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Tom Bombadil and Goldberry: Romantic Theology as Revelation in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

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Tom Bombadil and Goldberry:

Romantic Theology as Revelation in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

While the majority of literary critics suggest Tom Bombadil either subverts or dilutes the Rivendell's against Mordor, this essay analyzes Bombadil and Goldberry through the romantic theology of Charles Williams, Tolkiens' fellow Inkling. William's romantic theology suggests romantic experiences reveals glimpses of perfection, suggesting the Hobbits' stay at Tom Bombadil's home within Withywindle reveals the ideal of salvation within *The Lord of the Rings*. Utilizing Williams' *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, this essay shows how Tolkien's vision for an ideal community guides Bombadil as the moral model for the rest of the free peoples to follow. While romantic theology clearly influenced other aspects of Tolkien's work, such as the relationships between Aragorn and Arwen as well as Beren and Luthien, applying this theory to Bombadil shows how coinherence, the giving and taking of love between free persons, manifests perfection. By demonstrating redeemed relationships to the Hobbits, Bombadil presents a moral ideal for Rivendell, central to understanding the moral war against Sauron.