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"Hobbits really are amazing creatures . . . You can learn all there is to know about their ways in a month, and yet after a hundred years, they can still surprise you." -Gandalf the Grey

*The Dunadin
Rings*

A Monthly Reflection on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*

One of the themes that may be seen throughout Tolkien's writings is that of the little people (a.k.a. Hobbits) doing what the mighty warriors and statesmen cannot: turning the wheels of the world and of history! Being myself rather Hobbit-like in appearance and demeanor, I take consolation in this. But actually, being "little" in Tolkien's sense pertains to so much more than the external quality of size. It has to do with qualities that are deep in the soul, qualities or virtues such as humility and dependence upon Providence.

This "little-people" theme begins in Tolkien's primordial work - *The Silmarillion* and is found to an even greater extent in *The Hobbit*. Finally, it culminates in Tolkien's epic trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, when two small stout-hearted Hobbits - against all odds - undo the One Ring in the fires of Mordor at the Crack of Doom, thus saving all Middle-earth from perdition!

In the preface to *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien comments on the Quest of the First Age.¹

The chief of the stories of *The Silmarillion*, and the one most fully treated is the *Story of Beren and Luthien the Elfmaiden*. Here we meet, among other things, the first example of the [motif] (to become dominant in Hobbits) that the great policies of world history, 'the wheels of the world', are often turned not by the Lords and Governors, even gods, but by the seemingly unknown and weak - owing to the secret life in creation, and the part unknowable to all wisdom but One, that resides in the intrusions of the Children of God into the Drama. It is Beren the outlawed mortal who succeeds (with the help of Luthien, a mere maiden even if an elf of royalty) where all the armies and warriors have failed: he penetrates the stronghold of the Enemy and wrests one of the Silmarilli from the Iron Crown.²

When we feel overwhelmed, it is good to think of this motif. For this is a motif that is present not just in Tolkien's writings but also in this real world. In the vast scheme of things, we truly are little, but the one and triune God is always there to help us. Like Frodo and Samwise, the stout-hearted little Hobbits, we will place our trust in Him.

¹ The Quest of Frodo and Samwise to undo the One Ring occurs during the Third Age.

² J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999) xi.