

Christ & Tolkien: Visions of Paradise (Oct. 1-3, 2020)

“There is a place called ‘heaven’ where the good here unfinished is completed; and where the stories unwritten, and the hopes unfulfilled, are continued. We may laugh together yet.”

-- J.R.R. Tolkien

Concerning *The Fellowship of the Ring*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “here are beauties which pierce like swords or burn like cold iron; here is a book that will break your heart.” Much of this heartbreaking beauty comes from Tolkien’s ability to call forth the deep longing of the human heart for something beyond this present age. From Valinor to Lothlórien, from Númenor to the Shire, Tolkien’s mythical landscapes and legendary histories offer visions of Paradise—lost, regained, nearly achieved, and finally realized amid the sufferings and “long defeat” of the world.

The inaugural Christ & Tolkien Conference, sponsored by Ancient Faith Ministries and hosted by Trinity International University, invite you to join with us as we consider Christian visions of Paradise in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. We are soliciting conference-length papers of 15-20 minutes (8-10 pages). Some suggested topics for consideration may include, but are not limited to:

- The Christian understanding of sacred space is closely tied to the vision of Paradise—both that which was lost and that which is to come. In a society where this understanding of the created world is no longer taken for granted, how do Tolkien’s writings assist us in a recovery and re-enchantment of physical space?
- Tolkien’s mythology contains a number of notable trees—beautiful trees, like the Two Trees of Valinor, but also malicious trees like Old Man Willow. Is this understanding original to Tolkien, or does it engage in some way with the roles of trees in Scripture and Christian symbolism?
- Many authors have explored Tolkien’s theology of subcreation and the way he develops it in his cosmological myth *The Ainulindale*. But how do these same ideas work themselves out in Tolkien’s eschatology? What hints or foretastes of his vision of the “age to come” do we find in the legendarium?
- The attempt to create an “earthly paradise” is a theme which appears over and over again in the legendarium—from Gondolin in the First Age to Lothlórien in the Third. What do the successes, failures, and motivations of these various attempts teach us about our own mission as culture-builders and subcreators in a largely post-Christian society?

Abstracts of 300 words or less should be submitted as .docx, .pdf or .rtf attachments to academic@christandtolkien.com by March 31, 2020. Submissions should include your name, paper title, email, and institutional and departmental affiliation (if any; independent scholars are welcomed and encouraged to submit). Full papers will be due September 1, 2020 for distribution to panel moderators. Accepted papers will also be published in a conference journal by the St. Basil Center for Orthodox Thought and Culture.