

The Beginnings of the Bright Way

There was a period of natural religion prior to the Theophany that may have even preceded writing (akin to the ritual burials of the neanderthals). It is here that the most fundamental rites are established: a female shaman keeping the tribal fire lit and performing primitive medicine as well as the use of the bones of the dead as architectural adornment. After the Theophany comes the founding of the Bright Way proper, where the shamanate organizes into the first true clergy. As the yinrih's medical knowledge grows, it becomes necessary to split the two primary roles of the old shamans into cleric and healer.

The Theophany catalyzes the yinrih's technological development. They know there are other sophonts among the stars, but still don't know what the stars even are. While there is much discovery independent of the Bright Way, The Bright Way is responsible for a great many technological and social developments in its attempt to fulfill the Great Commandment. After the secularization of yinrih society, Attempts are made by historical revisionists to minimize their cultural and technical contributions.

Meanwhile, the shaman's role of keeping the tribe's fire lit keeps pace with the yinrih's progress up the tech tree. As agriculture and cities develop, a central lighthouse is established in each settlement. The lighthouse, decorated with the bones of the dearly departed, serves as a fane dedicated to the Creator who revealed itself to the yinrih in the Theophany. Inside the lighthouse is a central hearth tended by the cleric, from which the individual households feed their home fires. When electricity is discovered, clerics become the first engineers maintaining electrical infrastructure. When the true nature of stars as sustained fusion reactions is discovered, attempts are made to replicate these icons of The Light on a smaller scale for liturgical purposes. This is the origin of the fusion reactor, or Star Hearth. The atomic age is birthed not by war, but by faith.

I still have to detail how the clergy fall into corruption. I'm thinking it has to do with their control of electrical infrastructure. One of the themes that has emerged in this project is the reversal of typical religion tropes you see in speculative fiction. So instead of religion being portrayed an impediment to technological development, it's a catalyst for it. Instead of the priestly class using their superior knowledge to gull the superstitious masses into submission, it's used to maintain a certain standard of living, although as often as not with a hefty tithe to keep the lights on. Those reactors don't run themselves, after all.

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