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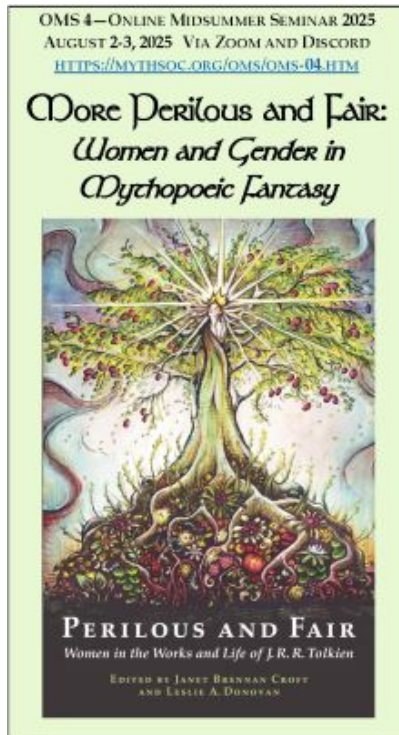
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## Augustine and the Ainulindale

### Abstract

Points out similarities in the meaning of *Genesis* as St. Augustine set it out (particularly in *Twelve Books on the Literal Sense of Genesis*) and Tolkien's account of the creation in the Ainulindale.

### Additional Keywords

Augustine, St. *Twelve Books on the Literal Sense of Genesis*; *Genesis*—Relation to Ainulindalë; Tolkien, J.R.R. "The Ainulindalë"—Relation to *Genesis*

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# AUGUSTINE AND THE AINULINDALE

JOHN HOUGHTON

The tale of creation in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis held a particular fascination for Saint Augustine, the fifth-century Bishop of Hippo — in large part because he saw in it refutation of Manicheism, the religion he had followed as a young man. The last part of Augustine's *Confessions* is probably his most familiar discussion of the subject, but he also considers it in *The City of God* and in three biblical commentaries: *On Genesis against the Manicheans*, *An Incomplete Book on the Literal Sense of Genesis*, and *Twelve Books on the Literal Sense of Genesis*.<sup>2</sup> The last of these presents Augustine's definitive word on the subject (even though, being written between 401 and 415, it antedates the *City of God*), and will be the basis for our discussion.

For the typical modern reader, the most striking feature of Augustine's various commentaries on Genesis is what he means by "literal." When people today talk of taking Genesis literally, we usually understand them to mean that the surface sense of Genesis, with God creating the world over the course of six days and resting on the seventh, is a precise historical account. Augustine, however, understands key words of Genesis like "day," "heaven" and "earth" in a symbolic sense, rather than in their ordinary meanings. Augustine calls this symbolic interpretation the *literal* sense of Genesis because he is convinced that Moses (whom Augustine accepts as the author of Genesis) deliberately used symbols in writing about the creation, in the same way that Moses at other points refers to God's strong right arm without expecting anyone to think that God actually has a physical body. But having once understood what Augustine sees as "literal," we will as students of Tolkien find a second surprising feature in his commentaries; for the literal meaning of Genesis as Augustine sets it out in *De Genesi* is strikingly similar to the *Ainulindale*.

## 1. Augustine

Augustine, born in north Africa in 354, received the late antique world's standard education in rhetoric, which included close study of the great texts of pagan culture; he later went on to become a professor of rhetoric himself. We know from the *Confessions* that the young Augustine wept over the death of Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* (*Conf.* I.13), and that one of his reasons for rejecting his mother's Christian beliefs was dissatisfaction with the literary style and content of the Christian scriptures (*Conf.* III.5). One factor in Augustine's conversion to Christianity was hearing the sermons of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Ambrose's allegorical method of interpretation made virtues of what Augustine had previously seen as flaws (*Conf.* VI.4-5); it opened the way for Augustine to apply his own consider-

able talent, and his formidable grasp of rhetorical technique, to the task of biblical interpretation.

One time when Augustine would have heard Ambrose preach was the week before his own baptism at Easter of 387 (*Conf.* IX.6); tradition has it that the set of sermons on Genesis which have come down to us as Ambrose's *Hexameron* were delivered on that occasion.<sup>3</sup> Ambrose's account of creation is closely based on an earlier set of sermons by St. Basil of Caesarea.<sup>4</sup> Basil uses relatively little allegory in his exposition; his emphasis falls mostly on answering the objections of pagan philosophers and on a sense of awe at the marvels of creation. Ambrose's *Hexameron* spends less time on the philosophers than Basil's original; whereas Basil will offer a detailed refutation of Aristotle or Plato, Ambrose is more likely to say that God's will, as Moses reports it in Genesis, is sufficient explanation for anything. Ambrose uses more allegory in his interpretation than Basil—for example, he says that the sun and the moon prefigure Christ and the Church (Bk. 4, Hom. 6.2.7)—but his allegories are more occasional set-pieces than a connected chain of interpretation. When Augustine himself comes to the interpretation of Genesis, however, he applies Ambrose's methods to Basil's concerns, giving a connected allegorical interpretation which shows that Genesis agrees with the theories of the philosophers.

Allegorical interpretation often strikes us today as a highly arbitrary procedure. When Ambrose says that the sun symbolizes Christ and the moon the Church, we may admire his cleverness, but we are likely to feel that he is, at best, taking things out of context. Augustine's interpretation of Genesis, however, grows out of a very careful attention to the exact words of the text, and we should note that he does not regard it as allegorical. He recognizes that allegory can be found in Scripture, but his concern in *De Genesi* is to explain Moses's literal historical meaning, as Moses expressed it in symbolic language.

This interpretation begins with the first words of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was invisible and formless. And darkness was over the abyss." Ambrose devoted a great deal of attention to the various senses of "In the beginning." It could refer to a beginning in time, or could mean that heaven and earth were first in the sense of being the elements out of which everything else was to be made. Or the phrase may indicate that we are being given an overview: in Greek, "in the beginning" is expressed as "at the head," which can mean "in sum." All of these are possible literal senses of the text; according to the mystical sense, "in the beginning" could be a reference to the second person of the Trinity, who is the "Alpha and the Omega,

the beginning and the end." Augustine sums up all of this in a sentence in the opening chapter of *De Genesi*, and then moves to the point which really interests him. Ambrose had assumed that "heaven and earth" refers straightforwardly to the physical world; explicitly rejecting the philosophers' discussions of the four elements, his interpretation confined itself to the Scriptures, citing Isaiah on the nature of the heavens and Job on the position of the earth (Bk. I, Hom. 1.6). Augustine, in contrast, interprets the phrase in light of questions from the larger Christian tradition and from philosophy as well.

Augustine begins (1.1.2) from an obvious (though unstated) question: "What about the angels?" These creatures of pure spirit certainly exist, but Ambrose's reading of heaven and earth leaves Genesis with no mention of their creation. Possibly, then, "heaven" refers to the spiritual creation, and "earth" the corporeal. But if this were the case, the passage might seem to be a needless duplication of the detailed account of corporeal creation in the later verses of the chapter. Or perhaps (taking the philosophers into account) "heaven and earth" refers to the unformed matter which will later be shaped into spiritual and corporeal creatures; but then we again have the problem that there is no account of the shaping of spiritual creatures. Hence, Augustine concludes (1.1.3) that "in the beginning God created heaven and earth" means that spiritual creatures were created in a state of perfection and corporeal creatures were created as unformed matter, in accordance with what follows, "The earth was invisible and formless."

This brief glimpse may be enough to give a sense of the meticulousness with which Augustine approaches the text, a greater care even than his two predecessors. Indeed, the key points of his reading start with a textual element to which Basil and Ambrose pay little attention. That element is the way Moses's formulaic account includes certain phrases that seem at first glance to be redundant. The account of each of the six days of creation begins, "And God said, 'Let there be made'...and so it was made." On four of the six days, this formula is followed by a statement that "God made" something. Then God names the thing which has just been created, and God sees that it is good. Finally, each account but the last concludes "There was evening and there was morning, the *n*th day." Augustine worries at the overlap of "let there be made," "so it was made," and "God made." As we have already seen, he is not willing to ascribe any redundancy to mere rhetorical style; rather, he assumes that each element in the formula has its own individual significance. Moreover, Augustine notes that Moses did *not* use this formula in the first verses of Genesis (that is, we never read "And God said 'Let there be made heaven and earth'") and he points out the significance of the change.

Augustine sets out his complex analysis of all this in a rather tentative way, putting forward and retracting various possible interpretations before settling on the one

which seems to him to offer the best fit. As the form of his argument has little relevance to our present study, I shall take the liberty of summarizing. The phrase "And God said," refers to the fact that God calls things to form through the second person of the Trinity, The Word who is the form of all creation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, "Let there be made" refers to the creation of things as ideas in the Word. "And so it was made" refers to the creation of things as ideas in the minds of the angels: for when God causes these spiritual beings to understand what it is that God is creating, the concept in the angelic minds is itself something which God has made.<sup>6</sup> "And God made," in turn, refers to the creation of things in their own proper existence, creation in the ordinary sense of the word. Finally, "God saw that it was good" refers to the Holy Spirit brooding over creation—not passively approving of what is made, but actively holding it in being.

Augustine's analysis of the repetitions in the story of Creation thus leads him to conceive of a four-step process, one which we would think of as repeated (with small variations) on each of the six days. But Augustine goes on to show that this temporal language of four steps and six days is also, for the most part, symbolic. The formula runs, "And there was evening and there was morning, one day." Augustine points out that this formula cannot refer to the ordinary sequence of evening and morning, for that sequence is only a local effect — when it is evening in one place, it is morning in another, half the world away (4.30.47). To summarize, again: Augustine, having already determined that "Let there be light" refers to the creation of intellectual creatures, now goes on to combine that insight with his four-stage process of creation in order to interpret "evening" and "morning." "And so it was done" means that God creates in the angels knowledge of what God is about to create; "There was evening" refers to the angels' direct knowledge of the created things in themselves; and "There was morning" means that the angels turn back from seeing created things to contemplate, praise the source of the creation in God, and receive revelation of further new creatures.<sup>7</sup> Thus the "day" to which Genesis refers is in fact the angelic host, the intellectual light which understands, perceives, and gives praise for God's creation (4.24.41-28.45). God's activity in creation does not take place over six chronological days (of whatever length), to be followed by rest on the seventh; rather, God creates everything simultaneously, in an eternal moment. Nor does the sequence in angelic knowledge indicate a passage of time; the angels themselves are temporal creatures, but in their direct contemplation of God, they observe the simultaneity of divine action. There is, Augustine says, a true six- or seven-fold repetition in the act of creation, but that repetition takes place in one single moment. This sixfold singularity may seem a difficult concept, Augustine says, but that is precisely why Moses chose to express it in terms of six days, making the difficult simple enough for a child to understand (5.3.6).

Yet even if creation is, generally, simultaneous, some elements of the creation narrative clearly do refer to events

that must take place in time—such as the earth bringing forth plants with their seeds. The meaning, Augustine says, is that God's simultaneous creation included both the creation of some things in their actuality and the creation of the "causal reasons" of other things. Augustine likens these "causal reasons" to seeds, and for this reason often calls them "seminal reasons," from the Latin for "seed." The concept, which comes to Augustine either directly from the Stoics or else via Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist, refers to a real material element (the Stoic philosophy had no room for immaterial entities) which will bring about some phenomenon at a later point in time, after a sort of dormancy. When Moses says that the earth brought forth plants or fish or birds, he means that God created in the world the physical-ontological potential which led the earth in due time to bring forth flora and fauna. These causal reasons, like DNA, may be expressed in more than one way: the child may grow to adulthood, or may die in adolescence; water may become wine through the growth and fermentation of grapes, or through the words of the Word made flesh. The working out of the potentials of causal reasons is subject both to the effect of secondary causes and to the explicit will of God; the ordinary course of nature and miracles both express the causal reasons (6.14.25-18.29). This is not to say, however, that God places the causal reasons of all things within creation: Augustine grants that God may have reserved some causal reasons in God's self, so that they are not subject to the necessity of other causes, and take effect only when God chooses. But even these reserved causal reasons, with their immunity to ordinary causation, fall within the necessity of God's will: miracles may surprise us, but one part of God's plan does not contradict another (6.18.29).

## II. The Ainulindale

Augustine's picture of creation, then, is a single moment of divine action with a five-part internal structure:

- (1) God's eternal intention to create, enunciated in the Word;
- (2) God's creation in the minds of the angels of a knowledge of what is to be made;
- (3) God's creation of things, some of them (like the angels) in full existence, but most of them (like trees, plants and human beings) in the potentials called "causal reasons;"
- (4) the angels' perception of the created things;
- (5) God's eternal support of the creation through the Spirit.

There is, of course, a great deal more than this to the twelve books of *De Genesi*. The points we have been considering deal only with the original moment of creation and God's internal management of the cosmos—God's underlying support of beings. Other sections of *De Genesi* deal with the actual creation of human beings from the slime of the earth and with God's external management of the universe. In regard to this latter question, Augustine

says at one point that the angels are God's agents for carrying out the design of providence (8.24.45); at another, he compares angels to gardeners—they do the work, but God gives the increase (9.18.35). He even considers (without accepting it) the proposition that the angels were created in two varieties, the heavenly and the mundane, only the latter being involved in the fall (11.17.22). He also toys with the idea that the Devil lived for a while among the angels (11.26.33); it is a position he adopts in the later work, *On Correction and Grace*.

A great deal of this material will sound familiar to readers of the *Silmarillion*. The first section of that compound work (and one of the earliest to have been drafted<sup>8</sup>) gives the Elves' creation myth, the *Ainulindale*, that is, the *Music of the Holy Ones*. Being a narrative, rather than a commentary, the *Ainulindale* is much briefer than *De Genesi*, and in our day, more widely read: but it may nonetheless be helpful to summarize. In the beginning, there was Eru, the One, who is called Iluvatar. Iluvatar created the Holy Ones, "the offspring of his thought."<sup>9</sup> Iluvatar proposed musical themes to the Holy Ones, and they sang, individually at first, reflecting the individual parts of Iluvatar's mind from which they came; but as they began to discover harmony, Iluvatar called them together and propounded the theme of a Great Music, for each of them to adorn. The symphony began; but after some time, Melkor, the mightiest of the Holy Ones, began to introduce themes of his invention. As others followed him, discord spread, until at length Iluvatar introduced a second theme of his own. The discord grew yet more violent, and Iluvatar brought in a third theme, which drew together his earlier two, even as the discord moved toward its own unity. Finally there seemed two separate musics, until Iluvatar arose a third time and drew all into one final chord.

When the music had ended, Iluvatar, in order to demonstrate that Melkor's discord only served his own higher purpose, gave the Ainur a vision of what till then had only been music. Taking them to the edge of the home he had made for them, he showed them a world sustained in the void: their music, he explained, was its design and history. From this vision, and their memory of the music and of Iluvatar's comments, the Ainur had much foreknowledge of the world's development; but the knowledge of some things Iluvatar reserved to himself. The vision itself contained surprises: in particular, the third theme referred to the creation of Elves and human beings. Iluvatar had designed the world as a home for these free beings, yet the Ainur had had no hint of their existence until they saw the vision. The vision lasted only a short time, and ended before the music had fully unfolded. When it had passed away, the Ainur for the first time perceived Darkness. Iluvatar then gave the world real existence, creating it with the single word *Eä*, "Let these things be." Many of the Ainur then entered into creation, only to find that it was not yet developed according to the shape of the Music; time, the unfolding of the Music, had begun only with their

entry into the world. The Music itself, the vision, and all the other events of which the story tells had taken place in the timelessness of the presence of Iluvatar.

This is, I submit, an Augustinian account of creation, one with which the Bishop of Hippo could have been quite comfortable (saving the fact, of course, that it is not canonical scripture). In both cases, God first creates the angels and then reveals to them the further elements of creation; the angels' own knowledge reflects ideas in the divine mind. In both cases, as well, after the revelation, God gives real existence to what the angels have perceived, upholding that existence in the void; yet that real existence has only the undeveloped potential of what it will become in the unfolding of time, and God reserves to God's self the introduction of elements unanticipated in the basic design.

Granted these similarities, however, the two schemata do contrast in two ways. First is the fact that the predominant musical images function in the *Ainulindale* in the way that the speech and light, taken together as intellectual illumination, do in Augustine's reading of Genesis. Second is the way the Ainur act as sub-creators, developing the themes proposed to them by Eru Iluvatar, whereas Augustine focusses on God as the sole creator. As to the first of these points: While it is true that Augustine does not use musical images to any noteworthy extent in *De Genesi*, he employs them extensively in other writings. In Letter 166, discussing why some people are born only to die almost immediately, Augustine compares the lengths of various lives in creation to the lengths of various tones in well-composed music: the universe, he says, is "a wonderful song of succeeding events" and "God, the distributor of time," grants lifespans which God "knows to be in harmony with the control of the universe."<sup>10</sup> Another source of musical imagery is the scriptural statement that God disposed creation in accordance with number, measure and weight (Wisdom 11:21): because Augustine understands music to be principally a matter of number, his references to this text can lead him to musical imagery. More specifically, the numbers of music give it rhythm, and rhythm serves Augustine as one of several favorite images with which to describe the place of evil in the universe. He often points out that as a brief silence gives form to a song or speech, so also the nothingness of evil in fact plays a role in the larger pattern of creation.<sup>11</sup> In the *Ainulindale*, Iluvatar makes precisely this point in showing Melkor the results of his rebellion:

Thou shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined. (17)

The idea expressed in this passage, common in Augustinian writings, would fit easily into *De Genesi*; indeed, though he does not use the musical imagery, Augustine does specifically say (while discussing the temptation of Adam and Eve in Book 11) that God will

bring good from Satan's actions, despite what the Devil intends.

On the second point, that of the Ainur as subcreators, we have already noted that Augustine describes the angels as God's gardeners, and agents to whom all creation is subject. For Augustine, the angels are free, rational and immensely powerful spiritual beings, and in this sense they play a role in the unfolding of creation, as do human beings on a lesser scale. This is a wide sphere of influence, but it seems to be more restricted than that ascribed to the Ainur: the *Ainulindale* does not picture the other rational creatures as contributing to the Great Music, even on a smaller scale. On the other hand, the *Ainulindale* does insist that the Children of Iluvatar are somehow distinct from the rest of the Music—not only in that they come from the third theme, Iluvatar's theme, in such a way that the rest of the Music merely prepares their habitation, but also in the specific insistence that the Children are free and reflect parts of the mind of Iluvatar which the Ainur would not otherwise have known (18). If the Children are free and rational creatures, then they must contribute to the unfolding pattern of the world; for a rational creature merely to follow that pattern would be slavery, not freedom. The Music of the Ainur develops the themes of Iluvatar, but it is not the full tale of creation; and the Children have a part in that tale, as they will have in the music at the end of days (15). Thus there is in the *Ainulindale* itself implicit evidence that the Ainur differ from the Children in power but not in the basic character of subcreators.

All this being said, however, the fact remains that the *Ainulindale* gives far more attention to the Ainur's development of the divine design than Augustine does to the work of the angels (and in terms of space, at least, more attention than it gives to the divine work of creation itself). The role of the Ainur harmonizes, if I may put it so, with Tolkien's interest in subcreation, his declaration (years after the first versions of the *Ainulindale*) that "we make still by the law by which we're made."<sup>12</sup> While Augustine's philosophy would have room for this idea of Tolkien's, the actual text of Genesis focusses rather determinedly on the primary creative activity of the one God, leaving little room for more reflection on subcreation than we have already seen. Moreover, the late antique world in which Augustine writes also militated against a Christian author giving too much attention to angelic subcreation. The idea of subcreators was common among the competing philosophies and religions of the day; but unlike the Ainur or Augustine's angels, these subcreators, often lesser gods in a pantheon, typically figure in a scheme which sees the created world as flawed, unworthy of the original intentions of the primary creator. Some such ideas were held by the Manicheans.<sup>13</sup> In Augustine's day, too much talk of angels as contributors to creation could seem to contradict not only the belief in one God but also the declaration that the creation is good: the anti-Manichean Augustine would do neither.

## III. The Language of Myth

It may be that Tolkien knew of *De Genesi* before he began his own work; I have not been able to find any evidence that Tolkien had studied the commentary, but the text is not particularly obscure as such things go, and Tolkien may have seen it. What I find interesting, however, is the symmetry of opposed motives between Augustine's reading of Genesis and Tolkien's account of the creation. Each man lives in a time which sees Genesis under attack from contemporary science: in Augustine's day, the story of creation seemed to contradict the Stoic and Neo-Platonic philosophers' picture of the world; in Tolkien's, as in our own, physical science and literary criticism seemed to converge in an attack on the myths of western religion, in particular on the stories of creation in Genesis. Tolkien, as we know from "On Fairy Stories" and from his remark about creating a mythology for England, was concerned with establishing, or restoring, the power of myth (and, indeed, the power of language itself), by bringing us to look at words and concepts in a new light. Augustine, as we have seen, demonstrates that Genesis, when correctly read, agrees with such Neo-Platonic and Stoic doctrines as that of the seminal reasons. If myths convey powerful truths, then Augustine works to assert the truth, and Tolkien the power, of the story of creation.

It seems to me (as a Christian theologian) that these two activities represent two moments in the task of theology. On the one hand, as Augustine says, it is necessary to avoid interpretations of Scripture which conflict with what we know to be true from other sources:

If people outside the household of faith find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well, and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason? (1.19.39)

This is, if I may employ a term of art in a slightly uncommon way, the "demythologizing" aspect of theology. On the other hand, the theologian faces the task of recovery, of restoring the power of images and stories which have grown weak from cultural change or from mere familiarity. In this sense, the theologian's task is not demythologizing but mythopoiesis, whether it takes the form of searching for a new language of theology (as for example in Paul Tillich's use of language of "depth" in places where the tradition uses language of "height," or the more recent work of Sallie McFague<sup>43</sup>) or the shape of telling new stories to express the old ideas (as most preachers do each Sunday).

I suspect, with the usual cautions attendant upon such generalizations, that the Christian theologian does not have a unique commitment to these two activities, but rather that every myth that retains its force, every myth

that does not become a set of broken symbols, goes through a similar continuing process of interpretation and recovery. The fact that myths can and do live on through the ages, however, brings me to a final point: interpretation and recovery are not replacement. Neither of our authors would countenance for a moment the proposition that his work could supplant the foundational story of Genesis. Ultimately, power lies not in translations, but in the language of myth itself.

## Notes

- For assistance with this paper, I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Fabian Lochner, who invited me to speak on the subject at his Freshman Seminar at the University of Notre Dame in 1992, and to Mr. J.M.B. Poppter, who read and commented on an earlier draft.
- The Latin texts are: *De Genesi contra Manicheos, Patrologia Latina* 34, 173-220; *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* and *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, ed. Josephus Zycha, *Codex Scripitorium Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 28, 1 (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1894). I shall hereafter use *De Genesi* to refer to the third text specifically. So far as I know, only this third has been translated into English: *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and annot. John Hammond Taylor, SJ, *Ancient Christian Writers* 41 (New York: Newman Press, 1982).
- Ambrose, *Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, *Fathers of the Church* 42 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1961).
- Basil, *Homilies of the Hexameron from Exegetic Homilies*, trans. Agnes Clare Way, CDP, *Fathers of the Church* 46 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1963).
- Whereas the initial reference to creation of corporeal things as formless matter refers to the second person simply as "The Beginning," avoiding an reference to "the Word."
- Thus "and so it was done" is omitted after :let light be made," since "let light be made" refers to the creation of spiritual creatures themselves, an event which angels experience (rather than one which is revealed to them) (2.8.16-19).
- For Augustine as with the Neo-Platonists, knowledge of the thing itself is only a sort of dim echo of knowledge of the thing as an idea in God.
- cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 62.
- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 15.
- Augustine, *Letters*, Vol. IV, trans. Wilfrid Parsons, *Writings of St. Augustine*, Vol. XII, *Fathers of the Church* (Fathers of the Church: New York, 1955), 19 ("in hoc labentium rerum tantquam mirabili cantico, "quam deus depositor temporum nouit ueritatibus mederaminis consonare," *Sanci Augustini Epistulae*, ed. Al. Golbacher, *Codex Scripitorium Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 44 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1904), 564).
- See *An Unfinished Book on the Literal Sense of Genesis* 25, where he uses the image in discussing the division of light from darkness.
- J.R.R. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 99.
- In presenting this paper at the 25th annual Mythopoeic Conference, I was reminded by David Bratman and Anders Strenstrom that Arda, in that it reflects the disharmony of the rebel Ainur, appears to be a flawed creation somewhat like those subcreators in ancient religions. anders points out the Tolkien himself contrasts the "subcreatively introduced" evil of Eä with the evil in "Christian mythology," where Satan's rebellion does not change the nature of the world *per se* (*Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981], 286). While the contrasts is a legitimate one, it does not reach to the level of a flaw in creation. The evil in Eä, however primordial, still has a place in the pattern of Iluvatar, while Augustine would say that God's assessment of the world as "very good" includes evil — is a verdict on the whole of the universe unfolded in time, not merely on the state of affairs at the moment of creation (cf. *De Genesi* 3.24.37).
- In *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).