

# *Writing Christian Poetry*

A DRAGON COMMON ROOM COLLECTION

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# *Introduction*

RACHEL FULTON BROWN

I have no business writing poetry. I have no formal training in writing poetry; I have never taken a course in writing poetry; the only poems I have published have been long-form narratives that I wrote with a group of amateurs whom I assembled on the social media platform Telegram, and occasional verses that I have posted on my blog *Fencing Bear at Prayer*. And yet, in Autumn 2021, I offered a course at the University of Chicago on “Writing Christian Poetry,” for which ten students enrolled.<sup>1</sup>

The course was cross-listed in History, Religious Studies, Medieval Studies, and the History of Christianity. We had no textbook on writing poetry, although we did have a handbook on the arts of the trivium which included sections on meter and rhyme (John Martineau), and we had readings in the history of European Latin literature (Ernst Robert Curtius), the laughter at the heart of Christian literature (Anthony Esolen), Christian theology and the poetic imagination (Malcolm Guite), and the spiritual history of English literature (Andrew Thornton-Norris).<sup>2</sup>

There was one assignment for the quarter, with no exceptions: write 50 stanzas of eight lines each in iambic pentameter (400 lines total) on a Christian theme of your choice. All ten students rose to the challenge; seven of their poems are published here.

I have taught at the University of Chicago for nearly thirty years. I have regularly included creative options in my assignments for final papers, for which students have frequently written poetry, including poems in Old English, Dwarvish, Elvish, Black Speech, and Portuguese for my course on “Tolkien: Medieval and Modern,” and praises of Our Lady (in English and Latin) for my course on “Mary and Mariology,” but this is the first course I have taught for which writing poetry, more particularly writing *Christian* poetry was a requirement. It was important for my pedagogical purposes that students were willing to do both, not because the course was intended as an exercise in conversion (although some students came to the course hoping for the context in which to explore such an experience), but because I wanted the students to learn something about the way in which Christianity depends on poetry for the expression of truth, as well as the practice of goodness and the experience of beauty.

Once upon a time, Christian education included training in meter and rhyme, particularly in Latin, because once upon a time, the arts of language were seen as bound up with the purpose of human existence: contemplating, serving, and praising God. As poet, philologist, and master story-teller J.R.R. Tolkien put it in “Mythopoeia,” the poem he wrote to convince C. S. Lewis of the worth—and truth—of myths, most particularly Christian “myths”:

Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme  
of things not found within recorded time.<sup>3</sup>

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Poetry is the art of putting language to music, of fitting words to the heartbeat of a meter. For Christians, this means participating in the work of the Creator—as Tolkien put it, in sub-creation—through imitation of God’s great Artifact, Creation, made, as the Scriptures tell it, through the Word (John 1:1-3) according to number, weight, and measure (Wisdom 11:21). Modern secular poets have for the most part abandoned meter to work solely with words laid out in patterns on the page; read aloud, their poems are difficult to distinguish from prose. Conversely, medieval Christians had no word for what we call poetry or verse, writing even their prose in rhyme. What we call “poetry,” they understood as “making” (*poiesis*) in all its rhetorical forms.<sup>4</sup>

What, then, is Christian poetry? We may think first of Dante Alighieri (d. 1321), writing rhyming, metrical verse in the vernacular at a time when Latin was considered the proper language for theology, but in English, Christian poetry begins somewhat earlier, back in the seventh century with the cowherd Caedmon, who was inspired to write verses on the stories of the Creation, the Fall, and Redemption—allegedly without any training in either theology or Latin verse. “Now,” Caedmon sang at the behest of a certain someone who came to him in a dream,

...let us praise the Creator, Guardian  
of the heavenly kingdom, his power and purpose,  
his mind and might, his wondrous works.  
He shaped each miraculous beginning,  
each living creature, each earthly kind.  
He first made for the children of men  
Heaven as roof. Then our holy Shaper  
crafted middle-earth, a home for mankind:

our God and Guardian watching over us—  
eternal, almighty—our Lord and King.<sup>5</sup>

According to Bede, the venerable eighth-century historian of the Anglo-Saxon church, Caedmon's poems covered the whole narrative of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, including the departure of Israel from Egypt, the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven of the Lord, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Apostles, as well as the "terrors of future judgement, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the joys of the heavenly kingdom."<sup>6</sup> For Caedmon, as for late antique Christian poets like Juvenius, Sedulius, Arator, and Avitus (not, to be sure, household names at present), poetry was primarily a form of narrative, a way of making the ancient stories of the Bible entertaining and accessible to new audiences, particularly when accompanied, as the ancient minstrels like King David sang them, on a harp.<sup>7</sup>

Much as today we would look to film makers to bring the biblical stories to life, in antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, it was poets recasting the Bible in alliterative verse (Old England, Old Saxon) and hexameters (Latin) who appealed to popular audiences of courtiers, schoolchildren, and cowherds. By the time Dante was writing in the Florentine vernacular and Chaucer (d. 1400) was taking up his pen in Middle English, Christian writers had been telling stories for centuries in verse. Think *Star Wars* with John Williams's magnificent score—stories set to the music of rhythmical language.<sup>8</sup> Many of these verses were lost with the advent of the printing press and, ironically, the shift to vernacular translations of the Scriptures (in prose), but the effect of centuries of Latin education persisted in the great rhythm of

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iambic pentameter: *da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum*. If even today Shakespeare is revered for the beauty of his monologues or Milton is remembered for his epic portrayal of Satan, it is, arguably, the effect of their iambic pentameters as much as their words.

Language set to meter *means more* than prose; it has a structure and beauty that participates both in number and word. It is more than choice of vocabulary or clever figures of speech that gives metrical poetry its power; it is the very architecture of the cosmos, the music of the spheres, the grounding of language in both sound and sense. “The heavens are telling the glory of God,” the psalmist sang. “And the firmament declareth the works of His hands.” “Caeli enarrant glóriam Dei, et ópera mánuum ejus annúntiat firmaméntum,” medieval Christians sang every morning. “Day unto day uttereth speech: and night unto night showeth knowledge” (Psalm 18, second psalm at Matins for the Little Office of the Virgin).<sup>9</sup> Christianity as understood throughout the Middle Ages was first and foremost a religion of praise of the Creator—as Caedmon put it, the “holy Shaper”—structured on the daily recitation of the psalms. Both clergy and laity recited them in Latin; children learned to read by reading the psalms. Accordingly, for one of the exercises in my course, I had the students participate in this tradition by rewriting a psalm in a meter of their choice—at which, through having to paraphrase the sense, they discovered the beauty of not only the words, but also the meter and sound.

Other exercises for the course included reading a favorite poem out loud to the class; writing twenty lines of iambic pentameter in heroic couplets (rhyming pairs) about a feast day of one’s choice; choosing a model story (or parable) on which to

structure a narrative; collecting materials on which to model characters, settings, and plot; thinking about rhetorical genre and style; writing a “Pixar-style” pitch for one’s story; and outlining the plot for the poem stanza by stanza. We practiced elocution with McGuffey’s Sixth Eclectic Reader and scansion by editing each other’s lines. We talked about the way poems depend on breath and timing, phonemes and lexicon. Students critiqued each other’s plots and characters, and we talked about symbolism and Augustinian *sermo humilis*. By the time we reached Gerard Manley Hopkins in our example readings, the students could hear Hopkins’s “sprung rhythm” and appreciate the power of his alliterations. They could hear his banging on the anvil of his verse, forging his imagination (as Anthony Esolen, one of our critical guides, put it) in the “bonfire” of the mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>10</sup> And they could appreciate their own longing (as Tolkien put it) to “make still by the law in which we’re made,” hammering out the firmament as a tent “myth-woven and elf-patterned,” and covered in jewels.

Will our verses encourage others to attempt the joys of the Word’s poetic forge? It may seem extreme to say as much, but without poetry, Christianity dies. Not because it becomes less true, beautiful, or good, but because it ceases to live in our minds, imagination, and hearts. We become “scientific” and cold, the stars mere rocks, the heavens no longer a jewelled tent, but only a void. As Tolkien told Jack Lewis (in, we may note, iambic pentameter):

He sees no stars who does not see them first  
of living silver made that sudden burst  
to flame like flowers beneath an ancient song,  
whose very echo after-music long

has since pursued. There is no firmament,  
 only a void, unless a jewelled tent  
 myth-woven and elf-patterned; and no earth,  
 unless the mother's womb whence all have birth.<sup>11</sup>

Both Tolkien and Lewis were enchanted with the ancient aperception of the music of the spheres—that celestial harmony created by the movement of the planets against the resounding tenor of the sphere of the fixed stars. This is the mathematical reality in which poetry moves: the measured beat of our breathing—in and out, in and out—against the movement of our language through time.

As Augustine put it in his meditation on music, it is this movement through time that our souls experience as ordered delight, wherein terrestrial things are subject to celestial, “and their time circuits join together in harmonious succession for a poem of the universe.”<sup>12</sup> Creation itself is a poem, in which we participate by singing praises to God as Creator and Lord. In Malcolm Guite's words: “To hear snatches from the huge unknowable symphony of experience, to catch them and transpose them to a key that resonates with our understanding, so that at some point they harmonise with that unheard melody from heaven we are always trying to hear—that is the purpose of poetry.”<sup>13</sup> To write Christian poetry in iambic pentameter is to recover the mystery at the heart of the Incarnation: the Word's entry into Creation; the Artist's entry into his Artifact, the Author's entry into his Story. Other meters may suit, to be sure, but iambic pentameter reminds us of who we are as creatures made in time, living insofar as our hearts beat to the rhythm of the stars.

Even more to the point, it matters that we *tell stories* in verse,

not just seek to capture moods. The Gospels of Our Lord Jesus Christ are “good stories” (*godspell*)—good stories, moreover, that we, as Christians, believe are not just historically, but also allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically true. Ancient and medieval commentators talked about the “four senses” of Scripture according to which its stories might be read; now, for the most part, scholars of the Old Testament and New Testament acknowledge only the one (historical), arguably, again, because they no longer are able to read the Scriptures *as poetry*, carrying multiple layers of meaning, including the mystical or figural as well as the literal (economic, social, or political). As medieval Christians like Dante understood, Christianity depends upon the reading of the New Testament through the figures and tropes of the Old. Christ appears in the Old Testament in prophecies (figure or types), but in the New Testament in truth, historically fulfilling the prophecies veiled in the stories of the Old.

Poetry, like the Scriptures read Christologically, works on multiple levels, drawing correspondences between images that point to a higher or transcendent significance in such ordinary creatures as pigeons and bread. Tolkien talked about this sense of layered significance as characteristic of “fairy-stories,” which he defined in turn as a genre of Gospel: “The Gospels,” as he put it, “contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories.” Like fairy-stories, the Gospels contain “marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful and moving: ‘mythical’ in their perfect, self-contained significance,” among which “is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe”—the Birth of Christ. As the most perfect fairy-story, the Gospel begins and ends as all true fairy-stories must—in joy—and for this reason, Tolkien insisted: “There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which

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so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits. For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath.”<sup>14</sup>

Professor Esolen (also a poet) writes of the laughter embedded in the Christian reading of such Old Testament stories as the sacrifice of Isaac—the son of Abraham who was not sacrificed, but spared. God spared the son of Abraham, but as Christ, the Son of God, he did not spare himself, but carried the wood as, in the words of the Anglo-Saxon author of *Genesis A* (was it Caedmon?), “*wudu baer sunu.*” Grammatically, the phrase could be read either: “The son bore the wood,” or (because in Old English *wudu* and *sunu* have identical forms in both the nominative and accusative cases) “The wood bore the Son.” Esolen comments:

Without dropping any other hint, the poet recalls to his audience a new field of significance, one unknown to Abraham and Isaac. The lad—from whom we hear not one word of protest against his father—foreshadows Christ, who carried the wood up another hill for a sacrifice, his own. Christ was Isaac, was the ram; Christ bore the wood to the altar, and *the wood bore him*. God spared the son of Abraham, but did not spare himself, so great was his love for the world.<sup>15</sup>

This is the understanding that telling the stories of the Scriptures in poetry unlocks: the vision of the world not just as a Creature, but as a Creature shot through with correspondences, echoes and reverberations of its making in time, and of God’s love for his creatures and continuing care for them: “*wudu baer sunu.*” Poetry trains the eye and the ear, the mind and the imagination to catch glimpses of these shimmering traces of glory, ever

present but ignored when we read the world only for its material, literal meaning. Again, in Professor Esolen's words:

To believe in a world governed by the all-wise and loving Father, who demands justice but whose very act of creation was a condescension, an act of mercy, is to know that divine providence is endlessly rich, embodied in the exploding galaxy and in the grain of sand on the shore. It is a world brimming with consequence: allusions shooting like weeds, wonderful and lush; paradoxes hidden like thrush's eggs in the tree-croched nest; etymological parallels winking one to the other like the glaze of dewdrops on the first day. And as long as there are creatures like us, once naked in the garden, wise and innocent—now wise in our own minds, therefore foolish and half-blind and huddled up in disguises—the play of irony will thrive. We now experience irony mainly as that cold splash that wakes us, when we thought we knew what we did not; a child would experience it rather as that warm and sweet moment of wonder, when something whose meaning he did not know suddenly assumes its surprising and self-displaying place in the garden of knowledge and love and time, the created garden of God.<sup>16</sup>

Writing Christian poetry, even more so than reading Christian poetry, enables us to participate in this joyous wonder, to become childlike indeed in the play of sounds and sense, even as we confront the sorrows of our sins and our failure to rejoice always in the Lord. This is why poetry is not just a frivolous ornament, but rather *necessary* to Christian education: it is the discipline by which we discover both sorrow for our falling away from God and joy at his ever-present love. Esolen identifies this experience as irony; Tolkien called it eucatastrophe, that moment in a story

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when there is a turn, a catch of the breath, and a brimming of tears, as the veil of sorrow is pulled back and the joy hidden within revealed. It comes in *The Lord of the Rings* on the Field of Cormallen when Sam, having longed to hear the tale of his and Frodo's adventures told "as in the great tales," has all his dreams come true when the minstrel steps forth to sing "of Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom," at which point—as Tolkien puts it in "On Fairy-Stories"—there is "a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through."<sup>17</sup> Again, as the narrator put it in *The Lord of the Rings*:

And all the host laughed and wept, and in the midst of their merriment and tears the clear voice of the minstrel rose like silver and gold, and all men were hushed. And he sang to them, now in the elven-tongue, now in the speech of the West, until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness.<sup>18</sup>

There is a persistent complaint among Christian parents about the poverty of modern story-telling, whether for adults or children. And there have been regular calls for more stories on the model of Tolkien and Lewis, but rarely is it acknowledged that what we are missing is not just stories, but narrative verse. Sam burst into tears as the minstrel stepped up *to sing*, much as Caedmon took up the harp and sang stories of the shaping of middle-earth, its sorrows and joys. Something is missing in our contemporary world, and it is not just stories, but stories in meter and rhyme. As Thornton-Norris observes in his account of our

cultural and moral decay: “Prose is an art of literacy, and thus modern; but poetry is eternal, the cleansing of the tools of thought, their purification. That is why poetry is the fundamental literary art, the most spiritual, and the closest to music and to prayer.”<sup>19</sup> Just as music expresses realities (mathematical, harmonious, celestial) that cannot be put into words, there are mysteries (symbolic, incarnational, transcendent) which cannot be paraphrased in prose.

With the loss of metrical narrative comes the loss of joy in modern story-telling because with the loss of meter comes the loss of the tension between reason and imagination on which the irony of Christianity depends. Witness the interminable printed and online debates about theology: there is little joy in such battles, because (as I read them) they are conducted not as experiments in wonder, but as exercises of domination and control. Poetry does not work the same way dialectic does. Dialectic, as Martianus Capella famously depicted her in his great pedagogical prosimetrum on the seven liberal arts, seeks to draw in opponents with her formulae (patterns or premises) so as to capture them with the serpent of her syllogisms. By contrast, Rhetoric seeks to capture the attention with beauty, rouse the emotions, and entertain, so as to move her audience to action, while Grammar concerns herself with proper pronunciation and the precision of names. Together, Grammar and Rhetoric produce speech that both inspires and moves, working at once on the imagination (adjectives and figures of speech) and on reason (naming), describing the world in ways that motivate us to make choices about how to behave. Dialectic convinces by leaving her opponents no logical way out; Grammar and Rhetoric persuade by moving their audiences to sorrow and joy.<sup>20</sup>

Here, then, is the true irony: without poetry, without the

work of the imagination on number and word, we lose access not only to beauty, but also to goodness and truth. Far from being “compound of lies” (as Lewis worried), the work of our imagination is bound up with our perception and experience of Wisdom.<sup>21</sup> Without the images, associations, patterns, and intuitions of imagination, our reasoning about God and his Creation is incapable of perceiving truth. It becomes sterile and, ironically, unpersuasive, no matter how perfect its syllogisms and logical traps. The debate between the proponents of the three language arts goes back to the Middle Ages, but its effects are felt to this day: Dialectic may have “won” the “scientific” ground, but without Grammar and Rhetoric—without the arts of sounds, naming, and figures of speech—she is not wise, merely an unpersuasive bully who sees only “progressive apes, erect and sapient,” and nothing of “the image blurred of distant king” in whose likeness those “progressive apes” were made.<sup>22</sup>

To be sure, that image and likeness includes reason, but it also includes the capacity to perceive symbolism—and enjoy play.

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-color as a brindled cow.<sup>23</sup>

We lose our humanity when we lose our capacity to participate in the joy of poetry, its allusions and assonances, echoes and counterpoint, ambiguities and ambivalence, sudden shocks and reversals, its irony and paradox. We lose our souls when we lose our desire to sing in praise of our Creator who “fathers-forth” in beauty in “all things counter, original, spare, strange.”<sup>24</sup> Tolkien spoke of the magic of the adjective in activating the imagination—of the “green great dragon” whom he longed for in crafting his stories.<sup>25</sup> “The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our

world coeval.”<sup>26</sup> To understand ourselves as made through the Word made flesh is to participate in the joy of our own incarnation in the image and likeness of the Artist who made us. To celebrate our making in words crafted according to the rules of grammar and meter is to sing with the creatures made according to measure, weight, and number, disciplined by the rule in which they were made to resonate with the song of Creation. As the Lord told Job: on the day of creation, the morning stars praised him and all the sons of God—the angels—sang for joy (Job 38:7).

Writing Christian poetry is, properly speaking, an exercise (a practice, a discipline, an art) in recovering the joy at being creatures of a loving and beautiful Creator. Much as creation itself, it works on multiple levels—physical and mental, sensory and intellectual, verbal and mathematical—to participate in the experience of the morning stars on the first day, praising God in jubilant melody. That we have lost this discipline or reduced it (as Professor Esolen laments) to child’s play (“children clapping their hands in a kindergarten jingle”) and (as Tolkien sorrowed) consigned it to the lumber room with the fairy-stories and mythologies we are too “grown up” to believe, is not only a witness to our sophistication as Enlightened *philosophes*; it is also the cause of our descent into madness, the collapse of our culture, and the death of our ability to reason.<sup>27</sup> Do you doubt me? When was the last time you looked up to the stars and saw the glory of God spangled across the heavens as on the first day when the angels sang? When was the last time you saw the reality of the firmament as a jewelled tent and wondered at the mystery of the Artist’s entry into his Creation through the veil of the Virgin’s womb?

Do you want to save our culture? Ask yourselves rather: do you want to practice our proper cult—praising and giving thanks

to our Maker and God? Do you want to look up into the heavens and hear the music of the spheres and shout with joy at the mystery of being incarnate minds made in the image and likeness of their Maker? Do you want to rejoice at the birth of God in time to remake his creatures through love? There is an easy solution: Learn to beat out the meter in which our greatest poems in English were written. Learn to hear the sounds of the words in which we tell our stories of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption. Learn to see the patterns and figures through which God communicates to his creatures, the numbers by which he crafted the cosmos and the symbols through which they are named. Learn to listen for melodies in phonemes and rhythms in stress; learn to name things precisely and pronounce their names. Learn to write stories true to the resonances and allusions of myth; learn to write stories in which reality breaks through and in which “Legend and History have met and fused.”<sup>28</sup> Learn to see the stars in a single syllable and God’s truth, goodness, and beauty in a grain of sand.

Learn to scan.

## THE STUDENTS' POEMS

Each of the following poems was written in response to the same prompt: “Write a poem of 50 stanzas of 8 lines each (400 lines total) on a Christian theme of your choice.” Everything else was up to the students: topic, mood, references, genre. Some students wrote poems based on their own experiences; others wrote stories drawing on historical models or themes. Some invented realistic scenarios; others drew on dreams and fantasies. There was no requirement for the poems to take any particular theological position other than incarnational, nor were the students expected themselves to be Christians (although most were). The challenge

was to write in meter on a Christian theme—historical, allegorical, moral, or anagogical, as the students chose. It is all the more remarkable how varied their poems are, given how closely they worked over the course of the quarter on references and meter, almost as if writing about the whole of history, the beauty of Creation, and the longing for virtue were liberating, rather than constrained. It is also remarkable how many of their poems deal with sorrow and death.

It is best, I think, to let the poems speak for themselves, although I will say they all make me cry, albeit in a good way, tears of joy as the veil is pulled back, and a gleam beyond the web of story is revealed. Whether in Somebody's quest for the reality of devotion to "made-up" saints like Nobody or Expedite, or in the Birdkeeper's son's allegorical wrestling with the real-life death of his father, we see the longing for assurance that the story is true, while with the dream-vision of the soldier, saying his rosary with his legs blown off, or with the king who has his wife executed on the basis of a rumor, we explore the poignancy of choice. The death of a beloved husband, the escape of a mother and her children from the leftist Republicans of Spain, a debate between brothers over the life choices they made—the poems resist paraphrase, much as (according to Bede) Caedmon's verses resisted translation. Like all good stories, much of their poignancy lies in the telling, made all the more so by the constraints of the meter to find just the right word. If nothing else, this was the most important lesson I hoped the students would take from the course: that in poetry, as in world-building, every word counts.

As do the silences. I may have no business writing poetry in praise of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but then neither did the psalmist—or the saints. As St. Expedite learns in his poetic quest:

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“Nobody has seen God!” (John 1:18) And yet, as Ronald assured his friend Jack, in Paradise:

... poets shall have flames upon their heads,  
and harps whereon their faultless fingers fall:  
there each shall choose for ever from the All.<sup>29</sup>

# Endnotes

## INTRODUCTION

1. Syllabus available on my academic homepage: <https://home.uchicago.edu/~rfulton/Writing%20Christian%20Poetry.pdf>. For my blog, go to <https://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com>. Visit <https://dragoncommon-room.com> for our long-form narratives *Aurora Bearialis*, *Centrism Games*, and *Draco Alchemicus*.
2. John Martineau, *Trivium: The Classical Liberal Arts of Grammar, Logic, & Rhetoric* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016); Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953, 2013); Anthony Esolen, *Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature* (Wilmington, Delaware: 2007); Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Andrew Thornton-Norris, *The Spiritual History of English* (The Social Affairs Unit, 2009).
3. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in *Tree and Leaf* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 88.
4. Curtius, *European Literature*, trans. Trask, 145-54.
5. "Caedmon's Hymn," trans. Craig Williamson, *The Complete Old English Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 1050.
6. Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, iv.24(22), trans. Bertram Colgrave, ed. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 215-17.
7. For introduction to these authors and lists of their narrative retellings of the Scriptures, see Willemien Otten and Karla Pollman, eds., *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
8. The comparison is less fanciful than it may seem. See Richard Keller Simon, "Star Wars and *The Faerie Queene*," in *Trash Culture: Popular Culture and the Great Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 29-37, for Lucas's dependence on the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser's mythical allegory, *The Faerie Queene*.
9. *The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary and The Office of the Dead*. In *Latin and English* (Kansas City, Missouri: Angelus Press, 2014), 8-9. For the importance of the Office for medieval Christians, see Rachel Fulton Brown, *Mary and the Art of Prayer: The Hours of the Virgin in Medieval Christian Life and Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

## ENDNOTES

10. Esolen, *Ironies of Faith*, 322.
11. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in *Tree and Leaf*, 87.
12. Augustine, *On Music*, 6.II (29), trans. Robert Catesby Taliaferro, in *The Fathers of the Church 4* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 355.
13. Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry*, 23.
14. Tolken, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, 72.
15. Esolen, *Ironies of Faith*, 58.
16. Esolen, *Ironies of Faith*, 58.
17. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, 70.
18. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 6.IV (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 954.
19. Thornton-Norris, *Spiritual History*, 148.
20. See the introductions to the respective Arts in Martianus Capella, *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, trans. William Harris Stahl with E. L. Budge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
21. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in *Tree and Leaf*, 87: "The heart of man is not compound of lies, / but draws some wisdom from the only Wise, / and still recalls him."
22. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in *Tree and Leaf*, 89: "I would with the beleaguered fools be told, / that keep an inner fastness where their gold, / impure and scanty, yet they loyally bring, / to mint in image of distant king / .... I will not walk with your progressive apes, / erect and sapient."
23. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," in *Moral Beauty, God's Grace: Major Poems and Spiritual Writings*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 25.
24. Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," in *Moral Beauty*, 25.
25. Tolkien, *Letters*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 214, 221.
26. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, 22.
27. Anthony Esolen, *The Hundredfold: Songs for the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 44; Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, 33-46.
28. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf*, 73.
29. Tolkien, "Mythopoeia," in *Tree and Leaf*, 90.