

# More on the early Bright Way

“[Visions1](#) wrote: 2025-12-16T17:52:30+00:00 What was Bright Way organization like in the early years? And who was the first Hearthkeeper? What was she like?”

There wasn't a clear delineation between shamanism and the early Bright Way. A lot of laymen (if not at least some clerics) regarded the Uncreated Light as a particularly visible animistic spirit. Only later as the migration out of the jungle really got going did the differences become significant. During that time, if you undertook the migration you were a Wayfarer and if you didn't you weren't. The trek into the strange environment of the southern grasslands and the subsequent leap in tech brought on by the need to adapt (along with the researches brought on by the Great Commandment) are what finally solidified the split.

The beholders (witnesses to the Theophany who began the migration) preached that the Light made itself known to all and gave the yinrih direction and purpose, whereas the nature spirits they previously worshiped were fickle and cared not whether their devotees lived or died. This would later be thrown in the clergy's faces by the Atavists during the Shakeoff. They claimed that the same argument made by the Beholders against nature worship were applicable to the Light as well, since people still suffered and died as before. This led to the formulation of the first Claravian theodicies.

But in general, the hearthkeepers regard themselves as the legitimate heirs to the legacy of the original shamans. Much of their liturgical practice was simply an uninterrupted continuation of shamanistic practice, in particular the association with fire and medicine and the yinrih's unique funerary rituals. If you were a shaman who left the jungle, you simply became a hearthkeeper.

Neoshamanism, especially the nonagentivist branch, incorporates a lot of Claravian ideas that would have been alien to the original shamanists, especially the use of the scientific method to understand the universe. This allowed them to apply the principles used by the research monasteries to their own endeavors. The Shakeoff is probably where the split between hearthkeeper and healer took place. The Bright Way had excellent knowledge of anatomy and biomechanics, since you have to know this stuff when firing people out of a cannon and expecting them to live afterward, but microbiology in particular was either completely unknown or given little attention. Indeed, I suspect quite a few of the first Neoshamanists were research monks frustrated that their particular areas of inquiry weren't given as much attention as aeronautics and spaceflight. Basically they were scientists following the grant money.

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