



# J. R. R. Tolkien's *Soul's Ward*: A critical edition of his unpublished translation of the early Middle English homily *Sawles Warde*

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Amongst the myriad academic papers of J. R. R. Tolkien held at the Bodleian Library, there is a typescript of a translation of the early thirteenth-century Middle English prose homily *Sawles Warde*. This translation, titled by Tolkien *Soul's Ward*, is the culmination of his extensive work studying and teaching this text and builds on a now-lost critical edition of the three medieval manuscript versions of *Sawles Warde* prepared by Tolkien. The publication of this translation allows for a clearer understanding of Tolkien's knowledge and interpretation of *Sawles Warde* and can furthermore serve as a gateway to the medieval text for general readers, much as his other translations have done. In order to make the translation as accessible as possible to both Middle English specialists and a general audience, this critical edition of *Soul's Ward* provides the history of the translation, a contextualization of Tolkien's relationship with the Middle English texts and their language, the dating of Tolkien's extant typescript and related manuscripts, and the final emended and annotated version of *Soul's Ward*.

## INTRODUCTION

In his obituary of J. R. R. Tolkien, Norman Davis voiced a lament then not uncommon among medievalists: 'We grieve also that his concern to publish nothing less than the finest has meant that much of what most of us would think excellent has not been handed on'.<sup>1</sup> In Humphrey Carpenter's words, Tolkien's 'article on the *Ancrene Wisse* manuscripts demonstrated that he had an unrivalled mastery of the early Middle English of the West Midlands',<sup>2</sup> and though there were high expectations for him to publish much on this dialect, most of the material he ever wrote has remained as unpublished notes to this day. Tolkien and his former student, Simonne d'Ardenne, had planned to work on a joint edition of *Katerine* that never materialized,<sup>3</sup> but Tolkien also devoted countless hours to a related work, *Sawles Warde*, materials that the available scholarship has scarcely covered.

<sup>1</sup> Norman Davis, 'J. R. R. Tolkien', *Postmaster*, 5 (1976), 8–12 (12).

<sup>2</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London, 2016), 185; J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Ancrene Wisse and *Hali Meidhad*', *Essays and Studies*, 14 (1929), 104–26.

<sup>3</sup> Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 189. Simonne R. T. O. d'Ardenne and E. J. Dobson published an edition of the text under the title of *Seinte Katerine: Re-edited from MS Bodley 34 and Other Manuscripts*, EETS ss 7 (Oxford, 1981).

It is likely that Tolkien first became familiar with *Sawles Warde* during his student days at Exeter College.<sup>4</sup> In handlist A of Tolkien's library by Oronzo Cilli—which comprises texts and works that the author was almost certainly familiar with—item no. A2025 records Tolkien's knowledge of *Sawles Warde*,<sup>5</sup> and acknowledges that Tolkien wrote numerous unpublished notes on it<sup>6</sup> and that he dated the work to approximately the year 1210.<sup>7</sup> Beyond what is recorded by Cilli, Tolkien also left behind lecture notes on the dialect of *Sawles Warde*,<sup>8</sup> as well as a translation under the title *Soul's Ward*.<sup>9</sup>

The existence of this translation has never been publicly discussed so far, either in print or online. The only writing on it—aside from its inclusion in the internal Bodleian Library's catalogue of Tolkien papers—is a short description by Christopher Tolkien from September 1985 found in the headnote to the folder which contains the translation:<sup>10</sup>

Note on folder A 33(a) attached to file A 33, to be taken to England from La Garde-Freinet by F.R.W. in October 1985.

This folder contains, in order:

[. . .]

– A translation of the mediaeval English homiletic text *Sawles Warde* (*Soul's Ward*).

This unique text was discovered by Professor Alan Bliss in 1983; his letter to me on the subject is attached. The typescript was certainly made by my father. I had no previous knowledge of this work. From its appearance I would guess that it belongs to the 1950s. This is a carbon copy, but there is no trace of the top copy among my father's papers.<sup>11</sup>

As Christopher indicates,<sup>12</sup> the translation was first found by Tolkien's former student, Alan Bliss (7 May 1921–26 November 1985), in 1983. He was then working at University College, Dublin, in a post previously held by Professor Thomas Patrick Dunning (6 April 1913–4 May 1973),<sup>13</sup> who had also been taught by Tolkien. Bliss's letter to Christopher is dated 29 September 1983:<sup>14</sup>

The other day I was making a much-needed clearance in my room in College, and I discovered tucked away in a drawer something which obviously belonged to my predecessor Father Tom Dunning—an envelope on which he had written 'Tolkien, *Soul's Ward*'. The contents, which I enclose, consist of a translation of *Sawles Warde*, apparently by your father: the typing looks like his, and the handwriting of the odd marginalia is certainly his. I have no idea at

<sup>4</sup> Oronzo Cilli, *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist*, revised and expanded edn (Edinburgh, 2023), 215. Tolkien likely first became familiar with *Sawles Warde* in part 1 of *Specimens of Early English* (Oxford, 1882), edited by Richard Morris and Walter Skeat, which was a required volume for Oxford English School students, though *Sawles Warde* was not itself in the curriculum of Middle English texts.

<sup>5</sup> Cilli, *Tolkien's Library*, 261.

<sup>6</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/1; MS Tolkien A 8/2. All manuscripts mentioned in this edition are preserved at the Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

<sup>7</sup> MS Tolkien A 21/13, f. 203. In fact, Tolkien ascribes *Ancrene Wisse* and other MS Bodley 34 texts from the Katherine Group to that same date. See as well: Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*', 112–3, 122.

<sup>8</sup> MS Tolkien A 37/1, ff. 135–50.

<sup>9</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, ff. 49–58.

<sup>10</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. i.

<sup>11</sup> Folio i of MS Tolkien A 33/1 is reproduced with kind permission of Baillie Tolkien.

<sup>12</sup> We follow the convention in Tolkien scholarship of using Christopher Tolkien's first name only to distinguish him from his father.

<sup>13</sup> Bliss and Dunning published an edition of *The Wanderer* (London, 1969) together.

<sup>14</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. 48.

all how this translation came into Father Dunning's possession—he never mentioned it to me in the many years of our association.

Perhaps you already know of the existence of this translation, but perhaps you don't, since this looks like the original. In any case you ought to have this copy, which I am therefore sending to you. I have made a photocopy for my personal use, but of course I should not think of doing anything with it without your approval.<sup>15</sup>

Dunning's thesis on early homiletic literature was supervised by Tolkien during his time as a Recognised Student from 17 October 1952 to 16 October 1953, the day when he became a probationary B.Litt. Student at Campion Hall, Oxford. He continued under Tolkien's supervision until J. A. W. Bennett replaced him in the role of supervisor on 4 December 1953.<sup>16</sup> On 11 March 1963, Tolkien gifted Dunning one of his twelve author copies of his edition of *Ancrene Wisse* for the Early English Text Society (London, 1962), finally published after many years, as proof of their lasting friendship.<sup>17</sup> The previous fact is also strengthened by Dunning's contribution to the *Festschrift English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (London, 1962) with 'God and Man in *Troilus and Criseyde*'.

That Tolkien had sent Dunning a translation of *Sawles Warde* is no surprise; Dunning was both a catholic priest and a scholar of medieval English expert in homilies, which made him an ideal judge for Tolkien's work on *Sawles Warde*. However, it remains a mystery whether Dunning ever let Tolkien know his opinions, and what his thoughts were on the rendering. The typescript of *Soul's Ward* has no annotations by Dunning, and no letters on the matter have emerged, if there ever was any correspondence.

The publication of this translation allows for a clearer understanding of Tolkien's knowledge and interpretation of *Sawles Warde*, and can furthermore serve as a gateway to the medieval text for general readers, much as his other translations have done. Moreover, it is clear that Tolkien also produced an edition of the text, as we shall see, and should this ever emerge, the translation will constitute a valuable resource for anyone wishing to edit that text in its turn.

## TOLKIEN AND SAWLES WARDE

*Sawles Warde* is a Middle English prose homily from the early thirteenth century. It is a fairly free rendering of a Latin work, *De custodia interioris hominis*, translated and adapted for an audience of anchorites and cloistered nuns. It is an allegory in which the body—stronghold of the immortal soul and under the attack of vices governed by the Devil—is represented as a house. Various roles in the household are allegorical representations: the master is Reason, the mistress Will, and the servants the Five Senses. A large part is played by the master's daughters: Prudence, spiritual Strength, Moderation, and Justice.

*Sawles Warde* belongs to a larger group of Middle English texts that absorbed a considerable amount of Tolkien's academic energies.<sup>18</sup> On the broadest level, it belongs to the literature of the medieval West Midlands,<sup>19</sup> which included earlier witnesses such as the *Vespasian*

<sup>15</sup> Folio 48 of MS Tolkien A 33/1 is reproduced with kind permission of the Bliss family.

<sup>16</sup> Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide: Chronology*, revised and expanded edn (London, 2017), 412, 416, 421, 436.

<sup>17</sup> Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 630, 636.

<sup>18</sup> Andoni Cossio and Nelson Goering, 'Academic Life: The Scholar', in Luke Shelton and Dimitra Fimi, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Oxford, forthcoming).

*Psalter* and—as Tolkien at least believed—the original version of *Beowulf*,<sup>20</sup> as well as later works such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*. More narrowly, it is written in a variety of early Middle English from this region famously argued by Tolkien to form a local literary standard,<sup>21</sup> dubbed by him ‘Language (AB)’,<sup>22</sup> though now more usually referred to as the ‘AB dialect’. One of the prime representatives of this dialect was the ‘A’ part, i.e., the version of *Ancrene Wisse* preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402—the aforementioned edition of which was published by Tolkien in 1962 after a very long gestation period.<sup>23</sup> The other part was a group of more diverse compositions known as the Katherine Group;<sup>24</sup> the label ‘B’ comes from their preservation in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34, though selections of the Group, including *The Life of St Katherine*—for which the Group is named—and *Sawles Warde*, are also found in other manuscripts (as discussed in the next section).

Tolkien’s assessment of this dialect group is one of his more influential and lasting contributions to Middle English studies,<sup>25</sup> and his essay suggests that his primary concerns were local patriotism and philological detail.<sup>26</sup> This impression is reinforced by the edition of another ‘AB’ text, *St Iulienne*, produced by d’Ardenne,<sup>27</sup> but containing substantial input from Tolkien:<sup>28</sup> this features lengthy assessments of the language, often tracing it back to the Old English *Vespasian Psalter* of the ninth century.<sup>29</sup> That Tolkien would choose to translate *Sawles Warde* into modern English suggests, however, that he was not insensitive to the content of these texts, and that he thought it was worthwhile to render their substance, despite its allegorical form,<sup>30</sup> divorced from its original linguistic form.<sup>31</sup> Probably this is most concerned with the vivid descriptions of heaven and hell. That he did not attempt to publish it is not surprising, since Tolkien published very little of what he wrote: this cannot be taken as indicating any kind of diffidence on Tolkien’s part regarding the content.

Tolkien has rendered the text quite literally into fluent modern English of a slightly archaic variety (he freely uses the pronoun *thou* and the corresponding verbal forms). He does not attempt to recreate the rich alliterative patterns of the original text, so that a line such as

<sup>19</sup> Tom Shippey, *Roots and Branches: Selected Papers on Tolkien* (Zürich, 2007), 56: ‘Tolkien’s fascination with the West Midlands, its history, philology and literature, has only become clearer and clearer over the decades’, a timeless aphorism in the light of the unpublished surviving materials.

<sup>20</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien (tr.), *Beowulf: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London, 2014), 150.

<sup>21</sup> Tolkien, ‘*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*’, 113–7.

<sup>22</sup> Tolkien, ‘*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*’, 109.

<sup>23</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien (ed.), *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe: Ancrene Wisse, Edited from MS. Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402, EETS os 249* (London, 1962). This edition includes a short introduction by N. R. Ker (ix–xviii), since Tolkien had, despite the many decades spent on the project, not produced one of his own. For details, see Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide: Reader’s Guide, Part I, A–M*, revised and expanded edn (London, 2017), 53–7. Tolkien also wrote the preface to a translation of *Ancrene Wisse* published by one of his students: M. B. Salu (tr.), *The Ancrene Riwe, The Corpus MS.: Ancrene Wisse* (London 1955).

<sup>24</sup> Tolkien himself preferred the label ‘*Hali Meidhad* group’: Tolkien, ‘*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*’, 107.

<sup>25</sup> Tolkien, ‘*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*’, 104–26.

<sup>26</sup> Tolkien, ‘*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*’, 104–6.

<sup>27</sup> Simonne R. T. O. d’Ardenne (ed.), *An Edition of De Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulienne* (Liège, 1936). d’Ardenne’s reprinted edition of her book with a list of corrigenda—EETS os 248 (Oxford, 1961)—was published in the previous year, in the previous volume, and in the same series as Tolkien’s edition of *Ancrene Wisse*.

<sup>28</sup> Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part I*, 291. As noted by Scull and Hammond, Tolkien’s contributions were substantial, with d’Ardenne herself calling it a ‘joint work’, and Norman Davis commenting that the book ‘presents more of Tolkien’s views on early Middle English than anything he himself published’. Tolkien could not attach his name to the edition of *Seinte Iulienne* because it was d’Ardenne’s Oxford B.Litt. thesis, which could not have a co-editor or co-author if she was to get her degree.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. d’Ardenne, *Seinte Iulienne*, 73–4, 156–7, 159, 178, 181–6, 239.

<sup>30</sup> See ‘Foreword to the Second Edition’ in J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 50th Anniversary edn (Boston, MA, 2004), xxiv: ‘I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence’. Cf. Shippey, *Roots*, 352: ‘Tolkien was something of a serial allegorist’.

<sup>31</sup> For the appeal of *Sawles Warde* and other ‘AB’ texts to Tolkien, see Shippey, *Roots*, 47–8; Arne Zettersten, *J. R. R. Tolkien’s Double Worlds and Creative Process: Language and Life* (New York, NY, 2011), 167.

'wununge of wanunge, of grure ant of granunge, heatel ham ond heard wan of alle wontreades'<sup>32</sup>—alliteration here marked in bold—becomes 'dwelling of lamentation, of terror and of groans, hateful home and cruel abode of all afflictions'. Only 'hateful home' retains any echo of the original alliteration, and this merely because the best translation happens also to use the same roots as the Middle English. Tolkien also sometimes expands or clarifies the original in small ways, so that the Middle English 'ase liun iburst'<sup>33</sup> becomes 'as a lion with bristling mane', rather than the more literal 'as a bristling lion': the word 'mane' is Tolkien's addition. Tolkien's intention seems to have been to convey the text and imagery precisely and clearly to readers of modern English.

## SOUL'S WARD AND OTHER RELATED MANUSCRIPTS

The only known version of Tolkien's translation of *Sawles Warde*, *Soul's Ward*, is extant in a ten-page one-sided typescript, folio-size, with several readable additions and emendations in Tolkien's hand in nib pen on every page.<sup>34</sup> Typescript pages are numbered starting from the second, and the first is the only one that contains annotations in red ball-point pen, a series of numbers hovering over words and in the margins which indicate that corrections are required. Although Bliss and Christopher disagree on whether the typescript is an original or carbon copy,<sup>35</sup> we are inclined to believe that the latter is true. Whether or not there is a further original of the typescript, the available version appears—after applying Tolkien's corrections and some light emendation—to be a finished product.

Before we discuss the translation or Tolkien's other manuscript materials on *Sawles Warde*, it is important to determine the source for his rendition. Tolkien was translating the text from a now-lost edition he himself prepared, which collated the three medieval manuscripts that contain the text.<sup>36</sup>

- Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34, ff. 72<sup>r</sup>–80<sup>v</sup> (henceforth 'B').
- London, British Library, MS Royal 17 A. xxvii, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>v</sup> (henceforth 'R').
- London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus D. xviii, ff. 105<sup>v</sup>–12<sup>v</sup> (henceforth 'T').

This editorial work could be derivative of the diplomatic conjoint edition with d'Ardenne of the entire MS Bodley 34 that was never finished in Tolkien's lifetime, but it surpasses in breadth and scope the transcript's mere annotated reproduction of the texts—with emendations and collated variant forms in other MSS added to the notes only, though missing letters and words are supplied from R, T, or both—and it is therefore a project of a different nature.<sup>37</sup> Tolkien made B the base of his translation, for he deemed it the less corrupt and closer to the

<sup>32</sup> R. M. Wilson (ed.), *Sawles Warde: An Early Middle English Homily Edited from the Bodley, Royal, and Cotton MSS* (Leeds, 1938), 16. For clarity, we have added modern-style punctuation and expanded 'AB' abbreviation.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, ff. 49–58.

<sup>35</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. 48; cf. MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. i.

<sup>36</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/1, f. 1<sup>r</sup>. For further details, see Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, xxx–xxxiii. It is possible that the relationship between Tolkien's edition and translation was more complex than a simple preparation of the edition followed by the translation. Cf. Christopher Tolkien, 'Preface', in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*, tr. J. R. R. Tolkien, deluxe slipcased edn (London, 2020), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Simonne R. T. O. d'Ardenne, *The Katherine Group Edited from MS. Bodley 34* (Paris, 1977). The editorial procedure is akin to that in Tolkien, *Ancrene Wisse*, vi–viii; cf. d'Ardenne, *MS. Bodley 34*, ix–xi. See also Simonne R. T. O. d'Ardenne and J. R. R. Tolkien, 'MS. Bodley 34: A Re-collation of a Collation', *Studia Neophilologica*, 20 (1947), 65–72 (72). In 1960, the Early English Text Society apparently agreed to publish an edition of *Sawles Warde* by d'Ardenne and Tolkien, MS Tolkien A 8/2, ff. 168–9.

original,<sup>38</sup> and supplemented certain passages with readings from the other two manuscripts. These deviations are indicated by Tolkien in his footnotes to the translation.

As noted above, only MS Bodley 34 is held in Oxford. We suspect that Tolkien worked primarily from R. M. Wilson's 1938 edition,<sup>39</sup> collating perhaps Wilson's B with the transcript of that same text prepared by d'Ardenne and himself to supply the missing letters and words in Wilson,<sup>40</sup> and it is not impossible that he travelled to London to consult the other two manuscripts—though there is no evidence that he did so. Tolkien owned a copy of Wilson's edition of *Sawles Warde*,<sup>41</sup> which edits all three manuscripts, together with an introduction, notes, a glossary, and two further texts: Hugh of St Victor's *De anima* (at the time thought to be the Latin original) and Dan Michel's *The Ayenbyte of Inwyt* (a text that then appeared to be an independent Middle English rendition of *De anima*).<sup>42</sup> Tolkien's copy contains several annotations to the text, notes, and glossary.<sup>43</sup> It is plain that he had read the edition with great attention, to the point of correcting what he thought to be mistakes. In Tolkien's opinion, Wilson's edition superseded Joseph Hall's,<sup>44</sup> offering a higher quality and more complete alternative.<sup>45</sup>

There is a series of further manuscript materials which contain work by Tolkien on *Sawles Warde*, namely an introductory lecture on *Sawles Warde*,<sup>46</sup> drafts of the beginning of the translation and notes to the edition including miscellaneous writings,<sup>47</sup> and a fair copy of textual notes to *Sawles Warde*.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the typescript, these materials allow for an approximate dating of the translation.

The earliest of these manuscripts, the introductory lecture on *Sawles Warde*, was delivered in the summer term, Trinity term in Oxford parlance, of an unknown year, probably in more than one session owing to its length. The lecture is preserved within a box that contains lectures and notes on early and Middle English dialects.<sup>49</sup> These materials most likely were prepared for Tolkien's first lectures dedicated exclusively to *Sawles Warde*, which he delivered between 24 April and 18 June 1949.<sup>50</sup> After Trinity 1949, Tolkien did not resume his teaching on *Sawles Warde* until 1956.<sup>51</sup> The other materials Tolkien wrote are found in two boxes,

<sup>38</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/1, f. 1<sup>r</sup>. See as well: J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Holy Maidenhood', Review of O. Cockayne revised by F. J. Furnivall (eds), *Hali Meidenhad: An Alliterative Prose Homily of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1922), in *Times Literary Supplement*, 1110 (26 April 1923), 281; J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Some Contributions to Middle-English Lexicography', *The Review of English Studies*, 1 (1925), 210–5 (212).

<sup>39</sup> Wilson began this work under the supervision of Tolkien's close friend and colleague, E. V. Gordon, and thanks Tolkien in his acknowledgement: Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, xlv. For Tolkien's acquaintance with Wilson, see Andoni Cossio, 'Further Notes on J. R. R. Tolkien's Photostats of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.1)', *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature*, 27 (2022), 166–76 (170).

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, xxx, xlv, was working from rotographs which made the transcription of the faintly inked last folio of B difficult, 'but for any doubtful reading the manuscripts themselves have been consulted'. Note that certain words and letters are illegible in B; editors and translators, perforce, rely on reconstruction, but Wilson only prints letters and words legible to him. See Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 36, esp. 38. Cf. Tolkien's translation; d'Ardenne, *MS. Bodley 34*, 183–5.

<sup>41</sup> MS Tolkien E 16/32.

<sup>42</sup> Tolkien was certainly familiar with the *Ayenbyte*, having glossed it for Kenneth Sisam (ed.), *Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose* (Oxford, 1921), though Tolkien's glossary was first published in a separate volume entitled *A Middle English Vocabulary* (Oxford, 1922). The *Ayenbyte* is in any case a holograph well known to all Middle English philologists as an example of the Kentish dialect represented without the interference of cross-dialect copying. He had furthermore taught the work in the Middle English Texts course (MS Tolkien A 21/7) at the University of Leeds (c.1920–5), and from 1949 until 1955 at the University of Oxford.

<sup>43</sup> MS Tolkien E 16/32.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Hall (ed.), *Selections from Early Middle English, 1130–1250*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1920); Tolkien owned the two volumes, both of which are heavily annotated: MS Tolkien E 16/9; MS Tolkien E 16/10.

<sup>45</sup> MS Tolkien A 37/1, ff. 135<sup>r–v</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> MS Tolkien A 37/1, ff. 135–50.

<sup>47</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/2.

<sup>48</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/1.

<sup>49</sup> MS Tolkien A 37/1, ff. 104–93.

<sup>50</sup> Cilli, *Tolkien's Library*, 439.

<sup>51</sup> Cilli, *Tolkien's Library*, 441. After 1956, he taught the work again for another three terms before his retirement.

MS Tolkien A 8/1 and 8/2. MS Tolkien 8/2 includes the drafts of the beginning of the translation—predating the full translation edited here—the notes to the edition and commentary, miscellaneous notes on *lac* and *leikr* and notes comparing manuscripts of *Sawles Warde*, and two letters from d'Ardenne in 1960 including a transcript of MS Bodley 34's *Sawles Warde*. These materials provide valuable information about the evolution of Tolkien's thoughts on *Sawles Warde* and mostly precede the fair copy in MS Tolkien A 8/1. They also provide an important anchor for dating the full translation. On a title page for the draft of the translation plus commentary, Tolkien scribbled the date May 1956,<sup>52</sup> implying that the revised version of the translation edited here is of a later date. It would seem that at least the translation is associated with Tolkien's resumed lectures on the text in the second half of the 1950s. The aforementioned use of ball-point pen to annotate the first page of the full translation is an additional piece of evidence associating his work<sup>53</sup>—in this case, the later revisions of it—with the 1950s, rather than the late 1940s,<sup>54</sup> especially since the red ink variant was not seemingly available until that later decade.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the earliest red ball-point pen inscriptions by Tolkien that can be dated with relative certainty point towards c.1950–1, and are extant in drafts and corrections to currently embargoed literary manuscripts in Oxford and in a copy—now in private hands—of a 1940s *The Hobbit* in which Tolkien marked changes for its 1951 second edition.<sup>56</sup>

For its part, MS Tolkien A 8/1 contains a fair copy of the extensive 148-folio textual notes to Tolkien's lost collated edition of *Sawles Warde*, on which he based his translation. The first line of folio 11v refers the reader to Tolkien and d'Ardenne's note on *ipplen*, whose publication Tolkien dates to 6 December 1947, confirming—as would be suspected anyway<sup>57</sup>—that these materials are later than the *ipplen* article.<sup>58</sup> There are also two printed announcements dated 4 March 1955 of an adjourned general meeting at Merton College, on which Tolkien scribbled some follow-up notes that expand on the textual notes to the edition.<sup>59</sup> This shows that Tolkien was still revising the textual notes around this date. While it is possible that the earliest parts of the edition and commentary go back to the later part of the 1940s, there is no positive evidence to suggest this.<sup>60</sup> If these initial attempts yielded any results, the work was probably abandoned from the early 1950s until 1955, a time when Tolkien was both busy in his day job and occupied with his literary endeavours during most of his free time.<sup>61</sup> It is likely that not merely the translation edited here, but the large majority of all this material on *Sawles Warde* in boxes 8/1 and 8/2 dates from 1955 or 1956, though corrections and changes may well have

<sup>52</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/2, f. 50.

<sup>53</sup> MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. 49.

<sup>54</sup> See Carl F. Hostetter, 'Editing the Tolkienian Manuscript', in Richard Ovenden and Catherine McIlwaine, eds, *The Great Tales Never End: Essays in Memory of Christopher Tolkien* (Oxford, 2022), 129–45 (132); Catherine McIlwaine, *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-Earth* (Oxford, 2018), 186. A possibility remains that Tolkien became an early adopter of ball-point pens from 1947 onwards: Jonathan Woodham, 'Biro (Established 1943)', in *A Dictionary of Modern Design*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (pubd online, 2016) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/>> accessed 21 March 2026. Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, eds, *The Collected Poems of J. R. R. Tolkien*, 3 vols (London, 2024), 1. 431, however, suggest—albeit tentatively—that his use of them could date back to as early as late 1945. See as well 1. 76–7, 129; 2. 547, 638, 665.

<sup>55</sup> Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, email to authors, 12 March 2026; cf. Scull and Hammond, eds, *Collected Poems*, 1. 76; 2. 547, 638, 665.

<sup>56</sup> Charlotte McKillop-Mash (Tolkien Archivist at the Bodleian Library, Oxford), email to authors, 28 January 2026; Hammond and Scull, email to authors.

<sup>57</sup> See notes 63 and 64 for definite evidence.

<sup>58</sup> Simonne R. T. O. d'Ardenne and J. R. R. Tolkien, "'ipplen' in *Sawles Warde*", *English Studies*, 28 (1947), 168–70.

<sup>59</sup> MS Tolkien A 8/1, ff. 61<sup>r-v</sup>, 69<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> The edition, translation, and notes appear to be coetaneous in the light of Tolkien's introduction to the notes: MS Tolkien A 8/1, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Andoni Cossio, 'The Missing Letters J. R. R. Tolkien Received from Derek J. Price and R. M. Wilson: Addendum to "Further Notes on J. R. R. Tolkien's Photostats of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.1)", *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature*, 28 (2023), 97–106 (103).

continued until his retirement. After all, the perfectionist Tolkien—who took around thirty years to finish the first version of his translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*<sup>62</sup>—might have kept tinkering with cruces for a few academic years before the typescript *Soul's Ward* saw the light of day.

## EDITORIAL PRACTICES

The text has been edited applying Tolkien's own corrections while maintaining the original punctuation whenever possible. Tolkien's spellings and capitalization practices have been retained. A few minor errors, punctuation marks, and formatting issues have been silently corrected, such as the addition of closing quotations marks. Tolkien occasionally uses a semicolon in place of a colon, a usage we have not interfered with. Tolkien employed round brackets (X) to mark regular parentheses and square brackets [X] to indicate his editorial additions, suggestions, and corrections to the source material. Our own editorial additions are enclosed between curly braces {X}. All footnotes to the translation are his, unless enclosed in curly braces {X}.

### THE TEXT: *SOUL'S WARD* BY J. R. R. TOLKIEN (MS TOLKIEN A 33/1, FF. 49–58)

{MS Tolkien A 33/1, f. 49}

#### *Soul's Ward*

Here begins *Soul's Ward*.

*Si sciret paterfamilias qua hora fur venturus esset, vigilaret utique, et non sineret perfodi domum suam.* If the master of the household knew at what time the thief was likely to come, he would certainly be on the watch, and would not allow his house to be burgled.

Our Lord in the Gospel teaches us by means of a parable how we ought carefully to guard ourselves against the Evil One of Hell, and against his wiles. 'If this master knew', he says, 'when and in what hour the thief would come to his house, he would be on the watch, and he would not suffer the thief to break into it'.

This house that Our Lord speaks of is Man himself. Inside, Man's Reason is in this house the Householder, and the ill-disciplined wife may be called Will; and if the house is run in her way, she manages it shockingly, unless Reason, as master, brings her by rebuke to better ways, depriving her often of much that she would like. And yet all the household would follow her in all points, if Reason did not forbid them; for they are all untrained and heedless servants, unless he directs them.

And of what sort are these servants? Some are outside, and some are inside. Those outside are Man's Five Senses: Sight, Hearing, Taste, Smell, and the Feeling of each part of the body. These are subject to Reason as servants under a householder; and if ever he is neglectful, each of them without exception behaves again and again in an undisciplined manner, and frequently does wrong, either in wantonness or in wicked deeds.

Inside are his house-servants: many an errant thought; they think to please well the housewife against the will of God, and coming together at once they swear that all things shall go according to her.<sup>63</sup> Though we may not *hear* this, we can actually *feel* their clamour and their

<sup>62</sup> Andoni Cossio and Dimitra Fimi, "'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'", J. R. R. Tolkien's 1953 W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture: An Updated Chronology and Related Findings', *English Studies*, 105 (2024), 773–91 (784–5).

rebellious outcry, until Reason comes forth and with both severity and kindness brings them to better discipline.<sup>64</sup>

His house will never be well looked after as far as these servants are concerned, so that he may sleep, or go away anywhere from home (that is when a man forgets to use his reason and lets them have their way). But it is not fitting that this house should be plundered, for in it is the treasure that God gave himself for: that is Man's soul. To break into this house to get this treasure which God purchased with His death, giving up His life on the cross, many a thief is busy day and night: invisible spirits possessing every wicked vice. And opposed to each good virtue which guards in this house God's precious possession under the direction of Reason, who is householder, there is always her opposite vice to seek an entrance at some point in the walls [*or to look all round the walls for an entrance*] so as to murder her inside.

The Chief of these is the Devil, who governs them all. Against him and his satellites, the master of the house, who is reason, {f. 50}<sup>65</sup> thus puts his house on guard. Our Lord has granted to him the comfort of his daughters: they are to be understood as the four chief Virtues. The first is called Prudence, and the second is named spiritual Strength, and the third is Moderation, Justice is the fourth.

Reason, the master of the house, God's Lieutenant, calls Prudence to come forward and makes her the Doorkeeper, who is to consider prudently whom she is to let in and out, and is to observe from afar all that approach, judging which may be worthy to have admittance or to be shut outside. Strength stands next to her, so that if anything wishes to come in against the will of Prudence, she is to forewarn Strength (who is her sister), and she is to throw it out. The third sister, who is Moderation, he makes the governess of his self-willed household that we spoke of before, so that she may teach them what is meet, which is called just Measure: that is the mean between two evils; for to keep to that is in every situation virtue and good conduct; and Reason gives orders to them all that none of them in defiance of her is in any circumstance without moderation to go beyond what is meet. The fourth sister, Justice, sits in the highest place as judge, and chastises those that do wrong, and crowns those who do well, and pronounces upon each his judgement according to his just desert. For fear of her Reason's household, each according to his nature, betakes himself to the guarding of his watchpost: the eyes to theirs, the mouth to his, the ears to theirs, the hands to theirs, and similarly of the others each one watches, so that as far as he is concerned no opposing vice shall come in.

As soon as this is arranged so, and everything is quiet within, Prudence, who is ever vigilant, takes alarm lest one of them should become presumptuous and go to sleep and neglect his watchpost; and she sends into them a messenger, whom she knows well, arrived from far away, so as to frighten those who are over-confident and make those that are careless more alert.

<sup>63</sup> Translating a supposed text of this sort: *inwið beoð his hinen in [hu]se: moni mislich þonc, [þe þencheð] to cwemen wel* etc. The three texts agree, but either the text or the allegory has gone wrong at this point. {d'Ardenne and Tolkien, "*ipplen*", 169, render the uncorrected text as: 'Inside his servants are in so many a different thought to please the housewife against God's will, and quickly they swear together that things shall follow her lead'. To *in* they further note that 'one has a feeling [...] that all is not well here', and that 'One would expect: "Inside are his servants, many various thoughts, who desire to please the housewife"'. This is clearly an older attempt to make sense of the probably corrupt passage, predating Tolkien's emendation, seen above in his footnote, of *in se* to *in huse*.)

<sup>64</sup> {d'Ardenne and Tolkien, "*ipplen*", 169, translate this passage as: "Though we do not hear this (sc. ? the actual swearing of the conspirators) we can X their noise and their unruly clamour, until it comes out, and with fear and love teach (train) them to do better". The differences primarily stem from the 1947 version being a literal rendering of the B text as written—including the missing word 'X', which is the main focus of their article—while Tolkien's later version reflects a critical text with *wit* 'Reason' taken from MSS R and T—where B has *hit* 'it'—and with the missing word 'X' rendered as '*feel*', also based on R and T—with Middle English *fele(n)*. d'Ardenne and Tolkien, "*ipplen*", 170, further note that 'Nothing could be more destructive of his [the medieval author's] allegory, or more confusing, than to introduce *we* at this point, the real persons, who are being allegorically analysed. [...] an "aside" to the reader that it would have been better not to make'.}

<sup>65</sup> {At the top of the page Tolkien wrote: '*Soul's Ward* ct.'}

He is received and let in, and looked at very closely by all. For he is lank and lean, and his cheek deathly pale, and of unnatural hue seems every hair that stands up stiff on his head. Prudence bids him announce before them all what he is, and whence he has come, and what is his business there.

'I cannot', he says, 'speak anywhere, unless I have proper attention. Attend to me then! Fear is my name, and I am Death's messenger and the reminder of Death; and I have come before him to warn you of his coming'.

Prudence, who knows best how to order her words, and her works also, speaks for them all and asks whence Death is to come, and what retinue he is to bring with him. Fear answers her; 'I do not know the time, for he did not tell it me; but watch always when it may be. For his custom is to come by stealth, suddenly, and at unawares when one least expects. As for what you ask concerning his retinue, I answer you: he lands wherever he comes with a thousand devils; and each one carries a great book all of sins, inscribed with small black letters, and a chain of fire, huge and red as hot coals, to bind and drag into inmost Hell whomsoever he may convict by means of his book (in which every sin is documented that a man in will or in word or in deed committed in all his life), unless he has made amends previously with true confession and with penance'.

{f. 51}<sup>66</sup> And Prudence asks him: 'Whence do you come, Fear, Reminder of Death?'

'I come', he says, 'from Hell'.

'From Hell?' says Prudence. 'And have you seen Hell?'

'Yes', says Fear, 'certainly, often and often'.

Then says Prudence: 'Tell us now, on your word of honour, what Hell is like, and what you have seen in it'.

'And I will', says Fear, 'gladly, on my word of honour. Not however according to what it really is, for that no tongue can tell, but according to my ability and knowledge. To this I will now proceed'.

'Hell is wide without bounds, and deep without bottom; full of burning beyond compare, for no earthly fire can be compared with it; full of stench beyond bearing, for no living thing on earth could bear it; full of sorrow beyond telling, for that misery and woe no mouth can recount and tell'.

'So thick therein is the darkness that one can feel it with the hands; for the fire gives no light, but blinds the eyes of those that are there with a choking smoke, of all fumes the foulest. And nonetheless in that same black darkness black things they see, like devils that hammer them and ever afflict and harass them with every kind of pain; and long-tailed dragons, horrible as devils, that swallow them down whole and spew them out again before and behind, at other times tearing them up and chewing them up, every bit; and they become again whole as they were before, to meet a like torment without relief. And well enough they see also, to their horror and terror and to the increase of their pains, the loathsome reptiles of Hell, toads and frogs, that eat out their eyes and the gristles of their noses; and in and out there crawl adders and water-efts (not like those here, but a hundred times more horrible) at mouth and at ears, at eyes and at navel, and at the hollow of the breast, like maggots in rotten flesh packed as thick as could be'.

'There is yelling in the burning, and gnashing of teeth in the snowy waters; wildly they shift from the heat into the chill, and they never know which of these two they find the worse; for either is unbearable, and in this dreadful mixture the one that follows gives the more pain because of the one that precedes. The fire burns them down to cold ashes,

<sup>66</sup> {At the top of the page Tolkien typed: 'Soul's Ward, ct.'}

and the pitch boils them down until they are all melted away; and they come alive again at once to suffer all the same things, and indeed in great degree worse ever without end. And this very despair is their greatest pain, in that none have for ever more any hope of any recovery, but are ever assured of every evil, to endure continually in woe from world unto world, for ever to eternity'.

'They choke each other and are each other's torment, and they hate one another and themselves as well, as they hate the black Devil; and ever in the degree that they in this world loved people more, so there they hate them the worse, and each curses the other and chews off the other's ears and his nose also'.

'I have begun to tell of things that I could not bring to an end, though I had a thousand tongues of steel and went on telling until they were all worn out. But try and imagine in this way of what sort the greatest pain may be, since the smallest is so cruel that, if a man had murdered both my father and my mother, and all my family on end, and had done to me personally all the shame and injury that a living man could suffer, and I saw this man in the {f. 52} very least pain that I saw in Hell, I would, if it were possible, suffer here a thousand deaths to rescue him from it, the sight is so horrible and deplorable to behold'.

'For if there was never any other pain except seeing always the wicked spirits and their horrible shapes, looking at their cruel and terrible faces, and hearing their bellowing, and how they with insults and scornful accusation cast up against each one his sins, this ignominy and the terror of them would be immeasurable pain, not to speak of enduring and bearing their savage blows with mallets made of steel, and being tossed by them from one to another with their flesh-hooks red as glowing coals like a rag of old skin'.

'O Hell! House of Death, dwelling of lamentation, of terror and of groans, hateful home and cruel abode of all afflictions, city of evil and mansion of every grief, thou loathliest of all lands, thou dark prison filled with all miseries! I quake for horror and terror, and every bone in me shudders, and every hair on me stands up stiff at the memory of thee. For there no word is spoken by damned to damned, save "alas! and woe is me, and woe is thee, and woe is thee!" Woe they cry and woe they have; and of all that woe means nothing shall they ever lack, who such an abode deservedly obtain for any passing pleasure in this world here. Well would it be for one of them, if he never had been born'.

'By this you can in part realize of what sort is Hell. For verily I have seen therein things a thousand times worse. And from thence Death is coming to this place here with a thousand devils, as I have said; and so I am come', says Fear, 'to warn you beforehand and to tell you these tidings'.

'Now, Lord God', said Prudence, 'guard and defend us, and direct and counsel us what we are to do! And as for us, let us be the more alert and vigilant to keep ourselves on every side under the wings of God. If we well defend and keep our house, and God's dear treasure that He has committed to us, then let Death come whensoever he will! We need not be afraid either of him or of Hell. For our death will be pleasing to God and entrance into Heaven. Of this treacherous world and of its lying delight let us take never heed! For all that is on earth is only like a shadow; since all turns to nothing, save only the dear treasure, God's precious possession, that is committed to our keeping'.

'I have therefore grievous trouble at heart, since I see', says Prudence, 'how the Evil One with his host, as a lion with bristling mane, walks about our house seeking eagerly how to devour it. And this I can do', says Prudence: 'warn you of his enmity, for I know his devices; but I can do nothing against his strength'.

'Then do now', said Strength, sister of Prudence, 'what is your proper part, and warn us of his wiles. For of all his strength let us in no wise be afraid. For his strength is of no avail, except where he finds the feeble and weak unwarned and without the armour of true faith'.

“The Apostle says: “Withstand the Devil and he flees at once”. Should we then flee from him? Is not verily God our shield, and all our weapons are of His bountiful grace? And God is on our side and stands by us in battle. If the Devil were to shoot at me as his darts the riches and delights of the world, and the pleasures of carnal desires, by such soft weapons as these I might be troubled {f. 53} somewhat; but nothing hard can dismay me, and no need nor any want can make my heart fail, nor make weaker my faith in Him who gives to me all my strengths’.

‘Of both,’ said Moderation: ‘as well of the hardship of need as of the softness of pleasure, one should be afraid and anxious. For many a man because of the too great hardship of woe that he endures forgets Our Lord, and more still because of softness and of carnal pleasure pay no regard to Him. Between hard and soft, between woe in this world and too much pleasure, between much and little, the middle way is golden. If we keep to that, then we walk safely; we need not either of Death or the Devil be afraid. Whatever be the case with hard things, I am not afraid at all of soft things; for no delight, nor any carnal pleasure, nor any bodily luxury can bring me to pass beyond the mean of measure and of the meet’.

Justice speaks now. ‘My sister Prudence’, she says, ‘who has reason and discernment between good and evil, and knows what in each case is to be chosen or to be avoided, counsels us and teaches us to pay little heed to all perishable things, and to keep carefully those that shall endure for ever. And she says, and says truly, that she cannot sin through ignorance, and yet does not feel safe against the strength of the Evil One, being one who considers herself weak, though in the eyes of us all she may be of great virtue, and judges herself to be without power as regards herself against his attacks; and she is wise to do so’.

‘My sister Strength is very valiant, and says that none of the hard things can make her afraid, but all the same she does not rely on her own weapons, but relies on the grace of God; and it is, I judge, right and wise to do so’.

‘My third sister, Moderation, speaks of the middle path between right and left that few know how to keep, and says that in softness she is valiant, and hardship can make her afraid; and therefore she makes no boast of feeling safe; and she is wise to behave so’.

‘My function is to do right and to judge right; and as my own judge I declare that I by myself cannot do this; for all the virtue that we have here is from God. Now it is right, therefore, for us to judge ourselves always to be without power to defend and to guard ourselves, or to keep any virtue without God’s help. The righteous God wishes us to judge ourselves feeble and humble, even if we are in no way so; for then He will judge us to be of great worth and virtue, and will regard us as His daughters’.

‘For though my first sister may be on guard against every evil, and my second be strong to resist every hardship, and my third temperate in every kind of pleasure, and I may do and judge right, unless we in spite of all this are gentle and humble, and think ourselves weak, God can with justice condemn us to forfeit all this because of our pride. And therefore it is a just judgement that we should thank Him alone for all that is good in us’.

Reason, the master of the house, God’s chief lieutenant, hears all their speeches, and thanks God earnestly with a right glad heart for a loan of such great value as are these sisters, His four daughters, whom He has lent to him as an aid in keeping well and defending his castle, and God’s precious possession that is therein enclosed.

The self-willed housewife holds her peace, and all the household that she used to lead after her turn loyally to Reason their master {f. 54} and to these four sisters.

After some while Prudence speaks again and says: ‘I see a messenger coming, very glad of countenance, fair and noble, and beautifully arrayed!’

'Let him in', says Reason. 'If it is God's will, he will bring us glad tidings; and that would be of great profit to us, for Fear, messenger of Death, has with his news made us in all ways grievously afraid'.

Prudence lets him in; and he gives fair greeting to the Master, and then to all the household, with a laughing countenance. And they return him his greeting, and are all relieved, and feel gladdened by the beholding of him; for all the house shines and shimmers in his radiance. He enquires if it pleases them to listen to him for a while.

'Yes', said Justice, 'very much it pleases us; and very right indeed is it that to thee we should listen patiently [who kept so quiet while Fear dismayed us]'.<sup>67</sup>

'Then harken now', he says, 'and attentively take note! I am the messenger of Joy, and the reminder of Eternal Life, and Love-of-Life I am named, and come straight from Heaven, which I have seen now and often before: the bliss that no man's tongue can tell of.'

'The blessed God saw that you were afraid and somewhat downcast because of what Fear told concerning Death and Hell; and He sent me to gladden you. Not because it is not all true that Fear said, and so all the wicked shall prove and discover. But you with the aid of God need not fear anything; for He sits on high Who is a help unto you, and He is almighty Who has you in His keeping'.

'O welcome, Love-of-Life!' says Prudence, 'and for the love of God, if thou ever sawest Him, tell us something of Him and of His eternal bliss!'

'Yea verily', said Love-of-Life, messenger of Joy, 'I have seen Him often, though not as He really is. For beside the brightness and the light of His face the sun's brilliance is dim and seems but a shadow. Wherefore I could not directly behold or look upon the radiance of His glorious face, but only through a fair mirror between me {and}<sup>68</sup> Him that shielded my eyes. In this way I have often seen the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though only for a little while could I endure the radiance. But for some time I was able to behold Our Lord, Jesus Christ, God's Son, Who redeemed us on the cross, how in bliss He sits on the right side of His Father Who is almighty, reigning in the eternal life without ending, so immeasurably beautiful that the angels are never satisfied of beholding Him. And yet I saw plain to see the places of His wounds, and how He shows them to His Father to testify how He loved us, and how He was obedient to Him that sent Him thus to deliver us, and He pleads with Him ever for the salvation of Mankind'.

'After Him I saw on high above all heavenly hosts the blessed Maiden-mother, named Mary, sitting upon a throne so exceeding brightly starred with jewels, and her fair face so full of happiness, that every earthly light is dark in comparison therewith. There I saw how she prays to her beloved Son so eagerly and so earnestly for those who serve her; and He grants to her gladly all that she entreats'.

{f. 55} 'When the light of her I could endure no longer, I looked towards the angels and the archangels, and to the others that are above them: blessed spirits that are ever in the presence of God, and serve Him always, and sing ever unwearied. Nine orders there are; but how they are arrayed and severally appointed, one above the other, and the function of each, it would be long to relate. So great a joy I had in their beholding that I could not for a long while elsewhere turn my eyes'.

<sup>67</sup> [ ] from T only, but clearly required. But *agrette* must be an error for *age(a)ste*. {*Agrette* 'attacked' (Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 104, says 'greeted', but this sense is unattested in Middle English save for that in T as read by Wilson. d'Ardenne, *MS. Bodley 34*, 178: 'In a private talk Prof. Tolkien suggested that "there is no such word as *agreten*; *agrette* must be an error for *ageaste*"); *age(a)ste* 'dismayed, frightened'.

<sup>68</sup> {The Middle English texts B, R, and T all have 'and' (abbreviated as 7): Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 26-7; its omission in the translation is a mere slip.}

‘After them I looked towards the Patriarchs and the Prophets, who make such rejoicing that they are now indeed in that very land of bliss which they had hailed from afar aforetime upon earth, and see now all that made true which they had long before foretold of Our Lord, even as He had revealed it to them in spiritual sight’.

‘I saw the Apostles, once poor and lowly on earth, all filled within and drenched without with boundless bliss, sitting upon thrones with all that is high in the world beneath their feet, ready to judge in the Day of Judgement kings and emperors and all tribes of every tongue’.

‘I beheld the Martyrs and their boundless joy, who here suffered pains and death for their Master, and reckoned lightly of every kind of hardship and earthly torment in comparison with the bliss to come that God in their hearts revealed to them. After them I beheld the retinue of the Confessors, who lived their life in goodness and died a holy death, who shine as do the stars in the everlasting bliss and see the glory of the face of God, Who has wiped all tears from their eyes’.

‘I saw the beautiful and the bright company of the blessed virgins, most like unto angels and most in fellowship with them, blissfully rejoicing: those who living in the body rise above the body’s law and overcome nature, who lead a heavenly life as they dwell upon earth. Their joy and their bliss, the loveliness of their fair countenance, the sweetness of their song, no tongue can tell. All sing who are there, but their song none but they can sing. So sweet a smell accompanies them, wheresoever they go, that one could live for ever by the sweetness. For whomsoever they pray he is surely saved; for God Himself arises to greet their petitions, Who sits to hear all other saints’.

‘Very greatly’, says Prudence, ‘are we delighted by what thou saist. But now that thou hast spoken so well of each single establishment of the Blessed separately, tell us now something of the quality of the bliss common to all alike’.

And Love-of-Life answers her: ‘The bliss that they have in common is sevenfold: length of life; understanding; and love; and from the love a rejoicing joyous beyond measure; song of praise; and swift motion; and certitude is the seventh’.

‘Though’, says Prudence, ‘I in part understand this, thou must unfold this more clearly and unlock it to these others’.

‘And that shall be done, Prudence’, says Love-of-Life, ‘as thou desirest. They live ever in a glory that is seven times brighter and more beautiful than the sun, and always in a potency to do without any effort all that they desire, and for ever more in one state in all things whatsoever that are good without diminution, without anything that could cause harm or grief, in all things whatsoever {f. 56} that are easeful or sweet. And their life is the seeing of God and the knowing of God: as Our Lord said. “This is eternal life,” said He: “to see and know the true God and Him that He sent for our deliverance, even Jesus Christ, Our Lord”. And therefore they are like to Him, in the same glory as He is; for they see Him as He is, face to face’.

‘They are so wise that they know all God’s purposes, His secret counsels and decrees that are hidden and more deep than dark abysses of the sea. In God they see all things, and know concerning all that is, and was, and ever shall come to be, what it is, why, and to what end, and from what it was begun’.

‘They love God beyond all measure of comparison; for they comprehend how He has treated them in His great bounty, and what return they should make to His inestimable mercy; and each one loves another as greatly as himself’.

‘Such joy they have of God that the sum of their joy is so great that no mouth may recall nor speech present it. Because each one loves another as himself, each one has of another’s good as much joy as of his own. By this you can see and perceive that each one has individually as many varieties of felicity as is the number of them all, and each of the same felicities is to every single

one as great a cause of happiness as is his own separately. Yet ever and above all this, seeing that each one loves God more than himself and than all the others, he has in God more joy beyond reckoning than he has in his own rejoicing and in that of all the others. Now therefore give thought to this. If no one's heart can ever find room in itself for its own separate joy, so immeasurably great is the single individual bliss that it receives, [how does it receive] into itself ones so numerous and so great?<sup>69</sup> For this reason Our Lord said to those that had pleased Him: "*Intra in gaudium Domini tui. Go*", said he, "into the joy of thy Lord". Thou must enter wholly therein, and be all drenched therein, for into thee it can in no wise be taken'.

'For this they glorify God and sing ever unwearied, having for ever the same delight in this song of praise, as it is written: *Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine, in sæcula sæculorum laudabunt te*. Blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in thy house, they shall praise thee from age unto age'.

'They are all as light and as swift as the sun-ray that shoots from the east into the west even as thy eyelid opens and shuts; for wheresoever the spirit will be, the body is without hindrance, because nothing can withstand them, since each one has all power to do all that he will, yea to make both heaven and earth to shake with his one finger'.

'Certitude they have of all this: of this quality of life, of this quality of knowledge, this quality of love and the rejoicing in it, {f. 57} this quality of bliss—that it can never more decrease or be impaired or find any end'.

'This little I have told of what I saw in Heaven, but nowhere near all did I see, neither even of that which I saw can I tell half'.

'Verily', said Prudence, 'we perceive clearly that thou hast been there, and hast told the truth of it according to thy seeing; and happy is he who is prudent, and takes heed how best he may keep his house, wherein is God's treasure, against God's Foe who with vices wages ever war upon it. For that will bring him to the place where all this that thou hast spoken of, and a hundred times more of bliss free from every evil he shall prove and discover'.

Then said Strength: 'Since it is so, what can separate us from God or keep us from that place? I have certitude in God that neither life nor death, neither woe nor joy,<sup>70</sup> shall divide us from His love, Who has prepared all this for us, if we as true treasure-guardians well His treasure that is committed to our keeping, as we shall do full well beneath His wings'.

'Cast out', said Justice, 'Fear our foe! It is not right that one house should hold these two. For where the messenger of Joy is and the true love of Eternal Life, Fear is banished'.

'Out now, Fear!' said Strength, 'Thou shalt no longer remain in our country!'

'Now, now', said Fear, 'I said with good intent all that I said, and though it was not joyful, my tale was no more false than was the tale of Joy's messenger, nor less profitable to you, even if it is not so acceptable and pleasing'.

'Each one of you', said Moderation, 'has his occasion for speaking, and the report of neither of you is to be rejected in his proper time. Thou givest warning of woe, he tidings of joy. It is most necessary that both of you should be listened to with attention. Depart now, Fear, nonetheless, while Love-of-Life is in this house, and submit in good temper to the ruling of Justice. For thou shalt be very willingly received and admitted, as often as Love-of-Life ceases to speak'.

Now is Will the housewife, who before was so self-willed, wholly governed according to the guidance of Reason, who is the husband; and all the household that used to be ill-disciplined

<sup>69</sup> It is necessary to assume a lacuna in the common ultimate original of BRT due to the omission of words between like words, similar to that seen in T 169, 369, and R 295 (refs. to the lines of B): *se unimete muchel is þe anlepi blisse þ ha nimeð [in. hu nimeð ha] in hire*, etc. Cf. Latin *quomodo capit tot at tanta gaudia?*

<sup>70</sup> B ends. For the remainder T is mainly followed.

and to do as they liked, as Will their mistress and not as Reason directed them, now listen to his teaching, and each one endeavours always to act in the way proper to him, because of these two messengers whom they have heard, and because moreover the four Sisters counselled them to keep each his watch-post against the entry of every vice.

Thus ought a man frequently and oft to reflect, and with such thoughts as these to arouse his heart, who in the sleep of carelessness forgets his soul's salvation; and according to the tidings of the two messengers [he should] turn his eyes from the vision of Hell to the bliss of Heaven: to have fear of the one and love for the other, and to guide himself and his servants, which are all the members of his body, not according to the counsels of his will, the wanton mistress, but according to the instruction and teaching that reason, the wise husband, will give. So that reason may ever lead {f. 58} the way and make will follow him to the achievement of all that he designs and decides; and so with the aid of the Four Sisters, the four chief Virtues, Prudence, Strength in God, Moderation, and Justice, he may guard God's treasure, that is his own soul in the house of his body, from the Thief of Hell.

Such reflexion makes a man to shun all vices, and kindles his heart with desire for the bliss of Heaven. That may Our Lord grant unto us in His holy mercy, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God in three Persons, reigneth for ever without end. AMEN.

[R adds:]

Of your blessed charity say a pater noster for John who wrote this book.

This text whosoever has read,  
whom Christ's grace to its end has led,  
of blessed charity I pray  
a prayer for me oft to say  
(one pater noster and ave mary)  
that I may here endure my days  
and well please Our Lord always,  
till my youth and my age are past,  
and may to Christ give back my soul at last.<sup>71</sup>  
AMEN

*biddeð ec for Johan þe latere þe þeos boc iturnde seodðen in to englische ledene of his ahne time.*<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> {The translation of this short poem is slightly less literal, due to Tolkien's attempt to emulate the rhyme of the original.}  
<sup>72</sup> {This line of Middle English is Tolkien's own composition, written by hand at the bottom of the page, and is left untranslated by him. The following translation is our own: 'Pray likewise for the later John who afterwards translated this book into the English language of his own time.' John is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, 'later' than the 'John who wrote this book' and requested prayers in manuscript R.}

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