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## “With the Gods, all things are possible.”

I sit here at my desk, in the quiet of the night with heavy heart, for you see, my dear friend and colleague Hrodbert is dead. I shudder at the circumstances of what was clearly a murder, knowing in my heart of hearts that he was innocent of the crimes levelled against him posthumously. He was a scholar like myself, and at times, those in our profession must walk in the shadows of corruption to arrive at the truth. In doing so, we must remain firm in our convictions, leaning against the august power of the Gods to shelter us from the cloying allure of the Ruinous Powers. The accusations levelled against him have cast us all into question, regardless of our deeds and service to the Empire and Sigmar. I wonder at the time it will take for the Witch Hunters to come to my door, filled with suspicions and righteous fervour. I must take heart though, for Sigmar is my guide.

Is it possible, then, that my comrade faltered? Could he have stumbled in his ill-advised study of the Ruinous Powers? Long had we urged caution, adjuring him to abandon his foolish course and turn his keen mind toward salvation and succour in the arms of the great Gods of the Empire. Yet Hrodbert ignored our advice and plunged ever deeper into the mire of madness, plumbing the depths of heresy to explore the landscape where the Dark Gods hold sway. Whether he finished his life's work, I know not, for he is dead and his home and possessions were seized and burned by those opposed to Chaos.

I cannot conceive of what would tempt man to turn away from the glorious Gods, to whom devotion is rewarded with divine protection. Those who placate the Gods, who show them their due respect, can receive great reward, sheltered from the worst of the ravaging touches and the ruinous temptations of the fouler deities. I grieve for my lost friend, for the tragedy of his abrupt end, and for the loss to us all that his passing has brought. But I do not question the whys of his end, for those who dabble with the darkness have a tendency to take it into themselves, wallowing in its despair, ambition, rage, and twisted perversions.

In a sense, I feel a responsibility, a purpose, a holy invocation to expiate the crimes of my friend. Perhaps I should set to paper the purpose and cause of the right and true Gods in the Empire, cataloguing their glorious works to, if not in part, diminish those blasphemies recorded by my departed friend. Truly such a work would glorify our Gods and restore the good faith and devotion of mortals to their service and worship, and thereby ensure the continued patrimony given to us by great Sigmar.

If I were to author such a tome, where would I begin? In the beginning, I suppose. My library is full of dusty accounts and ancient writings that claim to tell the true origins of our Gods. Whilst such information is indeed fascinating, there are many conflicting tales, even among those that relate to Sigmar. Such works drip with half-truths and falsehoods, and so extracting the truth of these writings is a daunting task. Which to choose? I must let Sigmar guide my choice and accept that which is decreed by divine will.

It is obvious that once I establish the history of the nine primary Gods of the Empire, that of their cults would follow. There is an abundance of lore regarding these institutions, though they tend to conflict depending on the era in which they were written. Alas, the lens of history is smeared with lies and confusion.

Of course, no discussion of the great Gods would be complete without a look at the low beliefs of the common men of our nation. Peasants have such curious ideas when it comes to the Gods, and most venerate an array of spirits, ancestors, and lesser Gods. It is from their ignorance that fanaticism arises. I acknowledge the zeal of these servants, but I worry that some other spirit, some foul thing of darkness, may seize their souls in place of the God to whom they prostrate themselves. I suppose some mention of these lesser deities should be made, in addition to the misguided rituals of their followers. Yet I must have care when approaching this subject, lest I call down the wrath of those who guard against these powers.

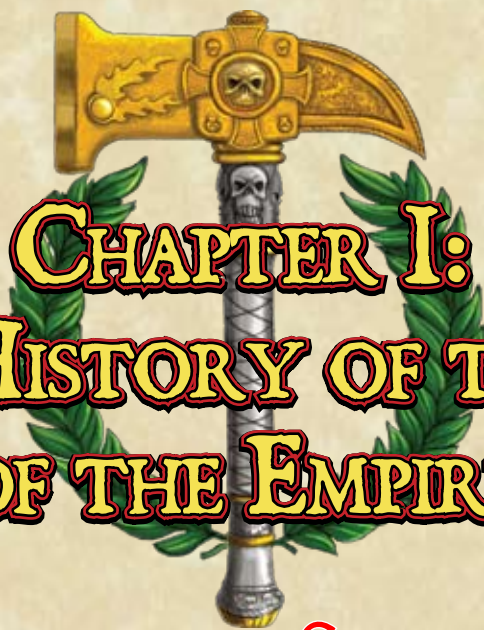
Pious expression is another worthy subject. Our calendar is full of holy and sacred days set aside to honour the pantheon. Doubters believe these are just excuses to shirk honest labour, but those who have participated in these grand festivals know they are pleasing to the Gods.

Undoubtedly, the most worthwhile subject is the servants of the Gods themselves. Sadly, many good Empire folk have misperceptions about the function and purpose of our role, misunderstanding what we do and what impels us to give over our lives to the deities. Whilst I am an expert only on Sigmar and his cult, I have colleagues in many other cults whom I'm sure would be willing to donate a portion of their time to the completion of this work. By shedding light on our relationship with the Gods, perhaps some clarity could be achieved.

Is such fancy foolish? Few in our brave land can read, after all. I wonder at this urge to author such a book. Is this some divine impulse, some path that has been illuminated by the glory of our Gods, or am I motivated by some baser need? Certainly, I have no need of fame, wealth, or glory; these are the trappings of the mundane, and they serve only to disguise more sinister agencies. No, this drive must be divinely inspired. I must embrace this belief, and listen to the divine utterances as they come to me from my master. I cannot be sullied by baser needs, and must remain pure of heart and purpose lest these words be tainted.

The history, then. Where did I place that letter to the Emperor? Ah, here it is...





# CHAPTER I: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CULTS OF THE EMPIRE

*Being A Brief  
History of the  
Cults of the  
Empire as Told by  
the Venerable Hieronymous of Nuln*

“Never have I encountered a supposedly civilised nation where religion and superstition directly control almost every level of thinking. The Empire is as much ruled by the representatives of its Gods as it is by its nobles, and that can make truth a dangerous commodity to own.”

—ATTRIBUTED TO HIGH LOREMASTER TECLIS OF ULTHUAN



# *To his Imperial Majesty, the Prince of Reikland, the ruler of our glorious Empire, sovereign of the heights and depths, Karl Franz I of Altdorf.*

*Again, I am to work by your command, to craft a manuscript for your discernment. My commission is to compile the works of all the great philosophers, historians, and theists, and the extant works of the Gods themselves, into a tome describing the History of the Cults of the Empire.*

*Therefore, as Verena is my witness, I shall describe truthfully the formation of the religious institutions in this blessed land. I shall begin by discussing matters that fall into Imperial pre-history, and then guide you through time's corridors until we arrive at this night, where I put my pen to parchment beneath the twin light of Morrslieb and Mamslieb. Throughout this discourse, I shall provide historical context, and sections from other essays, papers, and even individuals, all to aid in understanding this complex subject, for it is evident from my studies that there are many competing truths when it comes to matters of faith.*

*For although the holy cults are now sedulous powerhouses of the Empire's establishment, and all preach similar creation myths, it was not always so; once, long ago, the cults did not even exist, and neither did their beliefs.*

"And it began:

Rhya, the beautiful, rose up; Taal, the powerful, rose up;  
Blossom-broad, hot with life. Spread of Horn, firm of will.  
Then, they did create all natural things."

—THE BOOK OF GREEN

## OF THE FIRST TIMES

*What little is known of the earliest Human population of the land that would become our glorious Empire comes from two primary sources. The first is the learned Dwarfs—the Elder Race with whom we share our longest alliance—for they have relevant records that date back to our prehistory. The second is the primitive Humans themselves—for traces of their pasting still exist, including ancient carvings, cave paintings, and old burial mounds.*

*Although the Elves undoubtedly hoard many relevant records of this time, securing the lore of this Elder Race has proven to be impossible. However, as they have little regard for our religious rites and practise viewing our cults, as they view most of our great works, with little more than undisguised disdain I do not believe this to be a significant loss.*

## CONCERNING THE DWARF CHRONICLES

*Unfortunately, the ancient Dwarfs have few extant records concerning the first Human tribes that lived in the Reik Basin. It is presumed that once there were more, but most of the Dwarf holds have since been destroyed, and those that remain have suffered repeated natural disasters and attacks over the centuries, all of which have resulted in the many great losses. However, some primeval lore has survived the ravages of time, and from it the occasional glimpse of our antecedents can be found.*

*The Chronicles of High King Nurn Shieldbreaker of Karaz-a-Karak, dated by Dwarfs to 1347 KA (circa —1492 IC), boasts the first known historical record of a Human tribe in the forests of the future Empire. I was forbidden access to the ancient, golden volumes, so I cannot reliably quote from them, but I was granted an abridged copy of the relevant sections when I produced my Imperial Seal of Acquisition. The fascinating chronicles revealed the Dwarf Kingdoms of that era were under attack. Massive earthquakes rived the mountains, and from the resulting cracks the Greenskin foe poured, starting the conflict we now know as the Goblin Wars. Karak Ungor and Karak Varn had already fallen; and many other holds fell under attack.*

"... the Moist Earth, the Mother of all life ftwo obscure symbols& Dryad, Naiad, Nymph flist of unknown symbols& Gods ftwo lines obscured& devastation fcrack in stone& came from beyond the fhalf a line worn away& silver ships fseven unknown symbols& deep waters, fertile, and fthree lines worn away& Worship Her ftwo unknown symbols& nurture Her land fone line worn away& we are Her children, we are the Belthani ..."

—EXTRACT TRANSLATED FROM THE TALASTEIN CARVINGS,  
NOW HELD IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF TALABECLAND,  
TRANSLATED BY TECLIS OF ULTHUAN

*It was against this backdrop of desperate war that one of the first recorded contacts between Men and Dwarfs occurred. Whilst hunting Greenskins in the lowlands of the Worlds Edge Mountains, High King Shieldbreaker encountered a tribe of Humans. As far as the High King's scouts could ascertain, they were clearly scavengers, although they did employ primitive tools, presumably to hunt game and, perhaps, although unlikely, farm land.*

*When the High King and his retinue approached, the Humans immediately fled from the well-armed Dwarfs. The Humans' fear of strangers was so pronounced that Shieldbreaker took offence at their*



*frightened mien, presuming their xenophobia, or rather their cravenness, was an insult. After the abandoned, poorly constructed camp was investigated, the High King famously remarked in his personal Book of Grudges that the Humans were Umgal (which roughly translates as a band of people who make shoddy things), and “needed to be taught a swift lesson in respect.” Although Dwarfs undoubtedly encountered Humans many times before in the south, Umgal was to be the name that stuck; and now, almost 4,000 years later, Humans, to the Dwarfs, are still known as Umgi, the race that makes shoddy things.*

*We are blessed by the Dwarfen forethought, as these Dwarfs recorded everything they found in the camp. Among the simple tools and fixtures that littered the camp were suggestively shaped objects, no doubt of ritual significance, which reveal a forthright attitude to the acts of Rhya. Time and civilisation have now replaced such direct depictions with the wheat sheaf and the antler—symbols that are much more suitable for public display, and less likely to excite the passions of the easily led. Unsurprisingly, the Dwarfs had little interest in these badly sculpted figures, and they abandoned them.*

*Later chronicles recount similar tales—Dwarfs spotting nomadic Humans; Humans fleeing—but very little is added concerning their possible religious practises.*

*For this, we need turn to the antiquarians.*

## CONCERNING THE ANTIQUARIAN DISCOVERIES

*Fortunately for those enquiring into the foundations of our great nation, it has become increasingly fashionable to fund antiquarian projects. All over our enlightened Empire, one can see small groups of brave men and women sporting shovels and artists’ tools, all ready to enthusiastically excavate ancient sites and diligently record what they find. The recent development has led to all manner of discoveries, but none more pertinent to this manuscript than the Talastein Carvings.*

*Uncovered in the Kōlsa hills in Talabecland by a group of disreputable tomb robbers, the thirteen stone slabs of the Talastein Carvings are a wonder to behold. The pictograms are worn now, but fascinating clues can still be garnered by the educated scholar.*



## THE OLD FAITH

“Most believe the Cult of the Mother died out long ago. They are wrong. Not only do the Great Families of my Order continue Her traditions, but the sickle is born by others, which most of whom hide far from prying eyes.

Before he formed our Order, Teclis came to our great groves. By channelling Ghyran he activated the Waystones we believed had been raised by our ancestors, and showed us what our “Oghams” truly were: a creation of the Elder Race, the Asur, the Elves. We watched wide-eyed as Teclis explained the nature of belief, magic, and of Hoeth, the God he especially revered.

Not all of us accepted his foreign ways. Indeed, a full third of the Druidic Families stubbornly spurned Teclis, refusing to believe his “truth”, and fled into the dark forests, just like the prehistoric tribes of old.

But those who remained, listened, and then eventually understood.

Not long after, the Jade Order of Magic was formalised, and we were its numbers. We didn’t change our beliefs—indeed, we practise the Old Faith still—but we understood them for what they were: a twisted reflection of the truth.

Since then, our role as Nature’s Guardians has brought us into contact with many others who believe they are the Children of the Belthani. They are all, I am quite sure, just as wrong as we were.”

—EROWIN GRUNFELD, MAGISTER DRUID OF THE JADE ORDER