperfectly, the forces of good and evil (Kreeft 2005: 157). Clark asserts, “Were the heroic characters as pure in their goodness as Tolkien’s detractors would have us believe, the novel would comprise three chapters (Clark: 1997: 15). In TLR, there are numerous occasions when the protagonists are faced with a moral dilemma and are hard-pressed by the different choices they must make on their quest, such as the perilous predicament Sam found himself in, in the chapter ‘The Choices of Master Samwise’ (Tolkien 1994: 728).

Crowe (1983: 6) argues that instead of the protagonists displaying stereotypical hero attributes, they exhibit archetypal qualities. Crowe asserts that TLR bears distinct resemblances to the heroic archetypes, with a particular influence from Northern European traditions (Crowe 1983: 6). In TLR, Tolkien explicitly shows his love for the noble and archetypal concept of courage in the midst of certain defeat (Grant 1973: 378). The primary example of this occurs during the Battle of the Morannon, when the armies of the Free Peoples prepare for battle with Sauron's overwhelmingly greater forces, believing that the

quest has failed and their defeat is certain (Tolkien 1994: 893). Tolkien's heroes "fight for causes greater than themselves" (Crowe 1983: 6). It instills in them hope that reaches farther than despair and the courage to remain faithful till the end. According to Lakowski (2002: 23), a hero is someone who acts courageously. In a world that has fallen (become sinful), courage stands as one of the most crucial virtues (Kreeft 2005: 198). Heroism is required, for there is evil to be fought.

When it comes to the heroes of this tale, Polk (2016: 29) claims that they are 'crypto-Christians', in that they serve as a perfect illustration of how life would appear if the Christian claims were accurate, particularly the primary contradiction of achieving eternal life by means of dying, "immortality through death and resurrection of the self, self-realisation through self-sacrifice"(Kreeft 2005: 89). Tolkien saw death and immortality as the central topic of TLR, stating that he did not see Power and Dominion serving as a true focal point of his story but rather "something more permanent and difficult" (Tolkien 1981: 246). This assertion made by the author warrants careful consideration, although it is unexpected and initially elicits a tendency to reject it, argues Richard Purtill (2003: 175, 176). He asserts that the narrative rarely discusses death or immortality, and there is little mention or contemplation of an existence beyond death. Yet upon closer examination, the theme of death woven into the narrative becomes more evident. Boromir, Denethor, Theoden, and Gollum all perish in pivotal episodes that significantly impact the storyline; Gandalf and Frodo both "seem to have died at key points"(Purtill 2003: 175, 176).

According to Tolkien, it is only by personally reading the work that he becomes aware of the prevailing topic of death. Conscious of both death and immortality, as well as the distinction between genuine and counterfeit immortality, the "hideous peril of confusing true 'immortality' with limitless serial longevity" (Tolkien 1984: 267). The two states of immortality are diametrically opposed. As life's duration approaches infinity, its quality

diminishes to zero. Gandalf provides an explanation: "A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life; he merely continues until, at last, every minute is a weariness" (Tolkien 1994: 46). The hobbit Bilbo Baggins, who had been in possession of the Ring for numerous years, describes his state "I feel all thin, sort of stretched...like butter that has been scraped over too much bread." (Tolkien 1994: 33). Kreeft argues that the two opposed sorts of immortality may only be attained by undergoing two opposite kinds of death. Conscience must die to maintain false immortality, while true immortality necessitates the demise of egotism (Kreeft 2005: 98). In TLR the protagonists willingly surrender their individual wills to adhere to a "higher moral order", which is the good of the many, the whole (Crowe 1983: 6). In the tale, it expresses itself by each individual member putting others above themselves in the Fellowship.

Garbowski (1997: 29) proposes that the concept of life being a spiritual battle between good and evil is the underlying concept found in every great story. The central topic of every great story invariably revolves around the metaphysical conflict between a distinct manifestation of righteousness and a distinct manifestation of malevolence. (Garbowski: 1997: 30). Evil in TLR is formidable, and its force is astonishing. Gandalf comments on the seemingly hopeless state of affairs: "I am Gandalf, Gandalf the White, but Black is mightier still!" (Tolkien 1994: 489). The remarks below are from the same Gandalf, following the momentous victory at the Battle of the Pelennor Fields: "Against the Power that has now arisen there is no victory...This war then is without final hope. Victory can not be achieved by arms...I still hope for victory, but not by arms" (Tolkien 1994: 860). The unconquerable hope, finally in TLR, is placed in persons and the triumph that was ultimately achieved in TLR over Sauron, the embodiment of evil, was through "the principle of the power of weakness" (Kreeft 2005: 225). It is the self-sacrificial heroism of the protagonists, Frodo and Sam, and the rest of the Fellowship which accomplishes the impossible feat. Tolkien

(1984: 246) writes, "The greatest examples of the action of the spirit...are in *abnegation* [italics mine]". Kreeft asserts that Tolkien, like the saints, believed that true strength is not demonstrated by seeking and wielding power, but rather by relinquishing it, by suppressing impulses, in submission, and in martyrdom, the ultimate act of self-donation. (Kreeft 2004: 184). Concerning the ultimate and eucatastrophic outcome of the battles fought and trials endured in the Christian epic tale of TLR, Kreeft writes, "The weakness of evil is that it cannot conquer weakness. No matter how much power evil has, it is always defeated by the *free, loving renunciation of power*. It can be defeated in Middle-earth as it was on Calvary: by martyrdom" (Kreeft 2004: 164). It took Christ-like, heroic acts of abnegation and self-donation of the protagonists in TLR to win the day and save Middle-earth.

TLR does not provide a singular, "concrete Christ figure" that is comprehensive and evident. However, Christ is really, though imperceptibly, present throughout the entirety of TLR (Hartley 2004: 112). Chausse (2001: 30) claims that the embodiment of Christ is more evident in the characters of Gandalf, Frodo, and Aragorn. All three protagonists experience different variations of "death and resurrection", and all three protagonists act as saviours through their self-sacrifice to save Middle-earth from the malevolent influence of Sauron. Samwise Gamgee in the tale is analysed as the epitome of the portrayal of a true follower, a disciple of Christ (Chausse 2001: 31).

Frodo

Frodo is the clearest representation of the "sacrificial hero" in TLR, therefore, he shares more similarities with Aragorn or Gandalf than with the other hobbits. (Walkowski 2002: 26). Walkowski (2002: 26) asserts that Frodo is a reluctant hero, he is not extraordinary or a "superhobbit". Frodo sees his finding of the Ring as the worst thing that ever happened to him: "I was not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring. Why did it come to me?" (Tolkien 1994: 60). This statement could be paralleled with

Christ's attitude towards his task of carrying the weight of the cross. The Gospel account records: "he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Matthew 26: 29) Bruner and, - Ware suggest that Frodo's courage is so inspirational in large part because of how different it is from his culture and his upbringing, which fostered a desire for contentment and relaxation. (Bruner and, -Ware 2001: 38) Bruner and, - Ware further propose that the protagonists of our favourite stories are usually regular people who overcome enormous obstacles to achieve extraordinary things. For "the capacity and desire to be heroic resides deep within each of us" (Bruner and, - Ware 2001: 39).

Frodo indeed took upon himself the greatest obstacle and heaviest burden of the quest: to be the Ring-bearer. In that action, Chausse (2001: 32), asserts Frodo in TLR, "is like the Cross bearer" and the clearest example of "Christ suffering his Passion". Frodo, like Christ during the hour of his greatest heroism, could not carry his burden unaided. Sam, the Ringbearer's companion, carried him to the quest's dramatic conclusion, consequently assuming the figure of Simon from Cyrene in the Gospels (Chausse 2001: 32) . Frodo willingly accepted his task as the Ring-bearer and sacrificed himself for the good of the Shire and all of Middle-earth. The toll of the Ring during the quest ultimately left him too wounded to enjoy Shire and he has to depart over the sea, "I have been too deeply hurt...It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (Tolkien 1994: 1029). Frodo sets sail to the undying lands of Valinor, to experience again wholeness of body and mind and receive "incorruptibility" which can be counted as resurrection (Chausse 2001: 32).

Aragorn

In mythology, the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of heroism come down to Platonic or Jungian archetypes or ideas (Grant 1973: 370). Grant (1973: 367) claims that a great mythmaker arouses the yearning for them, for they already lie dormant

within the depths of human understanding, residing and having their habitat in the subconscious. The Platonic archetypes are the ‘essences’ of certain values, being in a metaphysical category that is objective but spiritual. The archetypes are unchangeable, universal, eternal, and true. Kreeft asserts that they are ”neither in space nor in time. They are unchangeable, birthless, and deathless.” (Kreeft 2004: 40, 41). Kingship, heroism and cowardice, friendship and self-sacrificial giving are all examples of Platonic archetypes (Grant 1973: 376). Taking kingship as an example of a Platonic Idea, Kreeft makes a claim that humans, unconsciously, are all familiar with the concept of a genuine monarch, a legitimate ruler, the archetypal king and there is a part of us that desires to give him our loyalty, devotion, assistance, and obedience. A king ”lost but longed for and will someday return, like Arthur” (Kreeft 2005: 44). The name of the king who returns in TLR is Aragorn (Crowe: 1983: 6).

Edith Crowe argues that high fantasy remains one of the few remaining strongholds of the archetypal hero in modern literature (1983: 5). Lakowski (2002: 29) claims that Aragorn in TLR ”is the embodiment of Arthur Redivivus, the archetype of the King-Who>Returns.” (Lakowski 2002: 27). According to legend, Arthur is the once-and-future king who will someday return. Aragorn, like Christ in the gospels, is initially an unrecognised hero who does not seek fanfare or rally great crowds to himself, but rather introduces himself as ”Ranger of the North”, and he willingly accepts the name that the Hobbits call him by, Strider (Lakowski 2002: 28, 29. Crowe 1983: 6). As the quest of the Fellowship progresses, he is unveiled as heir of Isildur, the rightful claimant to the long unoccupied throne of Gondor (Lakowski 2002: 28). Gandalf’s ultimate anointing of Aragorn as the sovereign of Gondor following the triumph over Mordor unveils his true heroic nature:

But when Aragorn arose, all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all

that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. And then Faramir cried: 'Behold the King!' (Tolkien 1994:968).

This description of Aragorn is a striking image in line with Chausse's assertion that Aragorn is ultimately the archetypal symbol of "the Christ King of the universe" in TLR (Chausse 2001: 32). Kreeft (2004: 223) states that Aragorn's symbolic passage through "the Paths of the Dead" in TLR, through which no man can pass and remain unchanged, and his later crowning as the rightful king of Middle-earth can be seen as death and resurrection, which defines him as a Christ figure in the tale.

Gandalf

Among all the characters in TLR, Gandalf, being a wizard, possesses the most prominent supernatural quality (Crowe 1983: 4), Crowe (1983: 4) describes his primary function in TLR as a herald, summoning the hero to set out on their journey. Furthermore, Gandalf also embodies the archetype of the Wise Old Man seen in mythology and fairy tales, providing assistance, protection, and guidance to the hero (Crowe 1983: 5). Gandalf "comes into his own" as a heroic figure of TLR following his fall from the bridge of Khazad-dum. While battling the Balrog, he sacrifices himself, so the Fellowship might have a chance to escape from certain doom (Crowe 1983: 6). Gandalf the Grey dies in this heroic act, yet he is resurrected into Gandalf the White. (Lakowski 2002: 31) Lakowski states that Gandalf, like Frodo "is something of a Christ figure" (2002: 31). After his transformation, Gandalf assumes the role of a dignified and authoritative figure who organises and leads all the righteous forces in their battle against Sauron (Lakowski 2002: 32). The wizard Saruman, Gandalf's counterpart in TLR, lost his previous wisdom and became corrupted due to his consuming desire for the power that the Ring offers (Levitin 1970: 14).

Samwise

Tolkien in multiple letters, declares that Sam is the "chief hero" of the tale (Tolkien 1981: 131). Crowe asserts that Sam, "the humblest of the humble" is undeniably the greatest hero of the quest (Crowe 1986: 5). Initially, Sam appears to be nothing more than a comical character, and, as the story progresses, his significance is mostly seen in relation to Frodo, serving as his attendant and gardener. This essentially positions him as a secondary character (Wojcik 1967: 17). Sam's exultation in the tale is gradual, yet "all the great events in the book begin as well as end with Sam" (Lakowski 2002: 24). Lakowski (2002: 24) writes that Sam Gamgee exemplifies a distinct form of heroism, chiefly demonstrated through his dogged "do or die" commitment to serve his master and accompany him even to the Cracks of Doom. "I'll get there, if I leave everything but my bones behind" said Sam. "And I'll carry Mr. Frodo up myself, if it breaks my back and heart." (Tolkien 1994: 918). It was Sam who carried Frodo when he had no power left in him to go any further. Chausse (2002: 32) points out the parallel of Sam to Simon of Cyrene, who helped Christ carry the cross up Calvary Hill. Yet Sam "carries the cross-bearer as well as the cross" (Kreeft 2005: 222). Wojcik (1967: 14) argues that Sam's role in bringing about the eucatastrophe, "the turn for good that gives us a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart" is absolutely paramount to the story. Furthermore, Wojcik (1967: 15) goes on to note that Sam possesses a single attribute that serves as the origin of all his acts of heroism: love.

The Eucatastrophic Tale

"The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe" that is what Tolkien considers to be "the true form of a fairytale, and its highest function" (Tolkien 1947: 81). Mende (1986: 37) writes that the eucatastrophe in TLR acts as the most significant form of resolution in the tale. Mende (1986:37) further points out, how the theme of resurrection, a highly sacred event in Christianity, is strongly

linked to the eucatastrophic instances in TLR. Tolkien adhered to a faith founded on eucatastrophe, he writes: "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. The story begins and ends in joy" (Tolkien 1947: 83). The experience of joy at the "unexpected turn" of events, is the hallmark of a successful fairy-story, as Tolkien claims in his essay (Tolkien 1947: 81). Mende (1986: 40) asserts that Christianity is inherently hopeful, as it is founded on the belief in the eventual victory of good over evil. Therefore, considering TLR to be a Christian epic, it is no wonder that it contains eucatastrophes that act as "sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur" (Tolkien 1947: 81). One of the major eucatastrophical moments in TLR, is the resurrection of Gandalf from the dead and his subsequent transformation from Gandalf the Grey into Gandalf the White (Lakowski 2002: 31). For Gandalf indeed died, having paid the ultimate price and yielded his own life in the Mines of Moria, yet eucatastrophically and in fashion of a true Christ-figure, was raised again to life (Tolkien 1994: 331). His return to Middle-earth fills the members of the Fellowship with fresh hope and joy.

Wojcik (1967: 18) proposes that the "most dramatic" eucatastrophe in TLR occurs at the Cracks of Doom. There we find the protagonists Sam and Frodo having reached the end of their journey, feeling completely devoid of hope and ready to face death. One of Frodo's fingers has already plunged into the Cracks of Doom, coupled with the Ring and Gollum's fangs. Frodo and Sam are on the verge of joining it as Mount Orodruin erupts. However, Frodo has successfully accomplished his quest: that is his joy. For Sam, the joy that the sudden turn of the eucatastrophe brings, is seeing Frodo be free again from the evil sway of the Ring."In all that ruin of the world, for the moment he felt only joy, great joy...His master had been saved; he was himself again, he was free" (Tolkien 1994: 927). Sam exclaims, "I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad

going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?" (Tolkien 1994: 930). In all three instances highlighted, the result of the eucatastrophic tale in TLR is joy.

To conclude, TLR can be viewed as a Christian epic, featuring the main protagonists as Christ figures who embody archetypal Christian heroism through self-donation, self-abnegation, and self-sacrifice. It is the sort of heroism that has its highest form in martyrdom and it most clearly expresses itself in courage that defies the odds. In its centre it holds principles that are morally absolute, rejecting utilitarian notions which claim that the quest should be achieved and the task completed regardless of the means used. The virtuous inherit immortality, and the road in virtue is the road in courage and heroism. The protagonists Sam, Frodo, Aragorn and Gandalf chosen as subjects for analyses, exemplify that through their seeming death and resurrection. Tolkien's claim that death and immortality are the most important themes in the book are taken into consideration and compared with the Christian vision of heroism, with Christ as the archetype. In TLR, the eucatastrophical events act as a resolution and a consolation; it is the happy ending that is the proper and ultimate function and aim of a fairy tale.

2 THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE AS COMPELLING FORCES FOR HEROISM IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*.

In the empirical part of the thesis, I will analyse the theological virtues of faith, hope and love as the compelling forces for heroism in Tolkien's TLR. The entire volume will be taken into consideration and episodes from each part of the quest will be presented, from the hobbits setting out from the Shire, the convening of the Fellowship of the Ring at the Council of Elrond in Rivendell to its climactic conclusion at the Cracks of Doom on Mount Gorgoroth. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love are intrinsic to the character of Christ, who is the archetype and ideal of Christian heroism (Glover 1971: 43), therefore the type of heroism evident in TLR is not the pre-Christian Olympian kind of the classical world (Reinken 1966: 7). Moreover, Reinken (1966: 9) asserts that the immortality in TLR is due to the mystical power of self-abnegation and self-donation, which makes full sense only as a consequence of Christ's death. The type of heroism held up as a standard is the one that Christ embodied in the gospels and which the protagonists of the tale in TLR reflect.

St. Paul writes "So now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13: 13). For Christ in the gospels, it was divine love for his creation and the people created in God's image: "Let us make man in our image." (Genesis 1: 26). In TLR, it is love between each member of the Fellowship, as well as of all that is good in Middle-earth, that compels the protagonists to heroic acts that require self-abnegation and self-donation. *Amor vincit omnia*, love conquers all and as Polk points out, friendship is just another word for love (Polk 2016 :30). The empirical chapter will have two subchapters. The first subchapter examines the theological virtues as the compelling forces for heroism in the Christian epic tale of TLR, viewing them as the driving forces behind heroic self-abnegation, self-donation, and self-sacrifice. The three virtues are presented as the powers behind the moral absolutism of the protagonists. The second subchapter explores

how the theological virtues transform Christ figures Aragorn, Gandalf, and Frodo, as well as Sam, the Fellowship's model disciple.

2.1 Theological virtues as a dynamic force

Faith

In the context of personal relationships, faith in TLR is equivalent to trust: the protagonists of the tale entrust themselves, along with their destiny and happiness, to someone else in the company of the Fellowship, Frodo's friends unabashedly announce, as he is setting out on the quest: "You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin – to bitter end...But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone" (Tolkien 1994:105). The first volume is entitled *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and another way to refer to fellowship is friendship. The members of the Fellowship are friends; they count on each other, hope in each other, and have unwavering faith that despite all the obstacles, good may yet come, as it was for Sam in the tower of Cirith Ungol. "In that hour of trial it was the love of his master that helped most to hold him firm" (Tolkien 1994: 881).

Genuine friendship of this nature necessitates trust, vulnerability, and dedication from all parties involved. In Middle-earth, historically, Elves and Dwarves have had their misunderstandings, or worse, periods of intense feuding. Not so in the Fellowship, where the elf and the dwarf stand up for each other, the travail of the common quest having forged an iron bond of friendship. As a threat was made to harm Gimli, Legolas the elf made a swift reply, "He stands not alone...you would die before your stroke fell" (Tolkien 1994: 433). The protagonists in TLR are known for their dependability and faithfulness in dire situations along the hazardous journeys encountered on the quest. They hold the morally absolute principle of duty regardless of the cost to oneself. Frodo announces at the Black Gate of Mordor, "I am commanded to go to the land of Mordor, and therefore I shall go...if there is only one way, then I must take it. What comes after must come" (Tolkien 1994: 624). Frodo

is declaring his absolute trust in the principles of loyalty and friendship. Gandalf, whom he loves and trusts, commissioned him to go to Mordor, and he refuses to break faith or renounce the oath he had taken, even if it costs him his very life. As demonstrated by the protagonists, duty is to persons and not to abstract principles or moral laws. Frodo has placed his trust in his taskmasters; he has complete faith in Gandalf and therefore completely trusts in Him and hopes in Him. Gandalf's faith in him reassures him in the quest.

Evil, or morally corrupt creatures in TLR do not understand fellowship or its value; Gollum being the principal example, the weapon they fear the most is friendship. "We want it [the Ring] we want it!...But there's two of them. They'll wake too quick and kill us" (Tolkien 1994: 633). Gollum, who was once a hobbit and is now an 'ex hobbit', like somebody in hell, although he's still alive on earth, though thoroughly and irredeemably evil, for the lust for the Ring, which gave him 'false immortality' and 'serial-longevity' has corrupted him, "Lost lost! We're lost. And when Precious goes we'll die, yes, die into the dust". (Tolkien 1994: 944) Frodo and Sam need Gollum to show them the way, yet he remains a constant threat. Gollum seems to be the worst thing on their journey to Mordor throughout the quest to destroy the Ring, yet Frodo and Sam, compelled by the virtue of love choose to extend mercy towards Gollum again and again, "His [Sam's] mind was hot with wrath...It would be just to slay this treacherous creature...But deep in his heart there was something that restrained him" (Tolkien 1994: 944).

Only by extending charity and mercy towards Gollum, is their task fulfilled and Gandalf's prophecy rings true, "The pity of Bilbo [in sparing Gollum] will rule the fate of many" (Tolkien 1994: 60). Gollum is the traitor, the Judas Iscariot figure, just as Christ in the Gospels was betrayed (Matthew 26: 50). "Is this the only way, Smeagol?" said Frodo...Yes, we must go this way now, he answered" (Tolkien 1994: 717). Gollum is faithless, self-serving and wantonly breaks his promises and the oaths he has taken. He

maliciously leads Sam and Frodo to the wrong path. Gollum is surrounded by fellowship and friendship; it is in that context his betrayal and faithlessness makes sense. Just as Judas Iscariot's betrayal was in the context of the fellowship of Christ's disciples.

At the Council of Elrond, Gandalf speaks up in defence of the seemingly two worthless, young hobbits Merry and Pippin, who are prone to make trouble with their antics and are not great warriors nor very wise. He says to the Elf King that he is in favour of carrying them along for the quest, stating, "I think Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom" (Tolkien 1994: 276). This statement by Gandalf demonstrates how faith and personal trust count more than anything else in TLR.

Hope

The second great virtue. Hope, is a necessity, not just optimism or a feeling. Hope is "faith in the future tense" (Piper 1986: para. 18) . If the Fellowship had no hope at all, they could not go on. They almost have no hope, in various times in TLR, they say they have no hope. They say it is hopeless, especially after Gandalf dies. "Farewell Gandalf!"...What hope have we without you? He [Aragorn] turned to the Company. We must do without hope, he said" (Tolkien 1994: 324). Yet they go on, which means they do have hope. Hope is different from comfort or optimism, or the belief that everything will turn out good. Hope demonstrated in TLR, which resonates with the hope Christ demonstrated, will go through the darkness. The Fellowship experiences profound despair as they reach the Black gate. It appears that the entire quest has been unsuccessful and Frodo has been taken along with the Ring, "A blackness came over their eyes, and it seemed to them in a moment of silence that the whole world stood still, but their hearts were dead and their last hope gone" (Tolkien 1994: 871). However, they refuse to surrender and instead continue to fight to the end. Frodo says to Sam, near the end, "Lead me! As long as you've got any hope left. Mine is gone"

(Tolkien 1994: 907). The protagonists place their hope not in themselves but in the trust, loyalty, and friendship between each of the members of the Fellowship.”So that was the job I felt I had to do when I started,” thought Sam; to help Mr. Frodo to the last step and then die with him?...But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned into a new strength” (Tolkien 1994: 913). Hope steels the protagonists for action. In the last analysis, hope remains unconquerable. It is like Sam’s sighting of the star in Mordor, in that blasted and barren wasteland,

Peeping among the cloud-wreck above a dark tor high up in the mountains Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land and hope returned to him...in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing; there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach (Tolkien 1994: 901).

Hope exhibits a confidence that somehow, in ways that nobody can see, you emerge on the other side. That is what motivates the Fellowship in TLR. It could be claimed to be a hope of salvation.

Love

The single most important virtue in TLR is love. Like faith and hope, love is not a feeling. Love is a choice as demonstrated in TLR, it’s a choice to give yourself away.”Come, Mr. Frodo! he cried, I can’t carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride” (Tolkien 1994: 919). St. Paul says: ”If I give away my body to be burned and have not love it profits me nothing” (1. Corinthians 13:2). If the protagonists chose to be martyrs without love, it would profit them nothing. The protagonists in TLR give themselves away to something they do not fully understand. It is this task that none of them chose, but which they have dutifully undertaken. The task to fight for good against evil. The task to be in some way a Christ figure. It is a task that presupposes

faith and hope and it all culminates in love. It works, though it does not look like it has any possibility of succeeding, but it is the one thing Sauron, the embodiment of evil or ‘the Devil’ cannot understand. That is why Sauron is tricked, ”and the magnitude of his own folly was revealed to him in a blinding flash, and all the devices of his enemies were at last laid bare” (Tolkien 1994: 946). Sauron has vastly underestimated his enemy, for he does not understand the principle of the power of weakness. Love chooses the ultimate good of others over power, and dominion. It uses weakness. It is not knowledge or wisdom and it is not power, but it is love that conquers in the end.

2.2 Theological virtues as the transformative power of the protagonists

Aragorn, the archetypal figure of the King lost and longed for. What force causes him to have courage to journey on the road, where no mortal may tread? ”I will ride east by the swiftest way , and I will take the Paths of the Dead. The Paths of the Dead! Said Theoden, and trembled” (Tolkien 1994: 779). Aragorn exhudes authority over the dead in another instance in TLR, as he leaps defiantly ”with a flaming brand of wood in either hand” in an assault on the Ringwraiths (Tolkien 2004: 196). This is not because he does not feel the terror and dread that these servants of Sauron carry; rather, out of duty and love for his hobbit friends, he rushes at the dreadful enemy. Aragorn is tempted to feel despair in moments when the tide of battle appears to be turning against him and the Company, against enemies determined ”not to give way for dusk or dawn” (Tolkien 1994:537). “Things go ill, my friends, he said, wiping the sweat from his brow with his arm” (Tolkien 1994: 538), yet his commanding, regal presence and self-abandoning heroism instill hope in those around him, “Ill enough, said Legolas, but not yet hopeless, while we have you with us (Tolkien 1994: 538).

Gandalf, the archetypal figure of the Wise Old Man. What propels him to fight, to lead? What force motivates him to use his supernatural abilities for good and not for ill?

”But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail of my task” (Tolkien 1994: 741). What inner force is it that compels Gandalf to twice renounce the offer to have the power of the Ruling Ring for himself. First when Frodo offers it, ”No! cried Gandalf...Do not tempt me! I dare not take it, not even to keep it safe, unused. The wish to wield it would be too great for my strength” (Tolkien 1994: 61). He rejects the offer for power a second time when Saruman, though deceptively giving it, says, ”And why not, Gandalf? He whispered. Why not? The Ruling Ring? If we could command that, then the Power would pass to *us*.” (Tolkien 1994: 260).

Gandalf is wise enough to know the old adage ”absolute power corrupts absolutely,” but it is his inner wielding of the virtues that enables him, and not Saruman, to resist the temptation, which, if yielded to, corrupts. Gandalf passes the test and remains virtuous. The virtues of faith and hope always go along with his counsels. ”Let folly be our cloak, a veil before the eyes of the enemy! Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, we shall put him out of reckoning” (Tolkien 1994: 269). His counsels urge the heroes on their quest to play upon Sauron’s weakness, his inability to see that anyone would wish to renounce the Ring of Power for the love of others.

Samwise, the model disciple and companion of the main hero. Samwise the brave-what invisible attribute of his compels him to remain faithful and true until the very end? The virtue of love in the tale shines the brightest through the actions of Sam, who does not hesitate to lay down his own life for his beloved Master Frodo, ”Sam did not wait to wonder what was to be done, or whether he was brave, or loyal...He sprang forward with a yell...Then he charged...a desperate small creature armed with little teeth, alone...upon a tower of horn and hide (Tolkien 1994: 728). Sam kept his promises he took when the quest set out ”I have something to do before the end, and it lies ahead, not in the Shire. I must see

it through (Tolkien 1994: 87). He was not exactly certain of what perils would lie ahead, but he heeded them not, so long as he could remain faithfully by Frodo's side. Frodo, in his own turn tries to spare Sam of the dark road ahead, to which Sam only replies, "I'm coming too, or neither of us isn't going. I'll knock holes in all the boats first" (Tolkien 1994: 406). Sam is "dogged" and relentless, and carries a "do or die" (Lakowski 2002: 24) determination to be nothing but faithful. It is love that enables Sam to be forgetful of himself and always attuned to the needs of Frodo on the quest. The climactic result of Sam's love for his master is the manifestation of almost supernatural strength at a moment in the quest when physical strength had been expended and will was soon to falter, "As Frodo clung upon his back...Sam staggered to his feet; and then to his amazement he felt the burden light" (Tolkien 1994: 941). Sam displays best the wonderful combination of heroism and humility, all due to his loving devotion to Frodo, the person he promised to look after.

Frodo is the epitome of the Christian hero, a martyr and a saint, and the ultimate Christ figure in TLR (Walkowski 2002: 26). Frodo musters all his inner strength, aided by Sam and driven on by virtue to complete the task set before him. In humility he starts the journey, "A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom...At last with an effort he spoke...I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way" (Tolkien 1994: 270). Having obediently submitted himself to the quest, Frodo heroically extends compassion to Gollum and has pity on him, "Poor wretch! He as done us no harm" (Tolkien 1994: 615), though Gollum remained a thorn in his side throughout the quest. To the extent that Sam's wholehearted dedication was to Frodo, so Frodo's commitment was to the fulfilment of his task for the saving of all of Middle-earth. Yet, "Sam guessed that among all their pains he [Frodo] bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind" (Tolkien 1994: 935). In the land of Mordor, it was Frodo's grasping and holding on to all the faith, hope, and love that he had stored up in the reservoir

of his soul in the better days of the quest that brought him just to the brink of finish, yet on the foothills of Mount Doom, he makes a confession to Sam: "No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark" (Tolkien 1994: 938). Without the Fellowship, the friendship between Sam and Frodo, the quest would have reached a bitter conclusion then and there.

Chausse (2001: 32) proposes that the climactic episode of Frodo carrying the Ring up the slope of Mount Orodruin is strikingly similar to the account of "Christ's Way of the Cross". According to the gospel account, during Christ's ascension up Mt. Golgotha, he wavers and stumbles under the weight of his burden, the cross, and is unable to rise without aid, "Frodo groaned; but with a great effort of will he staggered up; and then he fell upon his knees again" (Tolkien 1994: 940). Sam makes good on his promise then and lovingly picks him up.

The Eucatastrophe

There is no final, ultimate or allegorical depiction of Christ in the epic tale of TLR. Frodo, the clearest symbol of a Christ as "the suffering servant", ultimately falls short and fails in the most momentous scene in the entire book, at the Cracks of Doom on Mount Gorgoroth. Having been steered in his quest by the dynamic forces of faith, hope and love, Frodo has carried his burden faithfully with his companion Sam, who was for Frodo as Simon of Cyrene for Christ in the gospel accounts. Frodo, being a mere hobbit though a thoroughly virtuous one, cannot resist the lure of the Ring any longer. He has yielded his whole self to the quest in totality up to this point, having suffered greatly along the way both physically and spiritually, and been a flawless example of a Christian hero in self-abnegation and self-denial. At the Cracks of Doom he makes the terrible declaration in a strange tone of voice, "I have come...But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I

will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!”(Tolkien 1994:945). This act is not a manifestation of free will as it initially seems. The hobbit is finally unable to resist the malevolent force, however this does not imply that he willingly submits to it. At this point, he has no free will to speak of, as he already knew and said to Sam earlier, ”I am almost in its power now, I could not give it up”(Tolkien 1994: 937).

This egregious failure is not due to lack of character on Frodo’s behalf, but as Tolkien points out in a letter, ”following the logic of the plot, it was clearly inevitable, as an event” (Tolkien 1981:252). Tolkien further makes a remarkable statement that ”Frodo deserved all honour because he spent every drop of his power of will and body, and that was just sufficient to bring him to the destined point, and no further...The Other Power then took over” (Tolkien 1984:253). Tolkien explains how ‘The Other Power’ which took hold of the climactic episode is indeed ”that one ever-present Person who is never absent and never named” (Tolkien 1984:253). Due to the Christian nature of TLR, it can be safely proposed that Tolkien is referring to Christ, who is not allegorised about in TLR, but whose presence can be felt ”as a light from an invisible lamp” (Tolkien 1984: 413),

The pity or mercy that Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, Gandalf, and the elves showed Gollum, compelled by the virtues of faith, hope, and love, is what caused the poignant eucatastrophe in the quest's climactic conclusion. It would have been right and just to kill this wretched creature, yet because of the mercy that Frodo showed Gollum, he in the end received mercy, “His exercise of patience and mercy towards Gollum gained him Mercy: his failure was redressed” (Tolkien 1984: 254). The result is a poignant eucatastrophe, a “sudden turn” of events that truly acts as “a miraculous grace”. Frodo, the main Christ figure in the story is a victor, but the glory for the victory can not be contributed to him alone. Without Sam, and more so without the aid of supernatural grace, the quest would have failed. According to

Christian faith, it is Christ who incarnates every virtue. In the ultimate eucatastrophe of TLR, as in the Gospels, it is Christ who is the final hero.

CONCLUSION

The thesis explored the concept of heroism in TLR, specifically focusing on the characters Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf, and Sam from the Fellowship of the Ring. The analysis was conducted in relation to the Christian belief expressed in the Gospels, which states that the greatest act of love is sacrificing one's life for others. Tolkien's high fantasy novel contains a eucatastrophic tale that highlights the themes of death, resurrection, and true immortality, having numerous parallels to the accounts of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection in the Gospels. The first chapter provided an overview and analysis of the theme of archetypal Christian heroism as expressed by the chosen protagonists of the Fellowship of the Ring, as well as examined the theme of death and immortality in TLR. The second chapter presented an analysis of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as forces that compelled the protagonists to adhere to Christian moral principles of self-sacrifice in performing heroic acts in TLR.

The thesis proposes that TLR can be considered a Christian epic and myth. The main evidence to support that argument is the Christ-like, sacrificial nature of the protagonists in performing heroic acts, for the greater good of the Fellowship and Middle-earth. The protagonists exhibit archetypal Christian qualities in their heroism and the moral strength of their character does not reduce them to stereotypes, but transforms them to Christ figures in their suffering along the quest. The Christ figures of the tale are not morally incorruptible or beyond the reach of temptation, but they all exhibit the great Christian virtue of loving others above themselves, and they all go through seeming death and resurrection. Frodo is presented as the main symbol of Christ as the suffering servant and a reluctant hero of the quest. Gandalf is portrayed as the archetypal Wise Old Man who leads the Fellowship and becomes a Christ figure through his transformation into Gandalf the White. Aragorn is depicted as the once-and-future king and Christ, the king of the universe, whereas Sam is

the image of the model disciple and follower, humble and ever-steadfast in love and loyalty.

The story presents the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as compelling forces that propel the protagonists to enact self-sacrificial moral principles in performing heroic feats and establishing themselves as either Christ figures or disciples. TLR demonstrates that faith is equivalent to trust. Morally corrupt creatures, such as Gollum, break faith, while the truthful heroes in the Fellowship entrust themselves to other members of the company. Hope is the unconquerable force that steels the protagonists for action when, paradoxically, all hope to save the quest has vanished. Love is the supreme virtue; it is the ultimate choice for the protagonists to give themselves up for their friends in the company. Sauron cannot understand this virtue and thereby underestimates his enemies, resulting in his complete downfall.

This thesis has shown the significance of the theme of Christian heroism in TLR and the self-sacrificial nature of the archetypal Christian hero. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love intrinsically aid the protagonists in their quest. It also emphasises the overall Christian nature evident in Tolkien's epic fantasy tale. The eucatastrophical events in TLR act as a resolution and a consolation, providing the happy ending that is directly attributable to unexpected grace and reflecting the accounts of Christ's death and resurrection in the Gospels.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Romeo Siibak

Eucatastrophe and Evangelium: The Christian Vision of the Heroic in *The Lord of the Rings*

Eukatastroof ja Evangeelium: Kristlik Nägemus Kangelaslikkusest Sõrmuste Isandas

Bakalaureusetöö

2024

Lehekülgede arv: 35

Bakalaureusetöö eesmärgiks on analüüsida kangelaslikkuse olemust J.R.R. Tolkieni "Sõrmuste Isand" teoses, keskendudes tegelaskujudele Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf ja Sam Sõrmuse Vennaskonnast. Analüüs viiakse läbi seoses evangeeliumides väljendatud kristliku veendumusega, mille kohaselt suurim armastuse tegu on oma elu ohverdamine teiste eest. Tolkieni fantaasiaromaan sisaldab eukatastroofilist lugu, mis tõstab esile surma, ülestõusmise ja tõelise surematuse teemad, millel on paralleele Kristuse kannatuste, surma ja ülestõusmise lugudega evangeeliumides.

Töö koosneb neljast osast: sissejuhatuses, kahest peatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatus tutvustab Sõrmuste Isanda eepilist lugu, annab teavet Tolkieni maailmavaate kohta ja tõstab esile muinasjutu kangelaste moraalsete omaduste kristlikku olemust. Sissejuhatuses esitatakse ka töö eesmärk. Esimene peatükk on kirjanduse ülevaade, mis vaatlleb peategelasi kui "Sõrmuste Isanda" kristliku kangelaslikkuse arhetüüpsetest sümbolitest, mida käsitletakse kirjanduskriitikas, ning surmast ja surematusest kui peamistest teemadest koos eukatastroofiaga, mis toimib loo lahendusena. Teine peatükk analüüsib teoloogilisi voorusi usku, lootust ja armastust, kui keskseid muinasjutus olevate peategeleaste mõjutavaid jõude. Kokkuvõtte sisaldab põhilisi tööst tehtud järeldusi.

Märksõnad: "Sõrmuste Isand", Tolkien, kangelaslikkus, muinasjutt, kristuse sümbol

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