

St. Thomas is often depicted with a T-square because there is a legend about him as an architect who built a palace for an Indian king. We can also see this as a symbol of his role as a loyal critic of the Church, of his fellow disciples who claimed to have seen the risen Christ. He wanted to get things straight. And, in that tension between waiting to establish truth through visible evidence and accepting truth on the witness of other, have we not that central tension at the heart of Christianity and, perhaps, of all living, between Law and Spirit, between being told what to do and working it out for ourselves; between trusting the tradition that has been handed down to us but adapting it for today? There's an interesting allegory used by Tolkien to counter the critics of his translation of Beowulf. It goes something like this:

A man builds a tower using stones from a ruin
 in a field from which he'd built his own house
 nearby but his friends come along and demolish
 the tower in their search for knowledge and critical
 of its construction from old material *'while even
 the man's descendants murmured that he should
 have spent his time not building the tower but
 restoring the ruin.'* But from the top of the tower
 the man had been able to look out upon the sea.

(J.R.R.Tolkien: Tom Shippey p.161 &162.)

Now, I've probably started too many hares here but I wonder if what Thomas initially misses is the creation of something entirely new in Christ but using the very same stones from which Thomas had already built a house to live in. What is on offer is an entirely new way of looking at the world which is not a rejection of the stones or material from which the world is already made but a new building resurrected from the old, held together by love, the keystone of which is Christ, the one who loves and invites us to live in his love through our love of one another, which may include the occasional use of a T-square, that critical love that is just checking that the building is set on firm foundations – safe to climb if only for the view from the top.

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