

New Words for Ecclesiology: Newman and Tolkien

I am very grateful to Father Koterski and The Spiritual Family The Work for setting up this Forum on Newman and Tolkien: “Using Literary Genius for the Catholic Faith.” It is especially appropriate for us to hold such an event on the eve of Cardinal Newman’s 211th birthday. Blessed John Henry always celebrated February 21 as a day of self-examination and spiritual reflection. On this day in 1836, he wrote to his sister Jemima:

I think I am conscious to myself that, whatever are my faults, I wish to live and die to His glory – to surrender wholly to Him as His instrument to whatever work and at whatever personal sacrifice.

Newman certainly lived up to these words: words that could also apply to the author John Ronald Reuel Tolkien whose significance as a Catholic writer is becoming more widely recognized as critics look ever more deeply into his literary works, especially *The Lord of the Rings*.

What interests me most about Tolkien is the influence of Newman – the man, the thinker, the writer – an influence that I seem to find wherever I look in Tolkien’s epic, a work that he consciously wrote for England. In the past I have explained my conviction that Newman’s influence on Tolkien came from his experience as an orphan placed under the guardianship of Fr. Francis Morgan, a priest in Newman’s Oratory in Birmingham. Fr. Morgan had been a student in the Oratory School and then actually trained as a priest and an Oratorian while Newman was still active in his role as the guiding spirit behind the Oratorian house, church, and school. Fr. Morgan had befriended Mabel Tolkien, a young widow with two sons who had been rejected by her family after converting to Catholicism in 1900. After Mabel was diagnosed with diabetes in 1904, this kindly priest found them a place to live on the grounds of the Oratorians’ villa in Rednal, which proved a great comfort to Mabel in her last days. Following her death, Fr. Morgan almost became a second father to Ronald and his younger brother. The two boys became, in

Tolkien's words, "junior inmates" of the Oratory House – soaking up the atmosphere that was still dominated by the presence of Newman, who had only died in 1890.

I have entitled my talk "New Words for Catholic Ecclesiology" because I want to investigate the way both Newman and Tolkien approached the task of presenting a positive picture of the Catholic Church to an England that was, in large part, a bastion of John Bull Protestantism and viewed its inbred prejudice as nothing else but historical truth. This topic is, I think, unfortunately still relevant, as Catholicism remains a religion viewed with suspicion as if she were an opponent of freedom of conscience and an enemy of human rights. Of course, in the 21st century, the persecution of Catholics is much more subtle than it was in Newman's lifetime and in Tolkien's youth. One thing, however, remains the same. It is very difficult to fight long-held prejudices.

Newman, of course, knew all about the irrational bigotry that had been inbred in the British people. Such prejudices can be traced back to the first Anglicans in the sixteenth century who were eager to find ways to destroy the Catholicism of the average English believer. They took every opportunity to describe the Catholic Church as a corrupt institution that owed more to paganism than to Christianity, a diabolical situation that they claimed was no accident of history but rather a deliberate policy instituted by the pope of Rome who was himself none other but the Anti-Christ prophesied in the Bible. Because the original Protestant reformers recognized the emotional attachment that most Englishmen felt for Catholicism and because they feared the power that Catholicism had in appealing to popular imagination, the early reformers insisted from the pulpit that the beautiful images found in Catholic churches needed to be viewed with suspicion and hatred as seductive lures of the whore of Babylon – what one later Anglican divine described as the "meretricious gaudiness" of the Church of Rome. Note too the emphasis here on the Church of *Rome*, deliberately meant to bring out the foreign, un-English nature of Catholicism. Unfortunately, such continuous attacks on Rome had their desired effect: tabernacles disappeared, statues were smashed, monasteries and convents were destroyed. Nothing that might reawaken an interest in

Catholicism was overlooked. Archbishop Cranmer saw to it that even the rosary was outlawed. Children were expected to report if they found any beads in their parents' houses. Anyone who remained loyal to the pope was a traitor to the Crown.

This ugly brainwashing has had a long run and still is responsible for malicious anti-Catholic diatribes in the media, and especially on the internet. John Henry Newman had been reared in such an atmosphere. He won a prize for a schoolboy poem that he had written on the massacre of the Huguenots in which the young Newman vilified the pope as anti-Christ. Of course, like other Englishman, he did not view such slurs as prejudice or bigotry: simply true historical facts, so well had the early Anglican reformers carried out their campaign. As a clergyman in the Church of England, Newman considered it his religious duty to warn his congregations against the corruptions of the Romanists. Indeed, even at the height of his involvement in the Oxford Movement, while he was advocating that Anglicanism needed to return to the spirit of the primitive Church and the Church of the Fathers, Newman wanted it made clear that he was not advocating a return to the Church of Rome. In his book, *The Prophetical Office of the Church*, Newman warned against veering too close to Rome:

We shall find too late that we are in the arms of a pitiless and unnatural relative who will but triumph in the arts that have inveigled us within her reach. For in truth she is a Church beside herself, crafty, obstinate, willful, malicious, cruel, unnatural as madmen are. Or rather she (the Church of Rome) may be said to resemble a demoniac – possessed with principles, thoughts, and tendencies not her own; in outward form and in natural powers what God made her but ruled by an inexorable spirit. Thus she is her real self only in name, and, till God vouchsafe to restore her, we must treat her as if she were that evil one who governs her.

It is indeed ironic that Newman, one of the leaders of the “Catholic” party within the Anglican Church, himself held such a low opinion of Rome. Many of Newman’s opinions at this period came from his

close friendship with Hurrell Froude, who held both anti-Roman prejudices while at the same time hating the Protestant Reformation and the Reformers themselves. Following Froude's early death, the two main leaders of the Oxford Movement – Newman and his colleague John Keble, published *Froude's Remains*, four volumes of Froude's letters and writings. Its anti-Reformation tone so shocked Protestant Oxford that a collection was taken up for Oxford to honor the three great Protestant martyrs – Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer – even though they were sons of Cambridge. In reality, the famous Oxford Martyrs Memorial was erected as a deliberate affront to Newman's growing influence, seen as a movement toward Rome despite Newman's own denials.

Newman's combination of Catholic leanings with an open distrust of Rome itself remained the hallmark of the High Church position. Tolkien noted this same paradox a century later in his friend C.S. Lewis. As Tolkien writes to his son Christopher in October 1944:

... Hatred of our church (Roman Catholicism) is after all the real only final foundation of the C of E – so deep laid that it remains even when all the superstructure seems removed (C.S.L. for instance reveres the Blessed Sacrament, and admires nuns!). Yet if a Lutheran is put in jail he is up in arms; but if Catholic priests are slaughtered – he disbelieves it (and I daresay really thinks they asked for it).

Tolkien understood only too well that anti-Catholic prejudice remained a hallmark even of the Anglo-Catholics themselves. He considered his mother a martyr, blaming her early death on the bad treatment she had received from her family after her conversion. Throughout his life, Tolkien observed with righteous anger the abuse that his family and other Catholics had to endure, and not just from ignorant people who did not know any better. He wrote to his son Christopher how disgusted he became, hearing the anti-Catholic remarks of his fellow Oxford dons discussing the Allies' occupation of Rome at the end of the Second World War. Later, in the 1960's, Tolkien noted his pleasure that the post-Vatican II Church was encouraging better relations with non-Catholics; but he still resented the prejudice that he continued to encounter. In a letter that he sent to his son Michael in October 1968, Tolkien wrote:

I find myself in sympathy with those developments that are strictly ‘ecumenical’, that is concerned with other groups or churches that call themselves (and often truly are) ‘Christian’. We have prayed endlessly for Christian re-union, but it is difficult to see, if one reflects, how that could possibly begin to come about except as it has, with all its inevitable minor absurdities. An increase in ‘charity’ is an enormous gain. As Christians those faithful to the Vicar of Christ must put aside the resentments that as mere humans they feel – e.g. at the ‘cockiness’ of our new friends (esp. C of E). One is now often patted on the back, as a representative of a church that has seen the error of its ways, abandoned its arrogance and hauteur, and its separatism; but I have not yet met a ‘protestant’ who shows or expresses any realization of the reasons in this country for our attitude: ancient or modern: from torture and expropriation down to ‘Robinson’ and all that. Has it ever been mentioned that RCs still suffer from disabilities not even applicable to Jews? As a man whose childhood was darkened by persecution, I find this hard. But charity must cover a multitude of sins! There are dangers (of course), but a Church militant cannot afford to shut up all its soldiers in a fortress. It had as bad effects on the Maginot line.

Tolkien is, of course, referring here to the French attempt after World War I to avoid future German invasions by fortifying their border with Germany: a very expensive project that proved ineffectual in the Second World War.

Tolkien clearly believes that it had been a regrettable policy in the Church that had encouraged Catholics to cut themselves off from their non-Catholic neighbors. Tolkien expressed his gratitude to Fr. Francis Morgan and the other Oratorians who nurtured his Catholicism that they did not bring him up to have such a defensive attitude with regard to Britain’s dominant Protestant society. Far from it, they encouraged him to keep his scholarship at the Anglican King Edward’s School, allowed him to study the

Greek New Testament under its Protestant headmaster, and encouraged his friendship with non-Catholic classmates. At the same time, the Oratorians made sure that he strictly observed the teachings of the Church, served Mass every morning, and used the Church pronunciation of Latin in Catholic services. Tolkien realized that such a rational approach was unusual for its time, and that it had equipped him well to make his way in a non-Catholic professional society.

Unlike many other Catholic communities, the Oratorians were simply following the approach that Cardinal Newman had put into practice for his Congregation. Their mission with regard to Protestant England was two-fold: to train Catholics to be gentlemen who could take part in ordinary English social life, and to find positive approaches to break down John Bull bigotry. In his sermons, Newman reminded his Catholic audience that Christ had foretold that the world would hate them just as it had hated him but, nevertheless, they must not allow such hatred to make them misanthropic. Rather it should make them purify their motives even more. In one sermon, he said that ‘it may surprise those Catholics who live to themselves why so many Protestants are not Catholics, but it will not surprise those who go into the world. They will there find what will account for it, viz., a prejudice about Catholicism such that the wonder is not why men do not become Catholics, but why any do at all.’

According to Newman, the best way to remedy this prejudice is for Catholics to allow society “to see us” as we are: to admit that the human element in the Church has at times been corrupt, to point out the Protestant inconsistency of allowing “private judgment” and freedom of conscience to all but Catholics, and most of all to be prepared to explain our faith and practices in a cogent manner.

Newman himself took advantage of controversies that arose to explain the true position of the Church. To alleviate Protestant fears of papal power, he turned to history and reminded his audience that Christianity came to England through the efforts of a pope, St. Gregory the Great, who sent missionaries to convert this pagan people. When Prime Minister Gladstone wrote that the recent proclamation of papal

infallibility meant that Catholics could no longer be considered trustworthy subjects of the State, Newman carefully explained that papal infallibility was restricted solely to faith and morals, did not imply the impeccability of the pope, or deny freedom of conscience to Catholics. For Newman, the pope should be viewed as the successor to “the great Apostle, on whom the Church is built”: St. Peter who, although he had “denied his Lord, out of all the Apostles, is the most conspicuous for his love of him.”

Back in 1854, when Protestant England had learned to its horror that Pope Pius IX had defined the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Newman defended this teaching of the Church and explained the true role of Mary in Catholic teaching and practice. He preached numerous sermons on our Lady, showing that charges of Mariolatry were unfounded:

Here is the special office of our Lady, and its bearing on us. She does not predestinate, she does not give grace, she does not merit grace for us, but she gains it by prayer; she gains perseverance by prayer. Thus she overcomes God, as I may say.

It is significant to recall that before his conversion, Newman had great regard for Mary, but because of inbred prejudice he refused to pray to her. He first prayed to Mary on the very day that he was received into the Church by Blessed Dominic Barberi.

In fact, Newman developed a great love for Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception. Newman had learned that shortly, before his reception in 1845, a confraternity of prayer at the famous Church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris had been ardently praying for Newman’s conversion; their badge was the medal of the Immaculate Conception, popularly called the Miraculous Medal. Newman himself began wearing the medal about seven weeks before he asked to become a Catholic. On his way to Rome to study for the Catholic priesthood, Newman stopped at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires to give thanks for his conversion. I like to think that Newman, an excellent musician, may have known that Mozart use to visit this church to say the rosary.

When he got to Rome, Newman was delighted to discover that from his window at the Collegio di Propaganda he looked down on the church of Sant' Andrea delle Fratte, where the atheist Alphonse Ratisbonne in 1842 had seen a vision of Our Lady just as she appeared on the Miraculous Medal. The atheist Ratisbonne had himself been wearing the medal because of a dare by one of his Catholic friends. Newman certainly saw in Ratisbonne a kindred spirit who also owed his conversion to Mary. Sr. Brigitte Maria Hoegemann of the Spiritual Family the Work has reminded us that a painting exists – done by Newman's friend Maria Giberne – that shows Newman and his colleague Ambrose St. John sitting in their room in the Propaganda. Behind and above them stands Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as she appears on the medal – standing guard over her two devoted clients. When Newman established a church for his Oratory in Birmingham, he dedicated it to the Immaculate Conception.

As we can see, far from trying to hide from Protestant objections to this doctrine, Newman takes every opportunity to study it, to integrate it into his own spiritual life, and to explain it to others. In a conference that he delivered to Catholics and Protestants, Newman explained the importance of Mary in the life of the Church:

The Church gives us Jesus Christ for our food, and Mary for our nursing mother. Prove to the world that you are following no false teaching, vindicate the glory of your mother Mary, whom the world blasphemes, in the very face of the world, by the simplicity of your own deportment, and the sanctity of your words and deeds. Go to her for the royal heart of innocence. She is the beautiful gift of God, which outshines the fascination of a bad world, and which no one ever sought in sincerity and was disappointed. She is the personal type and representative image of the spiritual life and renovation in grace, without which no one shall see God.

Perhaps the worst prejudice that Newman had to confront was a constant attack on the Church's teachings on the sacraments and the sacramental system. Not only did the Protestant majority consider the

eneration of statues and relics as idolatry and the practice of wearing medals or scapulars as gross superstition, but they viewed the Mass as ‘hocus pocus’ and the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle as the original “Jack in the Box.”

In his *Apologia* and other works, Newman painstakingly explained the incarnational importance of the sacramental system, a system that was not foreign to England but had been the norm before the Reformation. He was able to deal with these topics convincingly because he knew from his own experience what these prejudices were. As he writes in the *Apologia*:

People say that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is difficult to believe; I did not believe the doctrine till I was a Catholic. I had no difficulty in believing it, as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God, and that she had declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation. It is difficult, impossible, to imagine, I grant; - but how is it difficult to believe?

Christ had, indeed, promised the Church that he would always be with her; for Newman, Christ carried out this promise through His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. As he wrote soon after his conversion, “I am writing next door to the Chapel – It is such an incomprehensible blessing to have Christ in bodily presence in one’s house, within one’s walls, as swallows up all other privileges and destroys, or should destroy, every pain. To know that He is close by – to be able again and again through the day to go in to Him ...” Newman now realizes what his prejudice had blinded him to when, as a Protestant, he had visited Catholic churches: “I did not know, or did not observe, the tabernacle Lamp – but now after tasting of the awful delight of worshipping God in His Temple, how unspeakably cold is the idea of a Temple without that Divine Presence!”

As a skillful and witty author, Newman also used satire in his war against prejudice. Rather than just condemning his fellow countrymen for their bigotry, he appeals to them through humor, counting on an

Englishman's pride in his sense of sportsmanship and fair play. In one of his addresses in *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, Newman turns the table on his opponents: How would you feel if you were treated the way we are? He hypothetically describes how a prejudicial anti-British Russian might easily misinterpret such basic principles of the British legal system as "the King is always right" or "the King never dies" and might suppose that the English actually believe in a very broadly conceived doctrine of royal infallibility, royal impeccability, and even royal immortality. Newman goes rather far in confronting the outrageous belief that the pope is really the Anti-Christ by showing how easy it would be to associate the mark of the beast with Queen Victoria herself. She ascended the throne in 1837 when she herself was 18. If you multiply 37 by 18, the result is 666! As Newman suggests, the best way to overcome an opponent is to get him to laugh at himself.

Tolkien uses a similar approach in *The Lord of the Rings*. In this epic for England, surely it is obvious that the hobbits themselves represent the English just as the Shire represents Great Britain. Unfortunately most readers become so delighted by the charm in this picture of a pre-industrial, pollution free, postcard pretty England that they miss Tolkien's satire. The hobbits are often narrow-minded, covetous, materialistic back-biters who have deliberately cut themselves off from other creatures and from any spirituality. They are isolationists who take no interest in the world outside of the Shire. Even hobbits who live beyond its borders are known as "Outsiders." While mistrusting all other creatures, the Shire's hobbits live in a fool's paradise, unaware of the dangers that are coming and totally unprepared to meet these challenges. Their chief interests seem to be food and collecting clutter.

It is important to remember that the four hobbits of the main story – Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin – are very different from the ordinary hobbit. They are friends of Bilbo who has always been considered a freak. He is friends with a very suspicious wizard, entertains elves and dwarves, and actually enjoys travel outside of the Shire. Unlike his neighbors, Bilbo is literate, fond of collecting the old tales and

songs of long ago. The most important trait that Bilbo shares with the four young hobbits is a love of elves and all things elvish.

Like Newman, these hobbits leave behind the comforts of home with all its prejudices and venture off into the wider world and adopt a new manner of living, taught to them by the elves. Now, even though Tolkien made it clear that he hated pure allegory, he admitted that *Lord of the Rings* possesses certain – shall we say? – allegorical touches. In other words, the Shire is the Shire and not really England but, nevertheless, it does represent a very English atmosphere that it is important for us to realize. In the same way, the elves represent a very Catholic atmosphere – a community that is very spiritual. Their two main centers in the epic – Rivendell and Lothlorian – represent the very best that can be found on Middle-earth. Rivendell with its towers and bells and Lothlorian in its sylvan atmosphere could almost be medieval monasteries, the abbeys that Newman wrote about that stood – in his words - “amid the deep pagan woods” where the “Benedictine plied his axe and drove his plough, planted his rude dwelling and raised his rustic altar” and “then settling down as a colonist upon the soil, began to sing his chants and to copy his old volumes, and thus to lay the slow and sure foundations of the new civilization.” Perhaps Tolkien also saw in these elvish communities something of the love of order, learning, and devotion that he and his brother Hilary experienced, like two young hobbits, at Newman’s Oratory in Birmingham and its villa in Rednal.

One of the things that the elves teach the hobbits is prayer. The elves are especially fond of praying to Elbereth, an angelic figure who is Queen of the Stars. Their most beautiful hymn is addressed to her:

A Elbereth Gilthoniel,
Silivren penna miriel
O menel aglar elenath!

Frodo translates this hymn. Let me recite the first stanza:

Snow white! Snow white! O Lady clear!

O Queen beyond the Western Seas!

O Light to us that wander here

Amid the world of woven trees!

Critics have pointed out its resemblance to the famous Marian hymn by Dr. Lingard, “Hail Queen of Heaven,” a hymn loosely based on the *Ave Maris Stella*. This elvish prayer appears at different times in the epic, perhaps most notably when Sam recites it in elvish and gains the courage to fight the monstrous She-lob.

Elbereth is not the only Marian figure that Tolkien introduces. He admitted that critics were right to see a Marian influence in his portrait of Galadriel, the “greatest of the elven women” whose name in Elvish means “maiden crowned with a radiant garland” and whose hair, according to the dwarf Gimli, “surpasses the gold of the earth as the stars surpass the gems of the mine.” In reading about this noblest of queens, I am reminded of Newman’s description of Mary as the “Royal Queen clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars of heaven” who “as the pattern both of maidenhood and maternity, has exalted woman’s state and nature.” Just as Mary has been credited with giving us the rosary, the scapular, and the Miraculous Medal, so too Galadriel provides the members of the Fellowship with gifts that will prove useful on their quest, including elvish cloaks woven by herself and her ladies, “a great aid in keeping out the sight of unfriendly eyes”; earth from her orchard for Sam to replenish his garden; and a small crystal phial for Frodo that contains light from “Earendil’s star, set amid the waters of my fountain.”

One Marian reference that, I believe, has gone unnoticed is found early on in the epic after the hobbits have left the protection and rest that they had found in the home of Tom Bombadil and his wife Goldberry whose appearance in time of need is certainly Providential. After the hobbits leave, Frodo recalls that

they had not said farewell to Goldberry; and in his distress, he turns around. What he sees is akin to one of Murillo's famous paintings of the Immaculate Conception: "There on the hillbrow she stood beckoning to them: her hair was flying loose, and as it caught the sun it shone and shimmered. A light like the glint of water on dewy grass flashed from under her feet as she danced." One cannot help but think of the moon under Mary's feet. After Goldberry gives them a "blessing on your footsteps," the hobbits return to their journey. When they reach the bottom of the hollow, they turn back once again: "... they saw Goldberry, now small and slender like a sunlit flower against the sky: she was standing still watching them, and her hands were stretched out towards them." If that is not a reference to Mary as she appears on the Miraculous Medal, I don't know what is!

Father Morgan and the other Oratorians instilled in Tolkien a genuine love for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a love such as Newman had. As Tolkien wrote to his son Michael: "...I fell in love with the Blessed Sacrament from the beginning – and by the mercy of God never have fallen out again...Not for me the Hound of Heaven, but the never-ceasing silent appeal of (the) Tabernacle, and the sense of starving hunger." In another letter to his son Christopher, he even describes a mystical experience of the Light of God that he had while he was adoring the Eucharist during the Forty Hours Devotion.

Tolkien clearly incorporated this love of the Eucharist into his epic when he describes the food that the elves give to the fellowship for their journey: "...We call it *lembas* or waybread, and it is more strengthening than any food made by men...Eat a little at a time, and only at need. For these things are

given to serve you when all else fails.” These words were prophetic. As Frodo and Sam were nearing the end of the quest, they “came to an hour of blank despair”; but it was at this low point that Sam realized that he still had some strength: “the *lembas* had a virtue without which they would long ago have lain down to die. It did not satisfy desire, and at times Sam’s mind was filled with memories of food, and the longing for simple bread and meats. And yet the waybread of the Elves had a potency that increased as travelers relied on it alone and did not mingle it with other foods. It fed the will, and it gave strength to endure, and to master sinew and limb beyond the measure of mortal kind.” This passage is important for what it tells us about the significance of *lembas*. Moreover, it demonstrates the spiritual growth that has taken place in Sam. He is no longer the comic character who eavesdrops at windows and, at times, needs a reprimand from Frodo. Now Sam is ready for the task that he must undertake when they return to the Shire. In the end, Sam will take Frodo’s place as guardian of the book of Old Tales, and he will have to keep it up to date. Sam will also use the earth given to him by Galadriel and replenish the beauty of the Shire.

In Tolkien’s world, Sam takes the role of Peter, the first pope, the Apostle who, according to Newman, had the greatest love for his Master: the Apostle who, seeing Christ walking on the water, jumps in impetuously and has to be saved by Christ – just as Sam jumps into a river when he sees Frodo sailing off alone, and has to be pulled to safety by his master’s hand. It is most important that, toward the end of the quest, Sam is the one who carries and distributes the *lembas*; for, as Tolkien told his son Michael: “that Church of which the Pope is the acknowledged head on earth has as chief claim that it is the one that has...ever defended the Blessed Sacrament, and given it most honor, and put it (as Christ plainly

intended) in the prime place. ‘Feed my sheep’ was His last charge to St. Peter; and since His words are always first to be understood literally, I suppose them to refer primarily to the Bread of Life.”

Sam brings three things back to the Shire: his strength from the *lembas*, his devotion to Elbereth, and his authority to govern. These three things mirror, in an imaginative way, those Catholic teachings about the Eucharist, Mary, and Peter that Newman had to defend against the John Bull prejudices in which he himself had been brought up, those same prejudices that Tolkien felt were responsible for his mother’s death, and which still kept his beloved country from fulfilling the role that God intended it to play in the world.

In dealing with the almost insurmountable problem of John Bull prejudice, Tolkien ultimately followed Newman’s lead. They both shared a great love for their country and an even greater love for the Catholic Church. Their hope was to prepare their fellow subjects to play a leading role one day in the Church so what they saw as the Northern virtues – courage, tenacity, loyalty, fellowship, the necessity of dialogue, and an insistence on fair play – virtues exemplified by the average Englishman at his best, would once more be used in the service of Christ’s Church, bringing about the full blossoming of Britain’s Second Spring.

In what the greatest Newman scholar of our day, Father Ian Ker, has called Newman’s last contribution to the field of ecclesiology, his great Preface of 1877 to *Lectures on the Prophetic Office*, Newman states that his purpose in writing was “explaining, as I have long wished to do, how I myself get over difficulties which I formerly felt.” Newman realized that this mission was Providential because, as he wrote, “It is so ordered on high that in our day Holy Church should present just that aspect to my countrymen which is most consonant with their ingrained prejudices against her.”

Tolkien, reared in the atmosphere of Newman's Oratory, felt a similar calling. I personally believe his calling was also Providential. Newman and Tolkien both performed their mission well, preparing the soil of England by endeavoring to uproot the pernicious weed of prejudice so that the Catholic Church could once again rejoice in freedom under the true light of Christ. Through Newman's presenting the Church as she really is and through Tolkien's epic created out of a Catholic imagination, both men used their "literary genius for the Catholic faith" so that their countrymen could follow the same path that Newman chose as his epitaph: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*, "from shadows and images to the truth."