

Graham McAleer

Why Bother Defending the Shire?

Here are two contrasting images of the city. The first is from David Hume, the second Tolkien. Hume argues that civilisation relies on the intimate relationship between commerce and refinement in the arts and sciences. These combine in the city. Middle-earth has its share of magnificent cities but, interestingly, in LOTR they are mostly marked by decay. Osgiliath is in ruins, Dwarrowdelf a tomb, Rivendell is emptying, and the White City sparsely populated. Tolkien does not celebrate cities like David Hume. He is far more sympathetic to Vincent McNabb's assessment: the "unceasing Nazareth cry is: 'Come back, not to Ur, Memphis or Jerusalem, but to Nazareth, lest you prepare another Golgotha.'"¹ The commercial city erases peoples' "differences and inequalities" and literally makes the human anew on the model of a routinised machine.² LOTR expresses Tolkien's dislike of mechanization.

Graham McAleer was born and raised in the north of England. He attended universities in England, Canada, Belgium, and the United States. He earned his doctorate at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. As a professor of philosophy at Loyola University Maryland, he teaches and researches in the areas of ethics and Catholic Social Thought. He was named Loyola's Distinguished Teacher of the Year in 2014. Graham's latest book, Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings: A Philosophy of War is available on Amazon as an [e-book](#).

1. V. McNabb, O. P., Nazareth or Social Chaos (Ihs, 2010).
2. F. Tönnies, Community and Civil Society (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 217.

