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INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume II

A Collection of Essays Presented at the Second
FRANCES WHITE COLLOQUIUM on C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS

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Gollum and the Mystery of Evil

John Seland

Gollum and the Mystery of Evil

by John Seland

In his two novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien describes a powerful Ring that corrupts whoever possesses it, depending on how much he uses it (Hall 351). We learn a great deal about the Ring's "satanic power" (Purtill 110) by examining the motives and ambitions of Sauron, its maker, as well as Saruman, his chief lieutenant. But these are semi-angelic beings, above the human, and more involved with "spiritual" sins, sins of the heart, like pride and envy. To understand how evil works on a much more physical, "fleshly" level—here we are dealing with such sins as greed, gluttony, and anger—one must turn to the little hobbit Gollum, who, though not corrupted in the same way, is surely just as much a pawn of evil as they are. One wonders, what specific role does he play in the novels? What particular aspects of evil does he represent? Has evil penetrated so deeply into his being that there is no hope for change? And, finally, how does his way of acting affect the goodness of others? Before attempting to answer these questions, a glimpse at some historical background may be helpful.

Before the creation of Middle-earth, certain powerful beings lived both on earth (Arda, the realm of the Valar, Noel 115) and in the heavens (the Timeless Halls). One of these was Sauron, an Ainur, and one of the Maiar of Aule (Foster 433; Noel 189). These were like angels, entrusted by Eru, a God-like Being, to tend the earth. All went well at first

until Melkor, the most powerful of the Ainur, rebelled. Melkor, desiring to bring things into being by himself and to dominate them, began to claim all the Earth as his own. However, Manwe, Melkor's brother and the noblest of the creatures brought into being by Eru, did not allow this. Thus began the struggle between the forces of good and evil.

Many years before the action described in *The Hobbit* takes place, Sauron was seduced by Melkor, becoming his chief servant (Foster 433). At one point (during the Second Age, between 1200-1600), Sauron made friends of the Elves and learned from them how to forge powerful rings (Day 264). However, he betrayed them, some ten years later secretly forging a Ring that was able to control all the others. Nevertheless, later (during the Second Age, 3441), an alliance of men and elves defeated him. One of the leaders of the alliance, Isildur, then cut the Ring from Sauron's finger and kept it. Very soon afterwards Isildur was attacked by a band of Orcs, the result being that the Ring was lost in the Anduin River. There it remained for 2,461 years, until a hobbit, Deagol, found it as he was fishing. Seeing its beauty, and jealous that such a Ring was not his own, Smeagol strangled him and took the Ring for himself.

In *The Hobbit* brief mention is made to what happened next. Because of his odious behavior, his family expelled Smeagol. Then we read how Gollum—his name had been changed because of way he gurgled when

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talking to himself—"crept down down, into the dark under the mountains" (69).¹ These are the Misty Mountains, the very place where, four hundred and seventy years later, the hobbits now find themselves as they make their way to a dragon's lair to recover treasures that he stole years ago.

Bad weather forces the little band of dwarves and hobbits, led by the wizard Gandalf, to take refuge in a cave. Suddenly goblins attack. All escape except Bilbo, who, hitting his head, falls unconscious. After groping along for a while, he happens to touch "a tiny ring of cold metal" (65). Unaware that he has found the Ring made by Sauron, he pockets it and then goes further down in the tunnel.² "Some of these caves," we read, "go back in their beginnings to ages before the goblins" (67). One feels that Bilbo is touching the very beginnings of time. (See also LR, Part I, Book I, 78.) At this point, the narrator introduces Gollum. "Deep down here by the dark water lived old Gollum, a small slimy creature. I don't know where he came from, nor who or what he was. He was a Gollum—as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face" (67).

Immediately afterwards, Gollum is described as a kind of Charon, ferrying souls from the land of the living to the dead. This suggests, rightly, that his underground home is like hell. We read:

He had a little boat, and he rowed about quite quietly on the lake; for lake it was, wide and deep and deadly cold . . . He was looking out of his pale lamp-like eyes for blind fish, which he grabbed with his long fingers as quick as thinking. He liked meat too. Goblin he thought good, when he could get it; but he took

care they never found him out. He just throttled them from behind . . .
(67-68)

Gollum shares a physical trait all hobbits have: they love to eat, which, in turn, is related to a more spiritual weakness: their greed. This, as we come to see, is also the sin of the dragon, Smaug, on an even greater degree. "[He is] a vast incarnation of the infantile selfishness which Bilbo has been outgrowing throughout the story . . ." (Green, "The Four-Part Structure of Bilbo's Education" 135).

Next, we see Gollum talking to himself, a habit showing his tendency to center all life on himself.³ Seeing Bilbo, he immediately thinks of a good meal. "Bless us and splash us, my precious! I guess it's a choice feast" (68). The narrator adds, "he always called himself 'my precious'" (68).⁴ Gollum makes himself into a sort of god, or, more correctly, a devil.⁵

Following this, Bilbo and Gollum tell each other riddles, the idea being that if Bilbo cannot answer, Gollum can eat him; if Gollum cannot answer, he must show Bilbo the way out of the cave. Significantly, Gollum's riddles all relate to death, nothingness, and "the end of things" (Crabbe 50), which implies that the Ring has corrupted Gollum, "eating up his mind" (FR, I, 81) and making him even worse than he was when he found it. Then, when Bilbo wins the contest, Gollum is obliged to help him. At this point, Gollum, apparently forgetting his promise to lead Bilbo out of the tunnel, excuses himself in order to fetch the Ring which, because of its capacity to make its wearer invisible, will be the means by which he can kill and eat Bilbo. Unknown to him is the fact that the Ring, having slipped off his finger, is now with Bilbo.

Here Tolkien refers to how Gollum came to possess the Ring. In the long years that

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followed, all the while the Ring had been working to corrupt him. His soul is in a sorry condition; perhaps, as his riddles show, he even suffers from paranoid depression. One even wonders if he is truly responsible for his decisions, as can be seen when Gollum says the Ring "came to me on my birthday" (75). It seems he believes, or half-believes that this justified his murder of his cousin Deagol. (See LR, Part I, Book I, 78 and 83.) The narrator alludes to this. "Gollum used to wear [the Ring] at first, till it tired him; and then he kept it in a pouch next his skin, till it galled him; and now usually he hid it in a hole in the rock on his island, and was always going back to look at it" (75).

We also learn here how the Ring tends either to slip on or off the finger of the one who has it. "The Ring itself becomes a transferable band of active ill will" (Catharine R. Stimpson 48). This suggests that the Ring may have felt "lonely" being with Gollum for so long a time. It wanted to be more active in bringing ruin to others.⁶ Also of significance is the fact that the Ring actually begins to control the will of its bearer. Thus Frodo at times, particularly when there is danger, feels an overwhelming desire to put on the Ring. "It seemed to him, somehow, as if the suggestion came to him from outside" (FR, I, 199). In any event, having become invisible to Gollum, Bilbo is able to escape the tunnel.

When Bilbo is about to exit the tunnel, and he sees Gollum sitting directly in the opening, his first thought is to kill him. But then he reflects.

No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden

understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart ...

And then quite suddenly in another flash, as if lifted by a new strength and resolve, he leaped ...

Straight over Gollum's head he jumped ... (79-80)

The word "over" balances the word "down," that is used earlier, when Bilbo first went "down" into the cave.⁷ This refers to the "descent-ascent" pattern that the hero must experience before maturation, a "rite of passage," necessary to test the hero before he becomes a man.⁸

Bilbo passes the test, emerging from the tunnel as a new person.⁹ The final proof of his success lies in the mercy that he shows Gollum. He could kill him but, instead, he spares his life, an act which will have great consequences when, at the end of the story, Gollum becomes the means whereby the Ring is destroyed.¹⁰

William Green observes astutely that Gollum serves as Bilbo's shadow, representing the dark side of his own personality (50), or, as Marie-Louise von Franz says in her study of shadow and evil in fairy tales, "the personification of certain aspects of the unconscious personality" (3). He is Gollum's alter ego (Jane Chance Nietzsche, Tolkien's Art 36). This holds true to an even greater extent, of course, with the dragon, who represents, even more than Gollum, a temptation to take wealth and use it for himself. Jane Nietzsche writes that Gollum "epitomizes the 'lesser and more nearly human' vices, as Smaug in the second part epitomizes the 'older and more elemental' vices" ("The King Under the Mountain" 9). "Gollum, in fact, functions as

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Sin and spiritual death" (Nitzsche, "The King Under the Mountain" 7.) The similarities between the two hobbits are many. Their habits are alike: they love food and riddles and holes in the ground. They both have considerable property, and they both live alone. But deeper spiritual weaknesses, like their fear of the outside world, their reluctance to become involved, and the way they hoard their property show a certain moral paralysis. Bilbo, of course, does not go to the extent Gollum does—killing another to gain wealth—but in his case, too, at least, initially, sin is well on its way of taking control of his freedom. We can see this from his previous behavior in the Shire. The Took part of his personality—his daringness and love for adventure—has all but been subsumed by the Baggin's part. Love has begun to turn inward, so much so that, given time and opportunity, Bilbo's already divided personality could worsen to the extent that he could turn into a kind of Gollum.

The two hobbits, however, are different, which can best be seen in the way they respond to grace or, in more naturalistic terms, to the opportunities that come their way. Here Gandalf's example benefits Bilbo enormously, and we see how after a while Bilbo begins to follow his mentor's example, for instance, in the way he remains dedicated to the group.¹¹ Furthermore, like Gandalf, Bilbo decides not to amass a fortune. Instead, he uses the precious Arkenstone that he finds in the dragon's lair to bring peace to the warring factions.¹² Gollum has no one to give him good example, this being one reason why the evil Ring grips his heart so tightly.

Randall Helms shows how the plots of the two novels, resemble each other, although the action in *Lord of the Rings*, being much more involved, has a larger cast and many more episodes. The tone, too, is much more serious.

But essentially, the two stories have very much in common, as can be seen, for instance in the way Frodo, like Bilbo, passes through his own rite of passage as he makes his way towards maturation.

Gollum plays an important role in *The Lord of the Rings*, just as he did in the earlier novel. Also, just as in *The Hobbit*, there are qualities that link him to Bilbo as well as Frodo. We see this when Gandalf visits Bilbo, now an old man, to persuade him to pass the Ring on to Frodo. Bilbo reacts violently, repeating the same words Gollum once used. "It's mine . . . My precious. Yes, my precious." And "you won't get it. I won't give my precious away" (FR, I, 56). He only relents when Gandalf threatens him. Later, when Frodo meets Bilbo at Rivendell, and Bilbo asks to see the Ring again, Frodo reacts as violently as Bilbo once did. We read: "Slowly he drew [the Ring] out. Bilbo put out his hand. But Frodo quickly drew back the Ring. To his distress and amazement he found that he was no longer looking at Bilbo; a shadow seemed to have fallen between them . . . He felt a desire to strike him" (FR, II, 280).

The words "My Precious" are of utmost significance, indicating that the one possessing the Ring is, in fact, possessed by it.¹³ It becomes his most precious possession, even more valuable than his very soul. The words, in fact, suggest that the bearer of the Ring loses his identity. It is no wonder, then, that the Black Riders, Sauron's chief servants, are little more than shadows. Originally Men, they were each given a Ring by Sauron and in this way easily corrupted, so evil that they lost their very identity (Foster 359-60). This is why they are invisible to normal eyes, and are only recognizable by their black clothing.

The story of Gollum continues in the second book, *The Two Towers*. During a

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battle with some orcs, Frodo and Sam are separated from the fellowship. Presently, they see Gollum coming down a cliff behind them, muttering to himself "my precious . . . We hate it . . . it spies on us" (TT, IV, 260). The word "it" refers to both Saruman and to the Ring, for one of the propensities of the Ring is to reveal to its maker the whereabouts of the one who carries it. Gollum fears Saruman, having been tortured by him in Mordor sometime after he lost the Ring to Bilbo. Gollum, it seems, both loves and hates the Ring. He loves its beauty and power, but he hates it because it betrays him, telling Saruman where he is.

At this point Sam catches Gollum, who begs for mercy. When he does, Frodo, remembering Gandalf's words about the need for mercy, pities him (TT, IV, 261). Immediately afterwards, they notice a change in Gollum: he is more friendly, nor does he hurt them when Frodo and Sam fall asleep. Following this, there is a long debate between the two "parts" of Gollum. Here Gollum's grammar gives him away. When he speaks good English, his good side, Smeagol, expresses itself, but when the grammar is faulty, the bad, Gollum, side—his subconscious self—comes out. Also, when the Smeagol side speaks, it uses the word "I," as in normal human conversation; whereas when the Gollum side speaks, it uses the word "we," as well as the words "my precious" (TT, IV, 283). This latter side also instills doubt about the need to do good. Thus we read how, after Smeagol speaks of his promise to help the hobbits, Gollum responds. "Yes, yes, my precious . . . we promised: to save our Precious, not to let Him [Saruman] have it—never. But it's going to Him, yes, nearer every step. What's the hobbit going to do with it, we wonders, yes we wonders." (TT, IV, 283)

Smeagol answers: "I don't know. I can't help it. Master's got it. Smeagol promised to help the Master," and Gollum replies: "Yes, yes, to help the master: the master of the Precious. But if we was master, then we could help ourselves, yes, and still keep promises."

The debate continues.

"But Smeagol said he would be very very good. Nice hobbit [Frodo]. He took cruel rope off Smeagol's leg. He speaks nicely to me."

"Very very good, eh, my precious? Let's be good, good as fish, sweet one, but to ourselves. Not hurt the nice hobbit, of course, no, no."

"But the Precious holds the promise," the voice of Smeagol objected.

"Then take it," said the other, "and let's hold it ourselves! Then we shall be master, gollum. Make the other hobbit, the nasty suspicious hobbit, make him crawl, yes, gollum!"

"But not the nice hobbit?"

"Oh no, not if it doesn't please us. Still he's a Baggins, my precious, yes, a Baggins. A Baggins stole it. He found it and he said nothing, nothing. We hates Bagginses." (TT, IV, 284)

Gollum implies here that the Ring is useless to Frodo: "What's he going to do with it?" Actually, we notice how he is unable to imagine how others might react in different circumstances. He cannot imagine that Frodo

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himself could have power, were he to keep the Ring. (Brian Rosebury alludes to this in writing, "the negativity of evil entails a loss of insight and . . . desire to understand others [for instance] the inability of complete evil to understand self-renunciatory motives" 32.) We also notice that, though he does speak about being "master" if he had the Ring, he does not covet power. His imagination and intelligence seem insufficient to realize the full power of the Ring. In this, he differs from Sauron and Saruman, who intend to use the Ring to rule all Middle-earth. Gollum's greed always remains close to the physical (Katharyn F. Crabbe 37). He wants to have power merely to be called "great," and to have as much fish as he can eat. But beyond this, Gollum is a liar to himself. While saying that promises are good, at the same time he tries to water-down the value of his promise to help the hobbits by adding a qualification: the only promises that have any value are those one makes to oneself! This, in effect, makes promises to others valueless. After this, he says that the good hobbit, Frodo, should not be hurt. But then, immediately afterwards, he shows his deeper feeling: by all means the Ring should be taken from him since he "stole it." But, as we have seen, Frodo never stole the Ring, nor did Bilbo. Bilbo found it, and later gave it to Frodo. In truth, it was Smeagol who stole the Ring by murdering his cousin, taking what did not belong to him by right. In all this, we see how Gollum's subconscious mind deliberately works to coax and then persuade the conscious mind to agree to its point of view.

In short, the hatred Gollum bears towards Frodo is ill-founded: there is no reason for it.¹⁴ All this shows that the Ring has weakened his will, his intellect, and his conscience. In fact, sin in his heart has divided his personality, so much so that his emotions and his reasoning

power are no longer in sync. His personality is split. (See Deborah W. Rogers and Ivor A. Rogers 70). Because his desires overpower his ability to reason, he has little control of himself. And because those desires are evil, he is willing to kill to satisfy them.¹⁵ Later we read how the Ring worked in the same way when Sam had it for a while. "Already the Ring tempted him, gnawing at his will and reason. Wild fantasies arose in him mind: and he saw Samwise the Strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land, and armies flocking to his call as he marched to the overthrow of Barad-dur . . . He had only to put on the Ring and claim it for his own, and all this could be" (RK, VI, 195-96).

The debate continues further.

"We must have it," says Gollum.

"But He'll see. [Saruman will see.] He'll know. He'll take it from us!" (284)

Gollum persists: "Must take it." Then, when Smeagol replies: "Not for Him!" [Saruman] Gollum answers:

"No, sweet one. See, my precious: if we has it, then we can escape, even from Him, eh? Perhaps we grows very strong, stronger than Wraiths. Lord Smeagol? Gollum the Great? The Gollum! Eat fish every day, three times a day, fresh from the Sea. Most Precious Gollum! Must have it. We wants it, we wants it, we wants it!"

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"But there's two of them [says Smeagol]. They'll wake too quick and kill us . . . Not now. Not yet."

"We wants it! But"—and here there was a long pause, as if a new thought had wakened. "Not yet, eh? Perhaps not. She might help. She might, yes."

"No, no! Not that way!" wailed Smeagol.

"Yes! We wants it! We wants it!" (RK, IV, 284)

Several conclusions can be made here. For one thing, the arguments of Gollum are irrational. There is no good reason offered for having the Ring, other than its usefulness in getting food and its ability to give him physical strength. This ties in with the constant repetition of the words, "We wants." The appeal is almost, if not entirely, to Smeagol's desires. Also, we sense a total self-preoccupation: no mention is made to the welfare of Frodo and Sam, but only to what will benefit him. In fact, if force is required to wrest the Ring from them, so be it. We also note how easily the subconsciousness of Gollum overwhelms his conscious mind. Whatever it suggests is readily acceded to. Finally, there is a gradual weakening of Smeagol's will power, so much so, that after a while, he is almost completely at the mercy of the evil voice within his heart.

In the next section relating to Gollum, we see how he enacts the weaknesses depicted earlier in his debate with himself. Seeing how the Gate leading to Mordor is impassable, and hoping to get the Ring by persuading them to enter the tunnel of the giant spider Shelob,

Gollum offers them another way through a mountain pass (Cirith Ungol, RK, IV, 296). Sam rightfully doubts Gollum's intentions, but Frodo agrees, naively, one feels, to let Gollum guide them.¹⁶ Then, soon after entering the tunnel, the spider attacks. When its arms coil around Sam, Gollum expresses his delight.

"Got him!" hissed Gollum in his ear. "At last, my precious, we've got him, yes the nasty hobbit. We takes this one. She'll get the other one. O yes, Shelob will get him, not Smeagol: he promised; he won't hurt Master at all" (RK, IV, 396).

Of course, Gollum's convoluted logic cannot excuse him for betraying the hobbits. Nor can his attempt to excuse his betrayal by telling himself that he did not break his promise to Frodo: he said he wouldn't hurt Frodo, and he didn't—it was Shelob who hurt, or will hurt him. This reasoning shows that Gollum still has a conscience. However, he concocts reasons to assuage his conscience, for he cannot bear guilty feelings. This makes him most dangerous, since he does not take responsibility for the misdeeds his conscience brings to mind. Because of this, though there is still hope that he may somehow change, the actual hope of such a change gradually becomes dimmer, even more so the closer he draws to Mordor, since it has a bad influence on him.

The significance of all this is that Gollum succumbs more and more to his lower nature. For a while he resists the temptation to cause the hobbits harm—at least to cause Frodo harm, since he was kind to him. (He hates Sam for being so critical of him.) Nevertheless the Ring has such a strong hold on him that the kindness of Frodo counts for naught.

After a long hiatus, we meet Gollum again, as Frodo and Sam draw near to Mount Doom, where they hope to destroy the Ring by

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throwing it into the fire where it was made. Seeing them, Gollum accuses Frodo of deceiving him by taking the Ring towards the volcano. Of course, Frodo has not deceived him at all, since he made no promises regarding the Ring, other than to the fellowship. By including this accusation in the narrative Tolkien may be trying to say that at this point Gollum's grasp of reality and truth is all but nil. Then Gollum wrestles unsuccessfully with Frodo, trying to snatch the Ring from him. Eventually, he goes away, but not very far.

At this point, Frodo, standing near the edge of the mountain, says that he will not give up the Ring. "I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine" (RK, VI, 248). One year with the Ring has made Frodo decide not to fulfill his mission by casting it into the fire. He is right in saying that the Ring is his, for Bilbo did give it to him as a birthday present. However, later, in Rivendell, he affirmed before everyone he would destroy it. In going back on his word, he breaks his promise to the fellowship. Then, putting on the Ring, he vanishes from sight. Soon afterwards Sam sees Gollum fighting an unseen foe. Gollum here clearly represents Frodo's hidden self. It is "as if we are witnessing the darkest night of the soul and one side attempting to master the other" (Jane Chance 102). Then Frodo, whose finger has been bitten off, cries out, and Gollum holds the Ring aloft, shrieking: "Precious, precious, precious! My Precious! O my Precious!" (RK, VI, 249). At this point, stepping too near the edge, he falls into the volcano, taking the Ring with him. With this, the mountain shakes. Sauron's threats against Middle-earth have been eliminated (Rossi 119).

Gollum's loss of rational control can be seen in the way he ignores the danger of wrestling on the rim of the volcano. "... even as his eyes were lifted up to gloat on his prize, he stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell" (RK, VI, 249). His ruin comes from the way he diverts attention from reality, concentrating totally on the Ring, and completely forgetting his precariousness in being too close to the edge. Gollum has degenerated so much from the truth of things that in the end he is defeating by reality itself.

Gollum's words, "My precious! O my Precious!" recalls the time when he was in the tunnel beneath the Misty Mountains and addressed himself as "my precious" (The Hobbit 68). Now, one year later, he attributes these words to the Ring. (We also notice how the word "precious" is capitalized on Mount Doom, as if the Ring has taken on even greater significance for him.) It is as if he has lost his identity, having become so much a part of the existence of the Ring, and so dominated by it that at the end he is little more than a creature going by the name of Gollum. In actually becoming what he possesses, his identity has been obliterated. It comes as little surprise that both he and the Ring are destroyed at the same time in the fires of the volcano. Both are beyond hope for change.¹⁷

In commenting on Tolkien's two novels, Stephen Medcalf writes, "Tolkien was persuaded to write [The Lord of the Rings—he started in 1936 (Grotta-Kurska 102)—as a sequel to his smaller work, The Hobbit, which had been very little involved with his principal myths, just before World War II" (1328). When one examines the chronology of Tolkien's writings, however, one comes to a different conclusion for, in fact, Tolkien was already working on his mythological kingdom

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of Middle-earth long before he wrote *The Hobbit*, published in 1937. Christopher Tolkien says that his father's battered notebooks which were to form *The Silmarillion*, a book which offers a background to elements found in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, extend back to 1917 (Tolkien, "Forward" to *The Silmarillion* 7). Thus years before he wrote *The Hobbit*, Tolkien had already been thinking of his mythic history. The text itself shows this. Indeed, a close study of Gollum demonstrates that there is not much difference between his behavior and attitudes in this novel and in *Lord of the Rings*. The Ring does possess him more as time passes, but essentially his nature does not change much.

Tolkien brings the story to completion in several ways, one of them being the way Gollum serves to free Middle-earth from Sauron's power. This, we know, is the result of the mercy that Bilbo, Gandalf, Frodo, and others have shown him. Because of this, Gollum lives on, eventually playing his part in destroying the Ring. Evil is used for good purposes by a higher being who seems always to be working behind in the scenes in the story.¹⁸

If we relate the story of Gollum to Scripture, there are a number of passages that come to mind. Gollum's behavior elucidates the truth of Jesus's saying, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). One also recalls the words, "Anyone who loves his life loses it" (John 12:25).¹⁹ There is still another passage, the parable of the pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45-46). Jesus's message, of course, is that the Kingdom of God is worth more than anything we can possibly possess, and that we must engage all our energy to get it. We also hear of the great joy the merchant experienced when he found

the pearl. The example of Gollum, shows us what happens when this process is reversed, that is, when someone makes lesser values the focus of life. One's spiritual being shrivels, while life becomes a veritable hell.

Goodness certainly plays a major role in the two novels. But one feels that Tolkien's main interest was the existence of evil, particularly how immoderate greed for material property ("dragon sickness") functions in such a way as to destroy free will and perhaps even one's very identity. The example of Gollum demonstrates what happens when one loves a thing to excess. The love one should have towards one's self is gradually transferred to the thing, to the extent that one begins to love it rather than the self. In fact, if the transference is not checked, one can even come to hate one's self. The psyche, knowing that it is not receiving enough love from the self, reacts, often by violence, either against others, or against the self. Gollum is an example of this.

Notes

1. The name of Gollum may be associated with the Latin, *gula*, which refers to one of the Seven Deadly Sins, gluttony. Ruskin, in *The Stones of Venice*, describes the Ducal Palace in Venice as depicting the chief sins. One of them is gluttony. She is depicted as wearing a turban and holding a jewelled cup in her right hand, while gnawing a limb of a bird held in her left. Ruskin compares these sculptured vices with Giotto's painting and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Morton W. Bloomfield 104).
2. Many critics have identified the tunnel as a metaphor of the womb. Bilbo's leaving his hobbit home in the Shire suggests that he

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is about to be reborn. His adventures will help the process of maturation. (See Robert Giddings and Elizabeth Holland 220.)

3. Even before he killed Deagol, Smeagol had developed this habit. His selfishness is shown in the way he murders his cousin to get the Ring. (See LR, I, 78.)
4. These were the very words Isildur used when he wrote in his scroll after he cut the Ring from Sauron's finger. (FR, II, 304)
5. William Ready writes that Tolkien "only gradually" realizes the significance of the Ring, that is, its evil power (86). However, a close reading of *The Hobbit* shows that all the essential elements of the Ring and its evil power are already present. Gollum does not change much from what he was when Bilbo first met him. He was and still is possessed by the Ring. Nor do the qualities of the Ring change: it tires Frodo, just as it tires Gollum, and it causes Gollum's personality to split, just as it later threatens to split the personality of Frodo.
6. Later Gandalf explains to Frodo how the Ring "could make no further use of him: he was too small and mean; and as long as it stayed with him he would never leave his deep pool again. So now, when its master was awake once more and sending out his dark thought from Mirkwood, it abandoned Gollum" (FR, I, 81).
7. William H. Greene writes that "the tunnel is a negative version of his own front hall" ("The Four-Part Structure of Bilbo's Education" 135).
8. Joseph Campbell's definition of the rite of passage clarifies what is happening to Bilbo. He refers to it as "a severance, whereby the mind is radically cut away from the attitudes, attachments, and life patterns of the stage being left behind"

(Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 10.) Kathryn F. Crabbe also writes about this. "Bilbo's encounter with Gollum is an example of the journey to the underworld archetype, the mythic journey of the hero to the land of the dead where he acquires some knowledge or some talisman that will help him to achieve his earthly quest, though Tolkien introduces some curious comic inversions into the archetype as, for example, having Gollum guard the exit rather than the entrance, and having Bilbo find the talisman without knowing he is looking for it." J.R.R. Tolkien 50. Gerald Monsman observations about *The Hobbit* are also instructive.

Utilizing in *The Hobbit* a variation of the fisher-king legend, Tolkien describes the land of the King Under the Mountain as having a curse upon it—the dragon. Or to be more specific, the curse of the land is actually the "dragon sickness," the immoderate greed for material property ... As in T. S. Eliot's "Wasteland," so here in *The Hobbit* we have a story about the lifting of the curse from a stricken land and the new life which enters in. (268-69)

9. Tolkien changes the usual physical battle that the hero normally undergoes with a strong foe into a verbal exchange of wit, but for all that, Bilbo still holds his own, refusing to back away from his adversary.
10. Kathryn F. Crabbe notes how suffering has helped Frodo to develop a sense of pity for others. "By the time Frodo meets Gollum in *The Two Towers*, he too has felt the pain of loss and the burden of the Ring and is thus able to feel pity for the wretched creature" (81). Richard Purtill writes how Frodo's pity for Gollum almost redeems him (111).

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11. A good example of the way Bilbo imitates Gandalf's action can be seen in the description of Bilbo's action immediately after leaving the tunnel. "Shadows [of the mountain] fell cross Bilbo's path, and he looked back. Then he looked forward" (83).
12. One might see Bilbo as occupying a middle position, between the virtue of Gandalf, and the vice of Gollum. He is being tested, and can move in either direction, either towards virtue, or towards vice. Fortunately he learn the value of acting charitably. Richard L. Purtill writes about this. "[For Bilbo] friendship involves giving even if you do not receive" (J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion 50).
13. Later Gandalf uses the word "devours," when referring to the corrupting power of the Ring. One feels that, initially, Tolkien conceived of the evil of the Ring in terms of gluttony. FR, I, 83.) Richard Mathews writes about the loss of freedom that comes when one is in possession of something evil, like the Ring. "Those driven by greed, possessiveness, hatred are tied irrevocably to the past Fall and to time" (39). Also of significance is the fact that those who are obsessed by the Ring or by other treasures do not use what they have. Smaug merely lies on his hoard of jewels, while Bilbo uses the Ring he found in Gollum's place in order to help the dwarves in various situations. (See Purtill, *Lord of the Elves and Eldils* 105.)
14. When Bilbo escapes from Gollum, the latter cries, "Thief! Thief! Baggins! We hates it, we hates it, we hates it for ever!" (*The Hobbit* 80.)
15. Bilbo faces the same situation early on in *The Hobbit*, "a struggle between the Baggins and Took personalities, which are only integrated by his brave self-sacrifice under the Lonely Mountain" (Green 136).
16. Sam seems to understand Gollum better than Frodo. Sam's "earthy, sensuous nature" may account for this (Jane Chance, *The Lord of the Rings* 100). Like Gollum, he is closer to the ground, his job being a gardener. The Ring tempts him in the same way it does Gollum, by appealing to his love of physical strength.
17. Robley Evans touches on one of the central themes of the novels, *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* in writing "Man is constantly in the process of freeing himself from possessiveness. [This is] opposed to the purpose of the One Ring which is to 'bind' life, enclose it within its circle forever" (92.) Daniel Hughes refers to the same idea when he writes about "the consistent sense of renunciation in the central action of the trilogy" (85). Jane Chance offers a good definition of this concept of renunciation. "It is a moral act par excellence, an act shared in by the 'community' . . . it epitomizes Tolkien's vision of the power of the community to heal and knit up the social fabric" (*The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* 99).
18. One finds it difficult to agree with Robert Gidding and Elizabeth Holland when they say that "at the last moment, on Oroduin, Gollum is won over by Frodo" (113), that "Gollum is the dying thief who said 'Lord, remember me', the first Christian" (209), and that Gollum is "reborn in Frodo" (209). There is nothing in the story to support these ideas. To have Gollum suddenly change into a Christian the moment before he dies is completely at odds with the entire narrative of the two novels, where it is made clear that he is

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enthralled with the evil Ring. In one of his letters, too, Tolkien made it clear that Gollum's life was tragic (Letters 320-30). As William Green writes, "Gollum's failure to repent is 'tragic'." (The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity 72). Gunnar Urang sees Providence as directing the course of events in the story of the Ring. He defines Providence as "faith in the ultimate divine control over the whole of history [that] issues in hope also for the consummation of all things" (116). This is also the argument of R. J. Reilly, who sees "a Christian pattern in the events of the book [Lord of the Rings]" (199).

A more correct assessment of the novel's ending, one feels, is that offered by Charles Moorman, who writes, "the Christian view of life is unflaggingly optimistic. God will eventually turn evil to good" (62). Moorman qualifies this statement by arguing that "[The Lord of the Rings] itself does not bear out this view [since] it reflects the attitudes and interests of Tolkien the student of Beowulf rather than those of Tolkien the Christian" (63). Nevertheless, he agrees that the ending of the story is "both optimistic and Christian" (63).

19. As Tolkien was working on Lord of the Rings and thinking how to make the Ring a powerful force for evil, he wrote the remark, "You must either lose it, or yourself" (Carpenter 186).

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