

THE RELIGION OF A HOBBIT

by Belladonna Took

"Religio Periani" - the religion of a Hobbit.
I just could not resist the glance at Sir Thomas Browne, and the temptation to see how a Hobbit would look in Latin.

I have often been asked what the religion of a hobbit might be. In the first place it must be remembered that Professor Tolkien himself a Roman-Catholic; and though he never gives any indication of his faith in LotR, and unlike his friends C.S.Lewis and Charles Williams never attempts either allegory or the employment of religious mysticism- yet he can no more fail to convey his beliefs into his writing than a trained singer can sing out of tune.

We are, however not shown the Hobbits practising any religion; yet, they being so like English country folk at their best, one feels their villages must surely have been incomplete without a church, and the church bells, and the solemn walk to church on the appropriate day of the week- and a churchyard? Surely they buried Hobbits after their long lifespan with the proper "dim and decorous" mirth? But I doubt whether Tolkien thought out all details of Hobbit life to a complete conclusion.

The religion of the Elves was a different matter: this is well set out in the Appendix to "The Return of the King". It is not a dogma but a history in its earliest past almost amounting to a Genesis or a Theogony, the story of the relationship between Men and the Higher Race, and between the Higher Race and the Divine Powers, and the gradual separation of the race of Men.

The account, under the heading, "The Numenorean Kings" takes us back to the early days of the High Elves and the Half-Elven. The Eldar were a race superior to Men having "immortality with the life of the world"; the Edain or Men were subject to the "Doom of Man", which is also called the gift of Men, that is, death. Both Men and Elves were under the rule of the Valar, who appear to be the Gods; but the Valar themselves were not supreme in power, since there were things they were not permitted to do. There are hints of a high overruling power, more purposeful than the Desling or Fate of the ancients- a providential Will guiding with ultimate purpose the actions of the Valar as well as of Elves and Men.

The Valar dwelt in Valimar, the Uttermost West, and thither the race of Men might not go. In early times there were some who rebelled against their lot, desiring both to enter the "Deathless Land" and to win immortality; and from this time there arose the subsequent discords, and banishments, and dooms, that separated men from Elves and began the cosmic conflict. In some ways this resembles the Christian idea of "the Fall of the Angels" and the consequent "Fall of Man". It must be remembered that C.S.Lewis allegorises the Christian cosmic pattern from the creation to the Day of Judgement, in the "Narnia" stories, and suggests it also in Perelandra.

