

Report on the Order of Creation and the Progression of Souls

by Valthonis

as told to Tracy Hickman and Matthew L. Martin

Introduction

My name? Ah, I have so many. Paladine, El'i, Fizban, Bah'Mut, Draco Paladin—that last was a special favorite. Forgive the digression; I sometimes find these academic discourses a little disconcerting, even with old friends. In a way, though, all my friends are old friends, since I knew you before you were born, not that you'd know that. In any case, I understand that you desire a record of my observations on the War of Souls. I'm glad to help, especially since this series of events spans times and concepts only the gods and High Gods fully understand. Of course, because of that, I'll have to be careful how I put things. The gods don't experience time in the same way mortals do; it sometimes frustrates us when you can't grasp the totality of simultaneous

existence and the stream of probability. You see what I mean? In any case, I'll try to keep this simple.

Foundation of the World

The origin of the War of Souls traces its origins to a time just after the creation of the gods by the High God, before the world was completed and the Order of Creation and the Destiny of Souls fully established.

The Beginning

There is, forever has been, and forever will be the High God, who chose to bring forth spirits out of love so that they might share in the glory, joy, and love He possessed. To this purpose, he conceived the Order of Creation and the Progression of Souls.

As a vital part of this plan, souls are born into the mortal world. From whence these souls come and what their condition was before their birth is not given to mortals to know. Nor is it given to us to know to where these souls eventually depart and to what state they may exist in the life beyond mortality. The progression of souls stretches into eternity—of which mortality is but a single moment. Nevertheless, that part of the progression of souls we designate as mortality consists of souls brought into the world to live, to learn faith in the gods and in each other. Thus mortals learn to love the purposes of the High God, to draw closer to him as they follow the ways of goodness and virtue, and to share in his glory and reflect it in their behavior. Yet some come to reject the goodness of the High God, even stand against him.

The High God conceived the Order of Creation and outlined his plan for the world's development in the Tobril. He created the gods, powerful beings who would help carry out the plan of Creation and shepherd mortals in their evolution. Greatest among the gods was Ionthas, chief among the shapers of the material world, who possessed more might than any of his brethren.

Gilean, Keeper of the Book, held the Tobril and guided Ionthas in the forging of the world, while Reorx, Sirrion, and other gods aided the many tasks. Paladine and Takhisis arose to counsel the mortals who were born to this world during the first ages. Majere served as advisor to Paladine and Takhisis, and lesser gods helped with the spiritual guidance.

After speaking the world into existence, the High God commanded Ionthas and the other gods to shape it, bringing it to fullness. As the gods molded the world in conformity with the Plan, Ionthas grew proud and haughty. Deviating from the Tobril, he declared himself the true deity and supplanter of the High God. Paladine, Gilean, and most of the other gods challenged him in this, although some remained silent. Ionthas sent his might forth across Krynn, undoing the work of the other gods and doing his best to remake the world in his own image. As he fought against the High God and the others, however, Ionthas found that his attempt to dominate Krynn did little more than drain him, and that while he could damage and distort what had been, he could not truly make anything new.

Ionthas's anger at his impotence, his failure to create a world in his own image, coupled with his overweening pride, caused him to turn against the High God, his fellow gods, and everything that was not himself. Ionthas even repudiated his old name and identity, from that moment on known to all as Chaos. Many of the other gods, led by Paladine, took up the struggle against their renegade brother. Though Chaos might have stood against them all, even in his now-weakened state, the High God granted Paladine, whose love for and obedience to the High God was second to none, the power necessary to vanquish and chain Chaos. Defeated by the Platinum Dragon, Chaos was cast beyond creation, to drift there, alone, his pride shattered. Thereafter, Chaos descended into an abyss of twisted thought, rather than face reason. He convinced himself that *he* was the creator of All and of Nothing, that the other gods were his children, that he was simply letting them play in his world. He denied the very existence of the High God, although deep within himself he dreaded

and hated the High God and all that had sprung from his brow—everything, including to some degree, Chaos himself.

Though he was gone from the universe, Chaos's wrath had undone much. Had they united their natural gifts, perhaps the gods could have healed this marring of Krynn, but such goodwill was not to be. For Chaos had not only harmed Krynn, his malice and rebellion had spread adversely among the gods themselves.

The High God had appointed as co-regent of the young world Takhisis, who was expected to rule jointly with Paladine. However, Chaos' evil had influenced Takhisis, for she was closely associated with Ionthas and admired his many skills. Like Chaos, she began to desire sole dominion of Krynn. Where Chaos had lusted after the physical universe, Takhisis was more concerned with the spiritual. She wished to be worshiped by the other gods, and she sought to possess the very souls of the mortals who came to inhabit Krynn. Subtly, she began to steer others among the gods to her side; the names of these apostates were Morgion, Sargonnas, Chemosh, Hiddukel, Zeboim, and Nuitari. These renegade gods began to draw their strength and might not from the High God and the unfolding of His will, but like vampires from negative energies, drawing power from decay and wickedness and mastering those elements of creation that sold themselves to the darkness. This rising of the dark came to fruition as the creation of Krynn drew to an end and the next phase of the Celestial Plan began.

The first creatures to populate Krynn were the dragons, who were tightly bound to Paladine and Takhisis, as well as to Krynn. Paladine and Takhisis, assisted by Reorx and Mishakal, crafted the Five Dragons, and the High God provided their souls. Seeing these creatures of might, the first free-willed beings to inhabit Krynn, Takhisis and Morgion seduced them to follow her dictates. In this alliance, Takhisis and the gods who stood with her declared themselves dedicated to usurping mastery of Krynn and thwarting the execution of the plan. They opposed the Order of Creation and the progression of souls.

Takhisis and her cohorts thus became the gods of Evil, falling from their lofty state into the Abyss, consumed by their own envy and malice. Their rebellion convinced several gods that the further development of Krynn would lead only to decay and disorder. These gods nurtured specific aspects of the Creation, while acting neither to thwart the will of the High God nor serve him as they were intended. Even Gilean took this point of view. These became known as the gods of Neutrality, because they saw themselves as aloof from the struggle between Good and Evil.

This struggle reached a frenzy with the birth of mortals. Takhisis, Sargonnas, and the other gods of Evil declared their intention to enslave the mortals, for, as Takhisis said, "We forged this world. Why should we now surrender it to lesser beings?"

The gods of Good stood against the evil ones, faithful to the High God. Paladine declared, "These coming mortals are children of the High God, just as we are. This world was made for them, as much as for us, and in the end, the mortals shall be greater and brighter than any of us."

The gods of Good pledged to guide the mortals, to protect them from the Evil ones and the remnants of Chaos. They would not betray the High God.

Thus began the All-Saints War, as Good strove against Evil. The gods of Neutrality originally intended to ignore the conflict, tending to their own gardens. In the end, Paladine and Majere persuaded Gilean and the other Neutrals to side with the gods of Good, for Takhisis sought dominion over the *entire* world, which would leave those elements cherished by the Neutral gods enslaved to her ends or destroyed.

The alliance of Good and Neutrality pushed the forces of Evil back, but without a decisive resolution. The High God was obliged to intervene directly.

"Know ye that I am the High God, and thou art my children, just as are these mortals whom I shall soon create.

"Paladine, thou and thine allies hath done well in remaining faithful to thy calling and desiring to aid the mortals. Though

they shall be free to choose for Good or against it, thou shalt be free as well to aid and protect them so that this freedom may be maintained. And as it shall be with the mortals who choose Good, so shall it be with thee. Thy labors shall in the end bring about Good, though Evil may surround thee. For Goodness, sought truly and for its own sake, shall redeem its own.

"Takhisis, thou hast followed Ionthas in foolishness, and those who follow thee shall likewise know their folly, should they not repent. Thou and thine shalt be free to mar, wound, and tempt the mortals, yet in the end, thou shalt regret this most grievously. For I am farther above thee than thou canst conceive, even more above thee than thou perceivest thyself to be above the mortals. All that thou shalt do to thwart my designs shall in the end fulfill them and be used to bring about Good. But, Evil, thy work remains, and thou shalt suffer for this, even more than the mortals who serve thee suffer for their misdeeds. For Evil, even pursued in the guise of Good, shall turn in upon itself.

"Gilean, though thou hast not acted directly against mine designs, still thou and those who declare themselves Neutral hath failed to fulfill the Plan. Thou shalt fulfill it despite thyself, and I shall permit thy declared Neutrality, for even in thy silence, thou all shalt bring Goodness. As thou art free, so are the mortals. Yet thou shalt not remain betwixt forever; in the end, thou must stand either with us in the Light or with Takhisis and her compatriots in the Darkness. For all are free to choose for Good or against it, but all will make a choice between sides in the end.

"Know ye all that there shall be a Balance. I will permit Good, Evil, and Neutrality all to work upon this world, and the mortals shall be free to choose between the three and garner the consequences of their choosing. They may alter the Balance, but the decision must come from within, and not be forced upon them from without. Know thee, Paladine, that if those mortals in thy service seek to force Goodness upon the others, they shall fall into Evil and bring about great suffering. Know thee, Gilean, that if

thy servants try to forbid the mortals from choosing between the two, they shall likewise fail and bring about devastation. Know thee, Takhisis, that when thou dost attempt to enslave the world to thine service, thou shalt be thwarted in the end, and yet in thy folly, thou shalt continue to seek such dominion until the end of thy presence upon this world."

Thus ended the All-Saints War, named because it affected the destiny of all who could become saints on Krynn.

Of the Gods

Though the gods numbered twenty-two in the beginning, Chaos was cast from their number in the first days of the Age of Starbirth. By the end of the All-Saints War, there were twenty-one gods on Krynn, divided into three orders of seven, the Gods of Light, the Gods of Neutrality or Twilight, and the Gods of Darkness.

The Gods of Light

Greatest among the righteous gods is Paladine, the Celestial Paladin and Platinum Dragon. Mightiest of all gods, save Chaos, Paladine is the exemplar of virtue and holiness, patron of the great virtue of Charity. Leader of the Order of Light, he protects Krynn against the schemes of Takhisis and leads both mortals and his fellow gods in the path of righteousness. Thus, he guides all who protect the innocent and seek to lead others in truth and goodness. His role as leader and keeper of Krynn, though, is tempered by a deep and sincere humility, which he strives to inculcate in his followers as well.

Majere is only slightly less in might than Paladine. Paladine loves the High God most fiercely and deeply of all the Powers. Majere is said to have the greatest understanding of the High God's wisdom and the Celestial Plan, surpassing even Gilean. Thus, Majere serves an advisor to Paladine and fosters the virtue of Faith, as well as the diligence that encourages mortals to

pursue values of the spirit despite effort and trial. Monks are the most conspicuous among Majere's followers, but he is also revered by many mystics and theologians, as well as the intellectual and spiritual gold dragons.

Mishakal, third among the gods of Good, is nearly as beloved as Paladine among the people of Krynn. Healer and Consoler, Mishakal strives to bring aid and comfort to those suffering in body and mind. Of the virtues, Hope is Mishakal's special concern, as she inspires mortals to trust in the promises and plans of the High God and the inevitable triumph of Good. She is also the patron of natural love, be it between parents and children, brother and sister, or man and wife. The silver dragons, who share Mishakal's concern and empathy for mortals, revere her deeply.

Of all the gods of Light, Kiri-Jolith, Sword of Justice, is the most martial. Tireless in his pursuit of Justice, Kiri-Jolith inspires his followers, among them the copper dragons, to protect the innocent and punish the forces of Evil. He is not merciless in this crusade, though, and directs his servants and those who look to him for guidance to temper justice with mercy and not to be carried away by bloodlust and wrath.

Habbakuk, close ally to Kiri-Jolith, is Prince of Beasts and Lord of the Seas. He promotes respect for the natural glories of Krynn and teaches mortals to see in them a reflection of the glory and virtue of the eternal. At the same time, he inspires Temperance, which keeps the passions of mortals' animal qualities in harmony and balance. With the metallic dragons, he shares a fondness for the sea.

While Habbakuk teaches devotion to natural beauty, Brachala inspires art, courage, and generosity. He encourages the people of Krynn to use artistic talents to lift the eyes of others heavenward and to muster courage, facefear, and strive for goodness despite danger and opposition.

Last among the gods of Light is counted Solinari, Keeper of the Silver Moon and the White Archmage. All White Magic falls under his dominion, and all wizards in service to good pay him honor and accord. In return, Solinari teaches them Wisdom,

helping guide them in knowing when to use their great gifts to best further the goals of Good and keeping them from being consumed by their hunger for magical power, as happens to so many mages of the Black Order.

The Gods of Neutrality

Brass and bronze dragons often consort with the neutral gods. Gilean, the Observer and Keeper of the Tobril, is the most impressive of the neutral gods in terms of power, but he has very few followers on Krynn. Cold in heart and passionless in spirit, Gilean merely watches, intervening only when it appears one side in the great conflict may end the 'experiment' prematurely. Though he does not seek followers, he accepts the allegiance of historians, scientists, and others who strive for pure and objective knowledge.

Reorx, Lord of Earth, is also patron of craftsmen. His concern is with the attention of the maker to his craft and the quality of the results. He is the special patron of the dwarves, who are descended from humans he took into his service and taught secrets.

While Reorx takes an interest in craftsmanship, Shinare is patroness of trade, taking a delight in the cycles of exchange, commerce, and economic development. Though admired by honest merchants, she is only revered by those who, while trustworthy, see nothing in life beyond their business. Many such tradesmen eventually fall prey to avarice and slip, knowingly or unknowingly, into Hiddukel's grasp.

Sirrion, Master of Flame, is primarily concerned with his chosen element, but also maintains an interest in inspiration and creativity. Alchemy is a favored subject, as well as other pursuits that seek transformation, or singular moments of beauty or intensity. Most chaotic among the Neutral powers, his tendency to focus on the moment without a thought for consequences has made him often a pawn of the gods of Evil.

Chislev, Lady of the Woods, concerns herself with the natural world of Krynn, as it is and for its own sake rather than as a

reflection of Good, as is true of Habbakuk; nor does she attempt to dominate nature and use it as a weapon, in the manner of Zeboim. She concerns herself above all with the plants and trees of Krynn, more so than the beasts of the world. Of all the Neutral powers, she is perhaps the most likely to intervene in the affairs of the world, trying to protect nature from the ravages of Evil or the unintended damage caused as a side effect when Good defends itself and the world against the assaults of darkness.

Zivilyn, Seeker of Wisdom, is aide to Gilean and companion to Chislev. Unlike Gilean, who pursues knowledge of what is outside mortals, Zivilyn encourages mortals to look within, finding wisdom in their own hearts. His approach sometimes brings tranquility, sometimes madness. Zivilyn sees both as viable paths to self-knowledge and enlightenment.

Last and seventh among the gods of Neutrality is Lunitari, Lady of the Crimson Moon and Red Sorceress. As the Mistress of Red Magic, wizards of the Red Robes pay her homage. Lunitari has a fondness for illusion and trickery, which makes her favored by confidence men, but her primary concern is magic for magic's sake, rather than as a part of the order of creation or a tool for her own domination.

The Gods of Darkness

With Chaos banished, Takhisis, Queen of Darkness, became the foremost opponent of Truth and Light upon Krynn. It is said by some that she betrayed Chaos and stole much of his power. What is generally accepted is that she inherited his megalomaniacal pride. She sees herself as the center and rightful master of all creation. Though she finds this, the queen of vices, distasteful in others, it is useful in tempting mortals away from the High God and into her clutches. The Dragon Queen also retains an interest in lust. She seeks disordered pleasures of the spirit—adoration and submission—for herself, and she stirs up disordered desires for pleasures of the flesh in mortals, so as to more easily entice them down the path of darkness.

Sargonnas the Vengeful stands next to Takhisis in the courts of the gods of night, and resents this deeply. Indeed, Sargonnas resents every slight and insult, and thus he is dominated by the vice of wrath which he champions, encouraging rampant bloodshed and harsh punishment for the slightest offense. Blue dragons, who evince fiery tempers, are his special favorites.

Chemosh, the Lord of the Undead, stands as counterpart to Majere and a master of wicked counsel. He specializes in sloth, that chill of the spirit that quenches the flames of love and faith and, while promising comfort and ease, turns life into a cold, joyless, loveless mockery. In many cases, this culminates in the shadowed life of the undead that Chemosh nurtures and cherishes. The white dragons, prone to this same coldness and long slumbers, are often associated with the Prince of Bone.

Morgion the Seething dwells alone. He lost the glory and majesty that he so prized in the early days, when he chose to stand with Takhisis in her rebellion. He was wounded in the All-Saints War, reduced to wrack and ruin. Like his fellow gods of Evil, he both suffers from and encourages his particular vice. In his case, it is the sin of envy, which resents the good of others and seeks to reduce all to common misery. Morgion especially enjoys the spread of disease, which causes suffering of the flesh, and deceit, which often brings about torture of mind and soul. Any who feel themselves injured by the good of others or seek to bring someone low find the Spreader of Disease a ready ally. Because of this, he is favored by the spiteful green dragons, who resent and hate virtue and desire to cause pain and anguish in body and spirit.

Hiddukel, Prince of Tarnished Gold, is perhaps the most often invoked of all the Evil Powers, being the patron of avarice. Thus he is honored by thieves, corrupt merchants, and all seduced by the lure of gold. Hiddukel does much to foster this devotion, being himself dominated by the greed for souls. Red dragons, the most avaricious of all their kind, often pay tribute to Hiddukel and seek his aid in their acquisitions.

Zeboim, Lady of Tempests, pays scant attention to the intrigues of the gods or the affairs of mortals. As representative of gluttony,

she spends much of her time trying to consume as much as she can beneath the seas of Krynn, ranging from individual sailors to entire ships, cities, or islands. Black dragons are her pets, due to their love for water and their own insatiable hungers.

Nuitari, Master of the Dark Moon and Black Wizard, stands last among the gods of Evil. Desiring recognition and prone to vanity, he fosters the growth of black magic and attempts to choke out the work of Solinari and Lunitari so that he alone will be recognized as the source of magic in the world. His followers are often obsessed with increasing their magical abilities, becoming the greatest wizards in history, and being feared or revered as such.

The Creation of Mortals

When the All-Saints War was brought to an end, the Firstborn mortals were created on Krynn, male and female.

All mortals spring from the thought of the High God and have their souls created by him. The gods of Good and Neutrality, as well as the High God himself, bestowed gifts upon the first parents to help them function in the world and achieve their destinies. The gods of Evil, though, were at work from the beginning of these new mortals' lives, and though they also promised gifts, they in truth lured the Firstborn to fall from their original state, be weakened in body and soul, and be cast under the shadow of the Dragon Queen.

Whether the three oldest races were created distinct from each other, or diverged from one father and mother into three races at some point in history, is a matter best left to your scholarship and dispute. Suffice it for now that within the earliest generations, elves, ogres, and humans were all present on Krynn.

Of the three races, the elves proved most faithful to the High God and least seduced or deceived by the wiles of Takhisis. Thus, they have retained many of the original gifts, such as a long lifespan, physical health, and a clearer, more focused will. Their greater control of their passions makes them less likely to suc-

cumb completely to the temptations of Evil, although they still must guard against that weakness. Pride, selfishness, and sloth are the most dangerous characteristics of elvenkind.

The Irda, being strongest and physically most beautiful of the races, were coveted by the Dark Queen, who expended much effort to seduce them, and largely succeeded. The Irda did not lose their physical or mental gifts immediately, yet their will and intellect were darkened, and a seed of decay was planted within them, which would bear bitter fruit in the Age of Dreams. Thus did they become ogres.

Regardless, ogres retain a crude moral sense and a capacity to choose Good. However, while there are differences in ogrish cultures, especially those before and after the collapse of the last ogre empire and the historical decline of their race, all ogres exhibit anger, vanity, avarice, lust, and gluttony. Most ogres shrug off concerns about "Good" and "Evil" and willingly enslave themselves to their desires. Despite this, ogres still must be dealt with in a compassionate fashion, for they are not wholly Evil nor irredeemable.

Humans occupy something of a middle ground, neither as committed to Good as the elves nor as enslaved by Evil as the ogres. Despite this, humans have the greatest potential for either Good or Evil and are often the key movers in the historic events of Krynn, as they have achieved the greatest glory and goodness, yet also fallen into the most appalling depravity.

And so the Age of Starbirth ended and the Age of Dreams began, with the gods of Good determined to do their best to realize a wondrous future for Krynn.

The Progression of Souls

Mortals are born into the world of Krynn for two purposes—each ordained by the High God. The first is internal: for the growth and enhancement of their own souls and those of others as they develop faith and exercise their agency of choice between Evil, Neutrality and Good. Some souls, when challenged by Evil,

choose to darken or lose themselves in the fires; others pass through such tests without failing but without attaining higher virtue; still others are purified and shine brighter than the stars, reflecting and radiating the High God's Light.

The second purpose is external: that mortals should take up their role in shaping the world of **Krynn**, bringing it to perfection, and, in the wake of the deeds of Chaos and the fall of **Takhisis** and her cohorts, repairing the wounds of Evil. The freedom of will given to mortals by the High God means that mortals may turn to dark ends. Yet the High God weaves Neutrality and Evil into the unfolding of the **Tobril**, inevitably bringing forth Good out of Evil. What mortals have called Fate is the expression of the High God's subtle but prevalent will upon Krynn.

Death, feared by so many mortals, is both an end and a beginning. For souls who have chosen by their faith and actions to stand with the High God, death is an end to the trials of this life and a gateway to sharing in the love and glory of the High God. Those who chose to turn their backs on the High God, though, cast themselves into the Abyss, tormented by the wickedness they embraced in life. More than that I cannot say, for some things must be left to faith.

Some mortals fear the passage to the world beyond, either out of fear of the unknown or, if they are wicked mortals, a suspicion of what awaits them. In some cases, the Evil god Chemosh responds to this fear and offers mortals a chance at a fake and perverted form of immortality. This attempt to "cheat death" and circumvent the progression of souls is but a sad joke that Chemosh delights in perpetrating. Those who accept his temptation find themselves trapped within their dead bodies or otherwise bound to the world of Krynn, doomed to a horrid existence until destroyed or freed from Chemosh's bonds. Even dragons are not immune to Chemosh's seductions, as the recent case of Cyan Bloodbane indicates. Some wizards have pursued a similar fate through dark magic. I have heard it said that Chemosh and Nuitari conspired to release the secrets of lichdom into the world for their own gain.

Glory of the Gods: The Four Powers

The life and death of mortals upon Krynn gives strength to the gods. This was ordained by the High God, both for the sake of the gods (that they might benefit and learn from the unfolding of the Tobril's Plan) and for the sake of mortals (that the gods of Evil would not destroy the balance). As mortals act on Krynn, their beliefs and deeds lend power to the gods aligned to their actions. This is especially true when they die and make their final commitments of the spirit. The gods not only benefit from this power but return it to their followers. (Fig. 1)

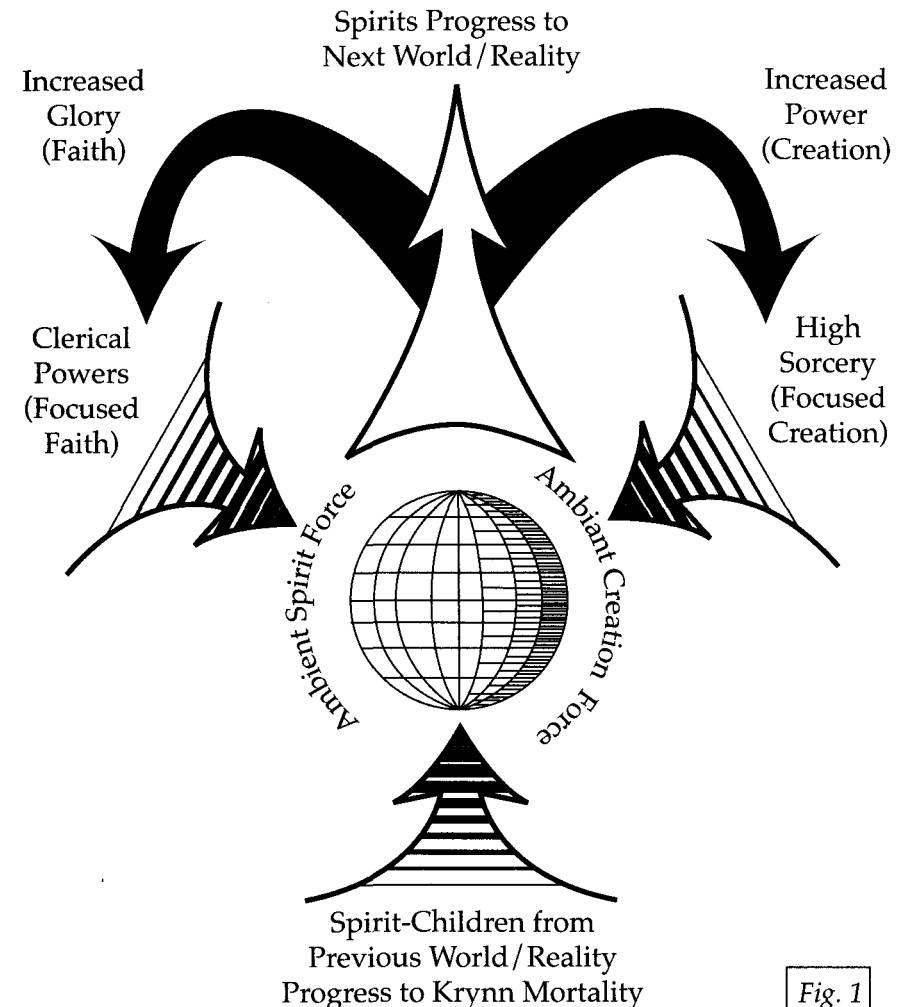


Fig. 1

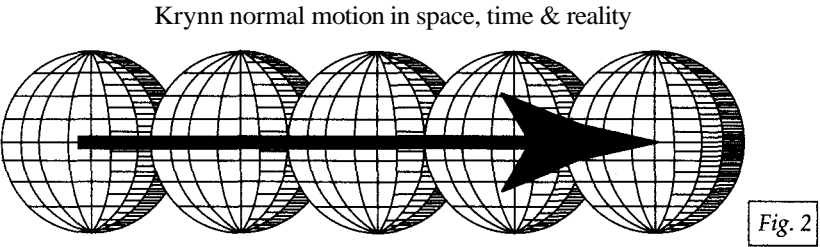
Two kinds of power can be said to exist on Krynn: the spiritual energy of faith, fueled by the heart and spirit of mortals, and the elemental energies driven by creation. These powers exist in two states, the ambient power of Krynn and the directed energies of the Cycles of Faith and Creation, which connect gods and mortals. From these sources comes the magic of Krynn.

The ambient power of the world is the source for the magic of the Fifth Age, both mystical (ambient spiritual energy) and sorcerous, or "wild magic" (ambient elemental and creative energy). These arts were also practiced in the Age of Dreams but largely forgotten after that era. This magic is fueled by mortals and their relationship with Krynn and thus survived even during the gods' absence. Wild magic is "wild" precisely because of the damage done to Krynn by the forces of Chaos and Evil. As it reflects the state of creation, it also shares in the disordering of the world.

It is from the harmony between gods and mortals that the powers of High Sorcery and clerical magic derive. As mortals revere the gods and pursue the acts of living faith, they channel power to the gods. The gods complete the circuit by returning that power, whether Good, Neutral, or Evil. The cycle thus rewards both gods and mortals, providing magic to the mortals and energy for the gods in their cosmic struggle. However, the gods are not equal, nor are all mortal beings, and there is constant flux and volatility.

The Fifth Age—Another Perspective

Despite the turmoil of Krynn and occasional disruptions of the Cycles of Faith and Creation, the Progression of Souls remained unthreatened until the Chaos War. (Fig. 2)

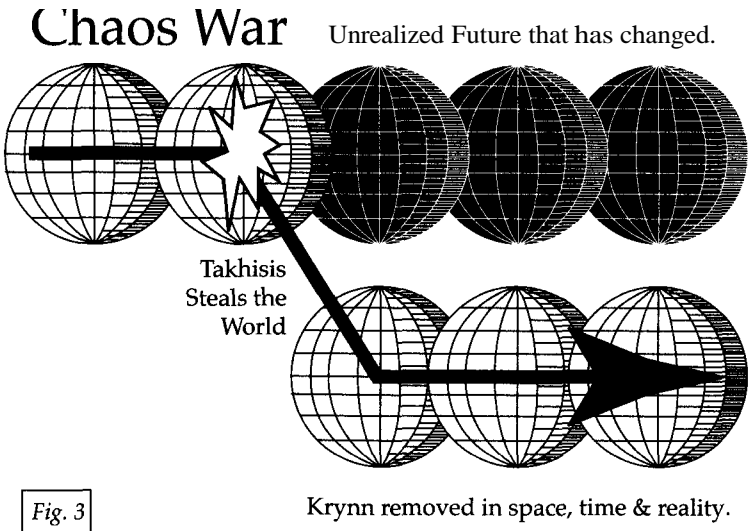


Chaos, released from the Greygem that had trapped him, resumed his challenge to the High God for mastery over Krynn. Some say that Takhisis enticed him into this mad scheme, but it certainly seems likely that she was the one who coaxed the Irda to crack the Greygem. It must be understood that the Chaos War was not fought merely over the world of Krynn, but over the souls of mortals.

The Theft of the World

The ultimate defeat of Chaos at the end of the Chaos War was the last cog in her own master plan, which Takhisis apparently had been developing for centuries. In the last instant of Chaos's fall, the Dragon Queen stole the world of Krynn, removing it to a place, time, and reality unknown and unnoticed by the other gods. She adopted many guises as she endeavored to achieve this and other ends . . .including that of a Shadow Sorcerer. (Fig. 3)

However, Takhisis, badly weakened from the terrible theft of the world and deception of the gods, needed time to rest and regather her strength. She felt comfortable in doing this, for



Spirit Krynn After Takhisis Steals the World

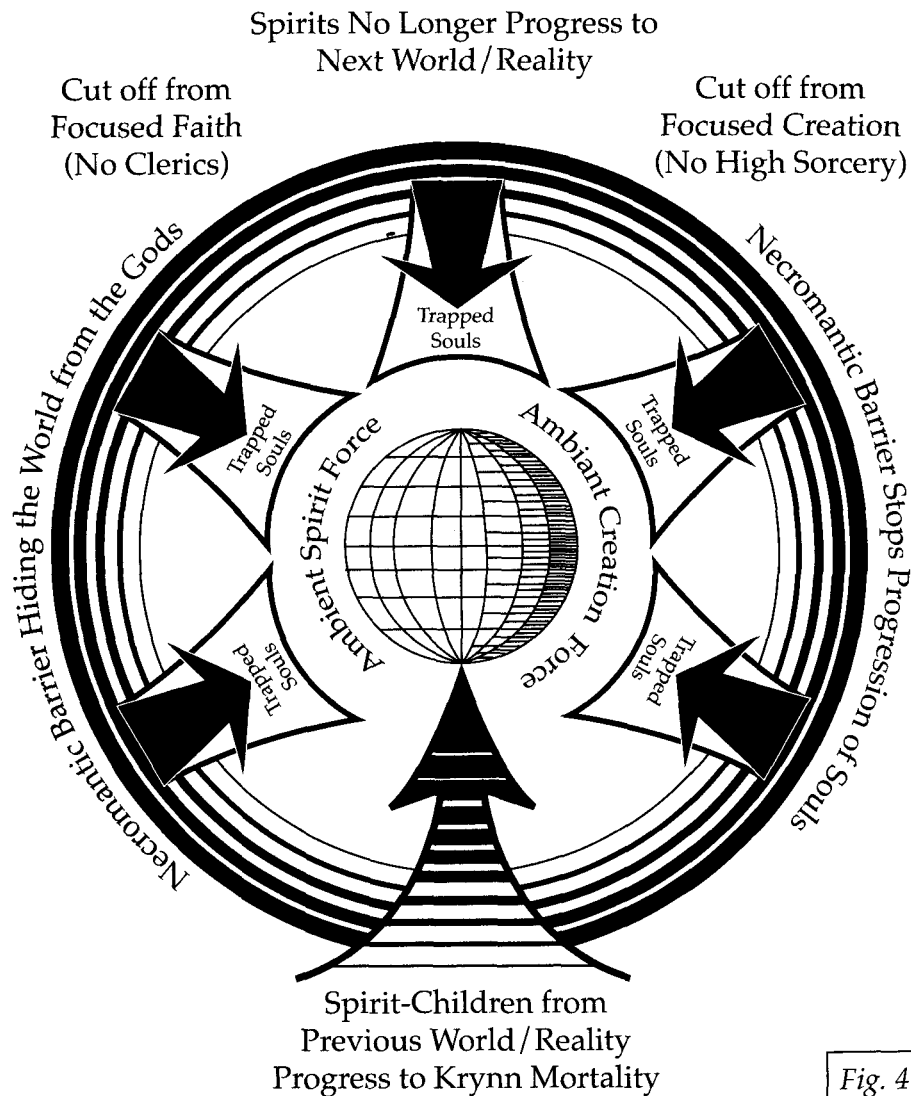


Fig. 4

while new souls continued to be born into the world, the progression of souls had been stopped. Instead of moving on to a higher plane after death, the souls of mortals were stopped, doomed to remain on Krynn. Takhisis drew power from their spirits as they were trapped in this hideous fate, in a fashion similar to that of her favored children, the Evil dragons, during the early days of this age. As the power of the Dark Queen waxed, these souls became more enslaved. She even began to send them forth to drain magic from the spells of mortals, and spellcasters even began to detect her foul taint corrupting wild magic and mysticism. (Fig. 4)

The world became a closed source of power for the Queen of Darkness. While other gods were deprived of the energies of mortal souls, the Dragon Queen drew power not only from those who served her but from the energy put forth by all mortals. In time, she believed that she would have enough power not only to retain supremacy over Krynn but to challenge the High God for mastery over all creation. Thus did she follow in Chaos' path, and bring about great misery in the world in doing so.

The Curious Case of the Kender: Then and Again

Time is key to understanding the unfolding of this history of Krynn. As creation would be meaningless without a past, present, or future, long ago the High God forbade the powers to tamper with the River of Time. Takhisis, typically, believed that this commandment had no real meaning for her, even though her theft of Krynn displaced the world both in space *and* time . . . with unforeseen consequences.

The Future That Never Would Be

Prior to the Chaos War, Tasslehoff Burrfoot—akender of some renown—was able to travel forward in time . . . to a future that would never take place, because of Takhisis's subsequent sin against the High God.

Chaos War

Unrealized Future that has changed.

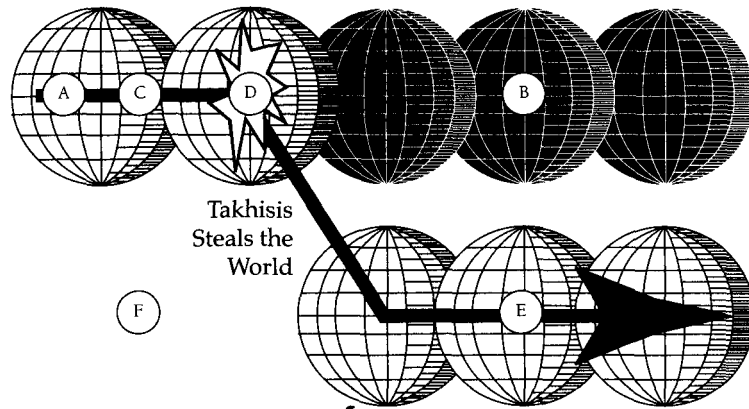


Fig. 5

Krynn removed in space, time & reality.

Perhaps this illustration will best serve to clarify the matter (Fig. 5). The kender went forward in time (A) prior to his deadly conflict with Chaos. He visited a future (B) where the elves were at peace and Palin had attended Caramon's funeral. He then returned to the past (C) where he was caught up in the Chaos War. At the moment Chaos might have destroyed him (D), he gratefully recalled my admonition to trigger the device once more. In that very moment, Takhisis stole the world, establishing it along a new and different timeline. Tasslehoff leaped forward once more to the same time—Caramon's funeral—but an entirely different future. (E) Another way of looking at it is that Tasslehoff jumped "down" the River of Time a ways, then returned and continued on his regular path through life. At the end of the Chaos War, Tas tried to jump forward again, but at the same moment, Takhisis dammed the river and forced it into a new course, sweeping Tasslehoff along with it.

Time travel, it is true, is a highly speculative subject. Inarguable is the fact that Tasslehoff had memories of two distinct futures because of the simple fact that he had indeed visited two separate futures.

The Past That Never Was

I have spoken with Palin Majere at length since the end of the War of Souls. He was most curious as to why, when he tried to travel back in time, he found no past beyond the Chaos War. As you can see from the diagram, when Palin used the device inside the War of Souls timeline, he attempted to travel back beyond the point in time when Takhisis absconded with the world. Thus, while everyone on Krynn from that time had lived in the original timeline and could thus remember it, from the point of view of the River of Time itself, there was no past at all (F).

Palin also expressed some confusion as to the relationship between the High God and Chaos, drawing from what he overheard in the Abyss and while working with Reorx to try and stop Chaos. When he was in the Abyss, the domain of Takhisis, observing the gods, his perceptions were influenced by Takhisis. While much of what he overheard was accurate in substance, his perspective was colored by the Dark Queen. Confusing Chaos with the High God, in Palin's mind, must have seemed to Takhisis an excellent way to advance her plans for dominion.

As to Reorx referring to Chaos as "Himself" and "the Father of All and Nothing". . . Chaos remained the mightiest of the gods until the end, and the magnitude of his presence could be overwhelming even for Reorx. When Reorx came face to face with Chaos, it shook him to the core and left him fleetingly believing Chaos's deluded claims. After the Chaos War, the Forger recovered, but by then the world had been stolen and the mistaken impression lingered.

The Future of the Fifth Age

With the return of the gods, the progression of souls has been restored, and mortals can now move on to their just rewards or punishments. High sorcery once again functions, and the gods have been reunited with the lost world with tremendous joy. However, Mysticism and wild magic have also blossomed in the Fifth Age and no doubt are here to stay.

As for me and my future, who can say? The justice of the High God has been satisfied. We know there are struggles ahead. There is still evil that threatens the balance, and there are still dragon overlords who oppress vast portions of Krynn. The minotaurs now threaten the continent of Ansalon more than ever before in history.

The best that may be said is that there will be a future . . . though what future will be up to each of us. We look forward, if not to a new age, to clearer Understanding of this Age of Mortals in which we live. We may not know the future, but as for me . . . I look forward with wonder to see it unfold.