

WORLD BUILDING MONTHLY

The Toast With Glasnost's Slidgründe
uNoahGuy

4

Of America and Dragons
Mick Gadeleta

7

Why Your World Needs Religion
Dheleos

16

and more

MYTHOLOGIES

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

The fifth issue of Worldbuilding Monthly Magazine has finally arrived! Our team wrote articles pertaining to religions and mythologies for you to enjoy!

For the next issue the team has decided to cover all things government. We have several Civics Majors amongst us so this should be good.

Being the head of a completely voluntary internet project is tough, but it is also rewarding. I always look forward to releasing these issues every month, knowing that we have contributed something of value to this subreddit.

As this magazine heads into its sixth month, we will always need more writers, artists, and editors to join the team to inject energy into the project. If you want to become part of the subreddit's only monthly online publication or write an article in the next issue, feel free to contact us!

Cheers,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'u/UNoahGuy'.

u/UNoahGuy

CONTENTS

4 THETOASTWITHGLASNOST'S SLIDGRÜNDE

uNoahGuy - World Showcase

6 HOW MYTHS REFLECT THEIR CULTURES

uNoahGuy

7 OF AMERICA AND DRAGONS

Mick Gadeleta

8 CHOOSING ONE OVER MANY: BUILDING A MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

Casparata

10 CHOOSING MANY OVER ONE: BUILDING A POLYTHEISTIC RELIGION

Casparata

12 POSTANTERA

The Worldbuilding Monthly Collab Team

16 WHY YOUR WORLD NEEDS RELIGION

Dheolos

18 REALITY IS UNREALISTIC, VOL. 2

LordHenry

THETOASTWITHGLASNOST'S SLIDGRÜNDE

uNoahGuy

World Showcase

Welcome to u/TheToastWithGlasnost's world of Slidgründe!

What do you call your world?

I call it Slidgründe.

Describe it in three sentences or less.

Long ago, (1200~ years) the First Kingdoms (abbreviated as FKs), four empires using advanced technologies and magic, waged a devastating war that plunged civilization into chaos, leaving magical war-beasts, abandoned cities, and dormant missile silos in their wake. Now, in no way is this world grimdark or anything: these days, people live pleasant, peaceful lives. But the year is 1251, or 2038 for us, 21 years after the wormhole between our worlds opened, and with the visit of a delegation of Earth people in a starship, the world is at a crossroads between isolation, or taking a risk and playing with power again.

When did you start building this world?

I've been worldbuilding since I was 12, but I can't say this world has had a certain start date. Ideas just came to me over time. But I'd say the world's possibly a year old.

What are your nations like? And how did you build them?

To be honest, I've only really developed two nations in depth, Origin and Lyr, both nations named for the First Kingdoms the descended from.

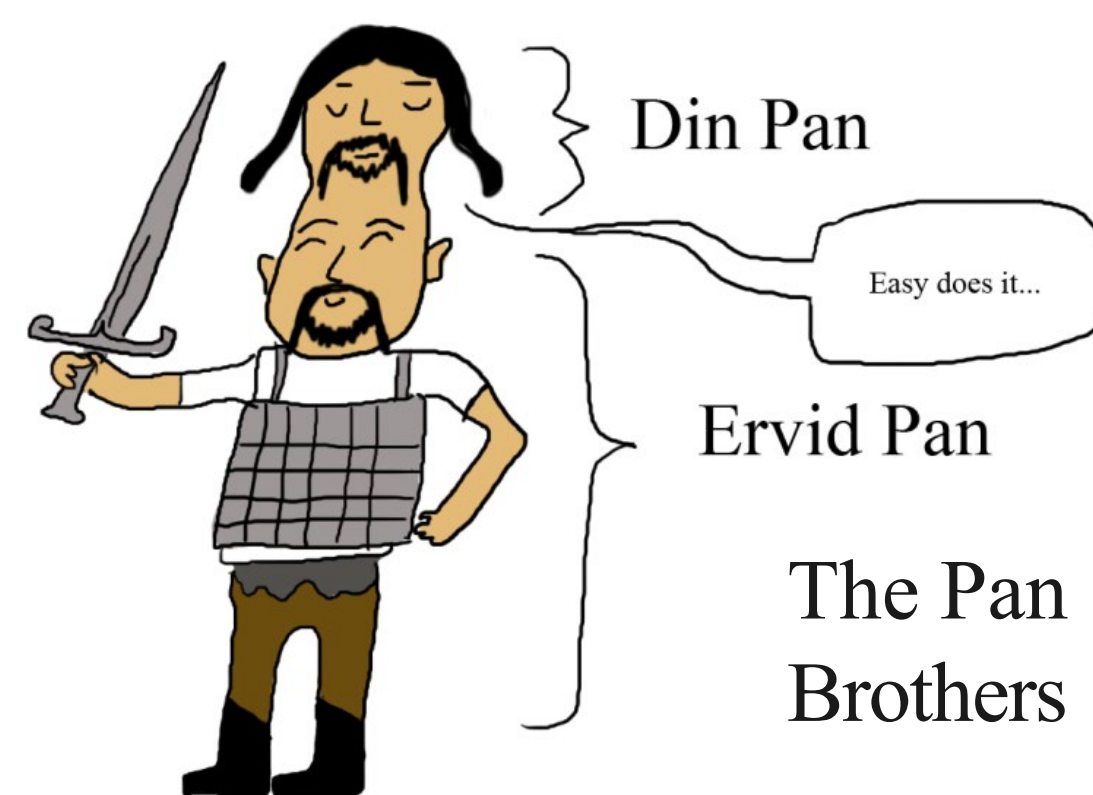
Origin is a theocratic, industrializing nation along the river valley in the centre of the continent, and they were the second nation to be contacted by Earth. Their religion, which I'll get into more later, professes that all people are the individual components in what we'd call god, so they have to imperialize a little bit, to unite everybody. But in a nice way. Technologically, they're like early 1800s level, but without fossil fuels, since they've all been used up by the aforementioned First Kingdoms. Because

of this, they resort to magejuice, a blue liquid with strange properties, not including teleportation, to keep the smokestacks belching. They're famous for their jam-filled pastries, their ballads, and recently, their trade deals and meetings with the Earth delegation. They've already cleared a section of their capital for use as a landing strip, and the ruling prince is currently trying to piece together knowledge on the Earth based on the sanitized history he's given.

Lyr, in comparison, is quite free and more rustic. It's located on the eastern side of the continent, in a bowl of mountains protecting moist, temperate forests. The country's got a very strong tradition of democracy, owing to the whole empires-ruined-the-world-a-thousand-years-ago thing, but they don't have their act together. For one, much of the population still lives underground, in the decaying caverns where the First Kingdom of Lyr hid their people in the war. Nature wizards are carrying out surprise attacks on politicians, while an intelligent creature, the Monster King, is building up an army of magical beasts to restore their former glory. They don't really like each other.

What do the people in your world believe how it was created?

The world's medieval, but they've had a brief flirt with modernity under those pesky First Kingdoms, so they have mostly accurate, yet mostly forgotten, scientific knowledge. It's thought by most that the world was made of a clump of heavenly dust.



Credit: TheToastWithGlasnost, uNoahGuy



Credit: TheToastWithGlasnost, uNoahGuy, AnotherCollegeGrad

happen. It's not specified what "something" is, but most think it's the creation of a utopia where all are as one. Their morality's based on ideas of preventing conflict, and while they have a monarchy, they have to go with the people's will, for the sake of keeping things together. They won't become a democracy, because they believe that'll tear people apart.

What is religion like in your world? An Example?

The fall of the First Kingdoms influenced religion in the world hugely. The old religions were discarded, as they'd just become not much more than imperial cults, while the kind of hysteria caused by society moving backwards 1,000 years caused people to turn to whole new ones.

Of particular interest is the state religion of Origin, a monotheistic religion started by the prophet Tiffany, who was a mage. During the First Kingdom War, she famously rebelled against her commanding officers and would later go on to protect the survivors in the ruins of Origin City, writing her beliefs and ultimately dying to Vulcan, a post-war conqueror who saw how valuable her writings were, converted, and spared her people.

They believe that God (not that their deity's gendered, but God's a strong word) is the combined will of people working as one. After all, it was people who made distant lands close to each other (through mass transportation and communication). It was people who created new animals (through breeding and the ancient war-beast programs), and destroyed entire races (genocide). It was people who could destroy cities with the press of a button, and people who gave names to the stars. They believe that the First Kingdoms, at their height, were at this level, but the war fractured them. To bring the coming of God, they have to get all people to work in tandem. This is why their country has a policy of soft imperialism, using perks and benefits, and only sometimes wars, to get new peoples into the fold. Then, and only then, will they be like god, and then something will

When they were contacted by Earth, it demoralized most people, as they discovered that the all the people they'd united were tiny compared to a 7-billion-strong planet of people who haven't heard the good news at all.

Favorite part of the world?

Din and Ervid are two brothers from Lyr who were born with complications; namely, that Din's got no body, just a head, which is stuck on Ervid's like two scoops of ice cream. Din's a nature wizard, and Ervid, who controls the body, lives in fear of his magical abuses. So this sweaty, nervous Ervid's forced to take him to his meetings in the woods, covering him with a big top hat when they go outside. That or another painful paralysis spell, so he has to obey. I find it rather funny that the man's enslaved by his conjoined druid head brother, and I hope you do too, readers.

What are your inspirations?

For the most part, I take inspiration from everything. I might read about the Great Lakes, and decide I need big lakes somewhere. I might read about those Chinese coffins they nail into the sides of the cliffs, and decide that some people in my world do that. I don't have the attention span to ever sit down and brainstorm for hours, so I just read things online until they clump together in my mind to make something workable, and because of this method, I'm not so sure where my chief inspirations are, or if I even have any.🐼

HOW MYTHS REFLECT THEIR CULTURES

uNoahGuy

What can myths tell us about their corresponding cultures? Things such as a foundation story, the nature of the gods, and even urban legends can actually tell a lot to an outsider looking in.

It is true that myths and religions have been created by their cultures, but many disagree on the purpose. So let's look into different myths and religions around the world and see what they can tell us about the culture that created them.

Looking at ancient real-world history, it can be seen in Egyptian myths that the **Pharaoh** was the mediator between their gods and the mundane world. After death, the Pharaoh became deified as well. "Divine Right" is a really good way to secure power in a society. If the people believe the gods put you there, they will most likely keep you in power. This "Divine Right" of ruling can be seen all the way to the modern day, as many monarchies around the world originally claimed the throne as a "Divine Right" from God to rule. Take a look into your own worlds, how do the ruling classes gain their power? How is it legitimized? Especially with worlds set in previous times looking into "Divine



Credit: uNoahGuy

Right" is a good idea.

How about the nature of a culture's pantheon? What can told by what deities they worship, or what importance they place on certain deities? Take the Greeks for example: each city state had a patron deity that they identified with the most. In Athens it was Athena, the goddess of wisdom, crafting, and warfare. She took on the yoke of wisdom as the city yielded many great philosophers. Sparta also worshipped Athena as her patron goddess, but as *Athena Protector of the City*, which supported the Spartan's heavily warfare centered culture.

Some pantheons of deities can be so extensive that people might not know all of the gods. Take a look at Hinduism; there are around 330 million gods in that pantheon, but only a handful of deities are elevated to the top, such as Vishnu and Shiva. Cultures like these tend to see the divine in everything, even the supposed mundane.

Let's look now at non-deity myths and legends, which often have morals to teach the younger generations. What type of morals are these myths and legends instilling? What does this culture value? Take the myth of Icarus for one; the man who flew too close to the sun is clearly being punished for his pride and hubris, something that ancient Greeks deemed dangerous to both the person being prideful and society as a whole.

Finally, when deciding whether to make your gods real or imaginary in your worlds, try to think about what would happen to the cultures that worship them. Whose actions will affect whom? Think of it like the chicken and the egg conundrum, but you actually have the power to decide which actually comes first. If the gods get their power and personalities from the people that worship them, then as the cultures change, so do the gods' behavior. If the actions of the gods affect how the cultures on the ground interact, what happens if these gods fight?

In the end, myths and religions can be seen as a mirror of the culture that created them. What does your myths and religions say about your cultures?

OF AMERICA AND DRAGONS

Mick Gadaleta

Of all the mythologies of the world, none are as unique in nature as the mythology that cropped up surrounding the New World. The United States' timing as a new nation in conjunction with improved record keeping and better communications meant its legends grew more rapidly and were better recorded than any before it. Moreover, they gave this burgeoning melting pot of many cultures a unifying banner to identify with.

Some of America's earliest European settlers, the Pilgrims, are enshrined in the American mind-set as stalwart survivors of hardship, persecuted for their beliefs yet still clinging to them. America's obsession with freedom of religion sprouted from these early roots and blossomed throughout its history. The individuals of American folklore, such as Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, and Calamity Jane served as testaments to American individualism, rugged frontierism, and personal freedom. In addition, the mythical beings of American legends like Paul Bunyan or John Henry hold aloft the image of hard and honest work.

These tales were distinctly American, both in their origin and in their morals, and so helped define what it meant to be an American to a nation of immigrants. They set the tone for the next two hundred years. Even today, with the popularity of the play *Hamilton*, we see the notion of a self-made man fighting for his beliefs, another core aspect to the American visage.

When creating a mythology, the same ideals have to be laid out before crafting a mythos. Consider the following questions: What do these people hold sacred? What attributes do they admire? What do they believe in? What are their opinions of outsiders? How do they define foreigners, compared with "natives?"

The same can be said of religion. The theological tenets of a fictional religion can be used as a magnifying glass, amplifying the ideologies central to its adherents. The earliest of man's religions were likely inextricable from the earliest of man's social agreements, a way to enact justice in an extrajudicial fashion. Because of this, many ancient religions

bore the same core principles as a way to foster community, unite a people, and protect the social order.

Special attention should be paid when constructing your world's religions and mythologies — the mythos makes the man, as it were. In the end, the decisions made by every king and every farmer are going to be dictated by the values they were taught as a child. Or, in the case of /u/Mikeclick's world of Knokerhun, the values they were taught from the egg.

/u/Mikeclick's approach to religion serves as a useful example of this concept in action. The dragons of Knokerhun are unique in their theology in that they do not worship any defined deity. Instead, their pantheon consists of seven forces of nature that are present in all living beings. According to the dragon scripture though, only dragons are in possession of the right *measure* of these seven, like a spiritual balancing act.

This subtle cultural detail can have vast consequences down the line. For example, carried to its logical conclusion, these dragons have a religious mandate that proves their superiority to other races — after all, no other race has the spiritual balance of a dragon. Any physical or mental illnesses could be written off as an imbalance in that dragon's forces, leading to a stigmatization of illness as something wrong with the dragon's spirit. Or, perhaps entrepreneurial dragons have begun selling all manner of elixirs and tonics to "maintain" the balance.

Whether dealing with American folklore or draconic spiritualism, the core values of a community are codified and taught via their mythological history. Using both myths and religions in the context of worldbuilding is laying the groundwork for the entire cultural identity of the people. These factors will play into a population's collective psyche, and will influence their outlook on everything from rain to marriage.



Credit: HBomba

CHOOSING ONE OVER MANY: BUILDING A MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

Casparata

Monotheistic religions are shaping our world: Christianity has been exported to every continent by the Europeans and represents the largest faith on earth, followed by Islam. Together with Judaism it feels like the Abrahamic religions have a monopoly on this type of belief system. They have fueled major conflicts all around the world for the past 2000 years and are a defining force in the political landscape to this day. From a Western perspective, religions with more than one principal god seem strangely exotic, and apart from those, what's left? It turns out: a lot.

There have been, and there still are, other monotheistic beliefs, some of them thousands of years old, and they provide different perspectives on what we consider to be typical for a monotheistic religion today. For example, while there are about 15 million Jews around the world, Sikhism can boast more than 25 million believers while being only about 400 years old. Bahaism, established in 1863, is still a small faith, but rapidly growing (compare 200,000 followers in the nineteen-fifties to over 8 million today). Others precede Islam and even Christianity: the Yazidis have been around for almost 1000 years, while Zoroastrianism dates back roughly 3000 years.

The One Truth

With the exception of the Yazidis, all of the above know some kind of holy scripture, and most of them revolve around divine revelations: an almighty god reveals himself and the truth about creation to a prophet. This mechanic is important if a religion is to be introduced at some point during a world's history – how else would people learn of God's existence?

This concept of universal truth makes monotheistic religions both very interesting and highly problematic for fictional worlds. If there's only one true god, all others must be either impostors or false beliefs. The Abrahamic religions have

traditionally considered non-believers as either pitiful, potential converts or mortal enemies because of this. Monotheism, it seems, is inherently less tolerant than polytheism. After all, if a religion already knows many gods, why shouldn't there be more? On the other hand, how can there be other gods if there's supposed to be only one?

Things become even more complicated when gods in fictional settings are observable in their actions or allow their faithful to perform miracles as a form of magic. While you cannot "win" a theological debate about the existence and nature of gods, you certainly don't even need to debate when actual proof of a god exists. At first glance, it seems like these are the only options for including a monotheistic religion in a setting: either have some kind of holy war or let monotheistic beliefs implode upon themselves.

Equality as a core concept

It turns out that the history of religious and political conflicts that we know from Christianity and Islam is only one aspect of monotheism. The urge to convert others and discrimination of other faiths are not definitive attributes of monotheistic religions. Zoroastrianism, that came into existence in ancient Persia, even then never knew the concept of persecuting non-believers as far as we know today. The much younger Bahaism teaches that all other major religions are manifestations of God and accepts Adam, Moses, Zarathustra (the prophet of Zoroastrianism), Krishna, Siddharta Gautama, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed as such manifestations. The focus of Bahaism is the unity of all people.

Compared to the clearly separated jurisdictions and fickle tempers of gods from ancient polytheistic pantheons, monotheistic faiths seem much more modern. They teach peace and love, but above all have a sense of equality of all people at their core. In this, they have historically been very

attractive for the lower ranks of society: everyone can go on to a better afterlife as long as they act compassionate and rightful. In death, nobody is treated with the special privilege they might have enjoyed in life (however, this doesn't mean that these teachings have not been twisted once ecclesiastical structures emerged, combining faith with power).

When building a believable monotheistic religion, it pays off to rely on some of the core elements above: they are usually built on a divine revelation that a prophet (or a line of prophets) shares with a larger community. These revelations often revolve around concepts of leading a "good life" with promises for a better future after death or even a rapture-like event, making them especially attractive to less privileged layers of society.

Once you've built a foundation for your religion, make sure to shake it up and create some potential for conflict (and if your world has real gods, look for ways to circumvent the idea of a Single Truth):

- Create a schism: people might share the same god, but the dogma is different enough to create conflict
- Have a broad variety of sects compete for the faithful
- Make your religion henotheistic: the faithful worship a single god, but don't deny the possible existence of others
- There's one all-powerful entity behind it all, but it is worshipped in many different forms
- Have powerful beings that may look like gods to puny humans, but really aren't – this way, you can easily include divine magic while maintaining a universal truth, for example with a forgotten "real" creator 🐉

"I know what I saw. Just don't let the fire die."



CHOOSING MANY OVER ONE: BUILDING A POLYTHEISTIC RELIGION

Casparata

For a fictional world, a distinct set of myths creates depth. This might be the reason why so many worldbuilders, especially in fantasy, opt for polytheistic religions; similarities to the well-known pantheons of antiquity create a feeling of history and tradition. The Greek and Roman gods, the deities of ancient Egypt and the Nordic pantheon of Germanic gods have transitioned so especially well into modern cultural identity that they often act as blueprints for their fictional counterparts.

But these pantheons are not the only possible source of inspiration. Indeed, almost all religious belief systems in stone, bronze, and early iron age civilizations were built on many gods. In the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians had their own distinct pantheons, as did the Maya, Aztec and Inca people in Central and South America.

Today, polytheistic religions are far less common and can only be considered widespread in East Asia, mainly in Chinese folk religion and Japanese Shinto. However, both don't define a fixed pantheon. Instead, they accept an unlimited number of gods that come in many different forms: natural phenomena, ancestors, specific places, or even living people. Hinduism as another modern example is far less uniform than it seems – while it clearly includes polytheistic worship, it also knows monotheistic and dualistic doctrines. Let's have a look at how we ended up here.

Ancient polytheism was basically utilitarianism

Being able to call on many different gods fulfilled very practical needs in ancient times. By performing holy and magic rituals, people hoped to avert harm like illness or harvest failures, and gain desirable weather conditions, fertility or protection. In order to have someone or something to appeal to, people imagined beings that were

directly responsible for aspects of their lives. When civilizations grew, so did their pantheons. Some spirits and deities were replaced by others that covered similar concepts. Others, initially tied to a specific place, outgrew their humble origins and became state doctrine. Religious services became more complex as well; highly formalized priest classes took over responsibilities for religious interpretation and performing rites correctly.

These complex belief systems were always in motion and seldom immune to foreign influence. Gods and beliefs have always been imported from other cultures – or exported. While Egypt had long lost its political power during Greek and Roman times, worship of Isis and Osiris took the Mediterranean by storm and quickly mixed with local pantheons.

Folk religion never lost its pragmatic approach to the divine, though. In everyday life, people prioritized gods that had clear “responsibilities” for their family, their jobs, or their home. Worship of ancestors and of specific house or family deities stems from these needs, and it has often been an integral part of religious life right along with the more formalized pantheons of the culture. The Romans for example maintained private shrines in their homes dedicated to family deities despite the monumental temples and the complex state religion we associate with them today. For the Mayans on the other hand, their pantheon felt less detached from the problems of the people and was likely more involved in everyday prayer.

Building bigger places of worship was complex and expensive, however, and has thus usually been restricted to a project of ruling classes. Of course they made sure that these undertakings would reinforce their position in society. The Cult of the Sun in Inca society was an official state doctrine that legitimized the rule of Inca nobles as “children of the sun.” Many pantheons at least included

similar concepts and gods that served as patrons of rulers and kings. Jupiter fulfilled this role for the Romans, Marduk for the Babylonians and Horus for ancient Egyptians. It was also quite common for rulers to claim a divine status for themselves, usually in the form of direct or indirect descent from a god.

Building blocks for a polytheistic pantheon

There are no limits on how many gods a polytheistic religion can include. Even the most well-known historic pantheons have never been set in stone and were constantly changing. Less important gods merged with better established gods that had similar jurisdiction. The rise and fall of some gods was tied to the political landscape or economic developments.

However, there are typical characters that can be identified in pantheons across different eras and cultures around the world. You can look at them from different perspectives, like social function, metaphysical attributes or the degree to which they actively influence the world. Here's a selection of the most common roles, in no particular order:

- Sky god
- Culture hero (inventor or discoverer of important cultural techniques, like the use of fire or the introduction of laws)
- Goddess of fertility
- Mother goddess
- Political god (for example a mythic king)
- Creator/destroyer god
- Sun/moon god
- God of the dead
- Trickster (creator of mayhem and breaker of taboos, often identical with the culture hero)
- Water/earth god
- Reborn god
- Gods for different trades, like the hunt, artisans, keeping knowledge, etc.



Credit: Wynter

There is no “correct” way to build a polytheistic religion, but it might help to achieve a believable outcome if one uses the building blocks of religion that have been around for thousands of years. In the end, it's your decision what kind of pantheon you're going for. Let the gods of old help you find the right inspiration, function, metaphysical attributes or the degree to which they actively influence the world. 🐉

POSTANTERA

The Worldbuilding Monthly Collab Team

Intro Piece:



“I do not understand. He was meant to protect us.” Lina’s tears streamed down her face. She shook her head in confusion, frustration, and disappointment. The room shook as the bombshells struck the city center. Her school papers were strewn across the floor; her favorite books littered the ground by the broken bookcase, and outside, dust rose in clouds, seeping in through the shattered window. Lina pressed her bandana to her face to avoid inhaling the thick clouds, but it was to little effect. The following blast disbalanced her, but she managed to grab onto the table just in time. Noel, her neighbor, tumbled in through the door, grabbing onto the same table as the house continued to shake.

“They’re shelling the Reign’s Square now,” Noel gasped through his military facemask. “After that, their best target is Tarin’s Plateau, which where we are at right now.” He grabbed Lina’s hand and they rushed out of the room. The stairwell in the main atrium of their complex was trashed by chunks of roof. Noel and Lina carefully navigated what was left of the stone stairs, swiftly making it to the outer courtyard. Once outside, the state of the city became clear from the Plateau; the densely populated and colorful center was reduced to a black smoking rubble, while Reign’s Square was aflame, becoming less recognizable with every shelling. The deserts beyond were spotted with the encroaching enemy masses, from east to west, north to south. Lina grabbed onto Noel’s arm to save herself from falling to her knees from the shaking earth.

“They're bloody bandits, Noel, why the hell can't Damian stop them?! Why isn't he keeping us safe from simple savages?! He's so much...”

“Damian’s dead by now.” Noel sharply turned to face Lina. “He's not a god, damnit. Shoot him in the head and he's dead, shoot him in the neck and he's dead, shoot him in the heart and he's dead, just like the rest of us. Look at the damn city!” Noel swung his pistol along the horizon. “If he was some god, then explain this! I've read far too many stories of these bloody aeternums turning the tides of battle through chivalry and courage. It's all bloody fairy-tale to me, and it's time for you to snap the hell out of it! If this is what he lets his people come to, then I won't believe any more of it. HE WON'T SAVE US, LINA. HE'S GONE, FLED, DEAD, TRANSCENDED INTO THE HEAVENS FOR ALL I CARE!”

Suddenly, the shelling stopped. The city stood so still that Lina managed to make out a bird’s song in the silence. She held her breath as the sun’s rays broke through the clouds of smoke, reflecting off of the blue water covering the courtyard floor. Then, all at once, the blasts filled the air and the earth shook again. Before their feet, a pair of birds hit the ground, dead. Noel pulled a handgun from his waistband and handed it to Lina. “You must understand. We're on our own now.”

Aeternum Religion:

As time passed on Postantera, the mortal folks that followed the aeternums around for generations began to see them as god-like. Anyone who stood relatively unchanged after hundreds of years would elicit the same type of response from the short lived mortals. Several aeternums who broke away from the crash site at Starfall even embraced the idea of being worshipped by their followers. Perhaps the most famous case of this de-facto deification is of “God-King Joe” Joseph Reed, who settled the Tarka Peninsula to the South of the crash site.

All aeternums in some capacity were worshipped, as the main religion spread by Thomas Crane’s followers of Aeterism decreed. It states that these aeternums were sent along to protect the mortals from the new world of Postantera, and from themselves.

However, this placement of aeternums atop pedestals is an unwise move on the mortals’ part. Yes, these aeternums have everlasting biological life, but they are not omni-present, they are not all-knowing, and most importantly they are flawed beings, unlike previous God figures like Jehovah, known to these mortals. There have been several instances where aeternums made a wrong decision or have otherwise shown their humanity, much to the shock of the masses.

Aeternum Spotlight:

Joseph Reed was born into a highly religious family in the Free State of Kennedy, a region on Earth that contained the majority of the adherents of the Kennedy Church. The Reed family played a pivotal role in maintaining the Free State and its predominant religion during the time of the Global Government.

Joseph, more commonly known to his peers as Joe, was rather eclectic. However, this quirky personality was only a facade for his solitary, scholarly, and wise mind. Since he was young, Joe questioned everything, and during his teenage years became at odds with the religious beliefs that he was raised with. The Kennedy Church did not really have dogma dictating the role of the larger universe in God’s plan, and Joe saw that as a major hole in its theology.

Earth’s population’s growing pains saw a need for a Great Exodus to other stars during Joe’s lifetime. The Starfleet recruiters came to Joe’s town and he signed up without hesitation. After several years of rising through the ranks as a pilot for various trading vessels, Joe requested a spot as a resident aeternum on a mortal generation ship called the SFSS Provenance. He saw it as an opportunity to figure out his faith in a whole new part of the universe.

As a biologically immortal being amongst the likes of thousands of mortals, Joe’s ego clearly became inflated. After crash landing on Postantera, he and his followers quickly made an exit before the civil war between the aeternums started. He travelled a long treacherous journey through the miles of Postanti wilderness in search of a perfect place to settle a new civilization.

Aeternum Spotlight: Thomas Crane

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Thirteen years and many deaths later, Joe finally made it to a great, arable place which he named Ehelterra (Land of Angels), and settled it with his followers. Joe created and taught the language of Neo-Latin, which was similar to the pidgin the mortals used, making it the official language of government and day-to-day business.

As the years passed by, and the city grew to a massive size with numerous villages and colonies, Joe officially started a new religion based off of the Kennedy Church, with him in charge. He named himself Josef, Zonis fon Kristis (Joseph, Son of Christ) as a sign of reverence to the religion of his birth. He created a place of worship in the city center. Generations more passed, and the mortals seemed to not glean the correct things from Joe's teachings; some even called Joe God himself. As these heresies arose, Joe became more and more distressed that he was leading his people down the wrong path, and quickly reminded everyone that he was not divine, only a teacher. Even so, people continued to worship him, believing him merely humble. After being plagued by guilt, insomnia, and worry, Joe decided that the only solution was to abandon the city.

Joe spent a year penning a book of teachings, which he immediately gave to a trusted friend upon completion. He then appointed his friend as head clergyman and governor of the city, and snuck away in the middle of the night to one of Ehelterra's colonies, Zmiddelterra. Even this place, founded years ago by a famous heretic, welcomed Josef as a leader and god, and he decided to leave his own sphere of influence entirely.

Joe made a long, perilous trek to the city where he knew his fellow aeternum and former friend Isaiah resided. He gained audience with Isaiah, and found an icy politician, atheist, and hardened leader in charge of an overpopulated city. They reached an agreement after Joe explained his purposes, and soon enough Joe became a simple plowshare, working the land in return for citizenship and food, and learning the various techniques and methods Isaiah's engineers had developed for exploiting Postantera's natural resources.

The new life eased some of Joe's fears, but doubts still lingered. Not a day went by that Joe did not worry for the fate of his city. He prayed often and in secret, trying not to upset Head Councilman Isaiah, who told him not to propagate his religion as long as he remained in the city. Over time, the memories of his own teachings began to fade from his head as well, and he began to ponder the nature of divinity as he worked, contemplating whether or not he, an immortal and the only remaining repository of Christian knowledge, was really just a man and should not return to Ehelterra and accept the people's worship, for their sakes and his.

Twice Joe was called to sit on a jury during his stay. The first time, he voted to convict a high-ranking official of corruption. The second time, he abstained from voting on the grounds of conflicted interests. The defendant was a personal friend of his, who could not afford to hire someone to speak in his defense. The official had been accused of being involved in organized crime, and was executed by Isaiah himself. After witnessing this, Joe decided he had to leave the troubled city and return to rule his home. Bidding farewell to his friends and extending an offer of diplomatic relations to Isaiah, Joe ended his self-inflicted exile.

He arrived at Ehelterra as the people celebrated the 200th year of the city's existence. Those who had known him from before he left were now old, for more than 30 years had passed. The new generation rejoiced at the return of the legendary teacher, leader, and deity their parents had raised them on stories of. In his absence the city had become a complex and crowded bureaucracy, his friends were no longer alive, and the book of teachings was ignored or cherry-picked from to fit people's agendas. Seeing this dismal state of affairs, and remembering the corruption he had seen under Isaiah's rule, Joe vowed to return Ehelterra to its former glory. He took the name Rex Deuis, God King, and became the leader of both the church and the state, a decision met by raucous applause and general respect. His absence had done little to quiet the heresies, and he fatefully decided to acknowledge them as truth, becoming a deity in the eyes of the people, and as his age and ego grew, himself.

Known far and wide as God-King Joe by the other aeternums, Joseph Reed is massively important in the history of Postantera as the great builder of nations and the patron of religion in this new world. Opinions of him vary, but none can deny the great feats he and his nation have accomplished over the years, and the zealous faith of Ehelterrans in their Rex Deuis.🐉

WHY YOUR WORLD NEEDS RELIGION

Dheolos

It may be tempting to create a religion that in some ways reflects or is inspired by your real world religious beliefs, or alternatively to leave out religion altogether. However, the subject of religion deserves much thought in worldbuilding; it is a vital part of any society.

A world without any religion, past or present, would come across as incomplete, unnatural, artificial, or unrelatable. This is because religion arises for natural reasons. Virtually all civilizations in the history of mankind have had religion in some form. Most early religions begin because mankind is naturally speculative over what they do not understand. These early belief systems develop through the sharing of stories from generation to generation; each time they're retold, the story is changed, ideas added or removed, and events dramatized and exaggerated. A recount of an eclipse could easily turn into a story of demons trying to subdue the sun god unsuccessfully. A story about an earthquake could be interpreted by young locals as a sleeping giant beneath the surface stirring, and become established as myth as they grow old and tell their children about this benevolent giant upon whose stomach rests the island of the tribe.

If your world takes place in a roughly classical society, consider stories like these, and consider how these gods should be best worshipped to appease them out of catastrophe or punishment. Maybe the demons just want some light, so lighting torches in the forest pleases them. Maybe the sun god needs large fires to empower him. Maybe the sleeping giant needs calming medicines poured into the ground for him to drink.

However, as centuries go on and society develops, religions adapt to fit the changing times, dropping outdated rituals, altering their gods to better reflect technology. This is in part because religions are revised to better fit peoples' understanding of the world, and because people naturally want more and more to envision their deities as similar

to themselves. This is also in part because rulers realize that they can institutionalize these beliefs to help consolidate and stabilize their grasps on power, or generally improve their people's loyalty to the government.

Once people realize that they can use religion for their own gains, it becomes a cultural, political, and social tool. It's often used as a means to an end, as opposed to an end in itself. People have used religion to justify wars and division, and justify peace and unity. People have used religion as propaganda to consolidate support for a regime, or as an inspiration to resist the propaganda of regimes. Religion has been used to enforce laws and subordination, and to resist authority. To create a world without religion is to leave out a huge chunk of potential intrigue and intricacy.

When you make a religion, don't just let it sit on the sidelines, static and independent from everything else in your world. Your religion has implications and effects on every aspect of society. You must tie your religion into every other part of your world.

Consider as a real world example the Calvinist revolution of Geneva in the 16th century. John Calvin, upon being given unquestionable theocratic leadership over Geneva, forced the small city-state into a reformation, taking away luxuries and leisure activities, redefining the Holy Trinity, and burning political and religious opponents at the stake.

The Calvinist Reformation was not an isolated event, it had immense implications, and significant effects on all aspects of life, and not just in Geneva, but across Europe, and even the world.

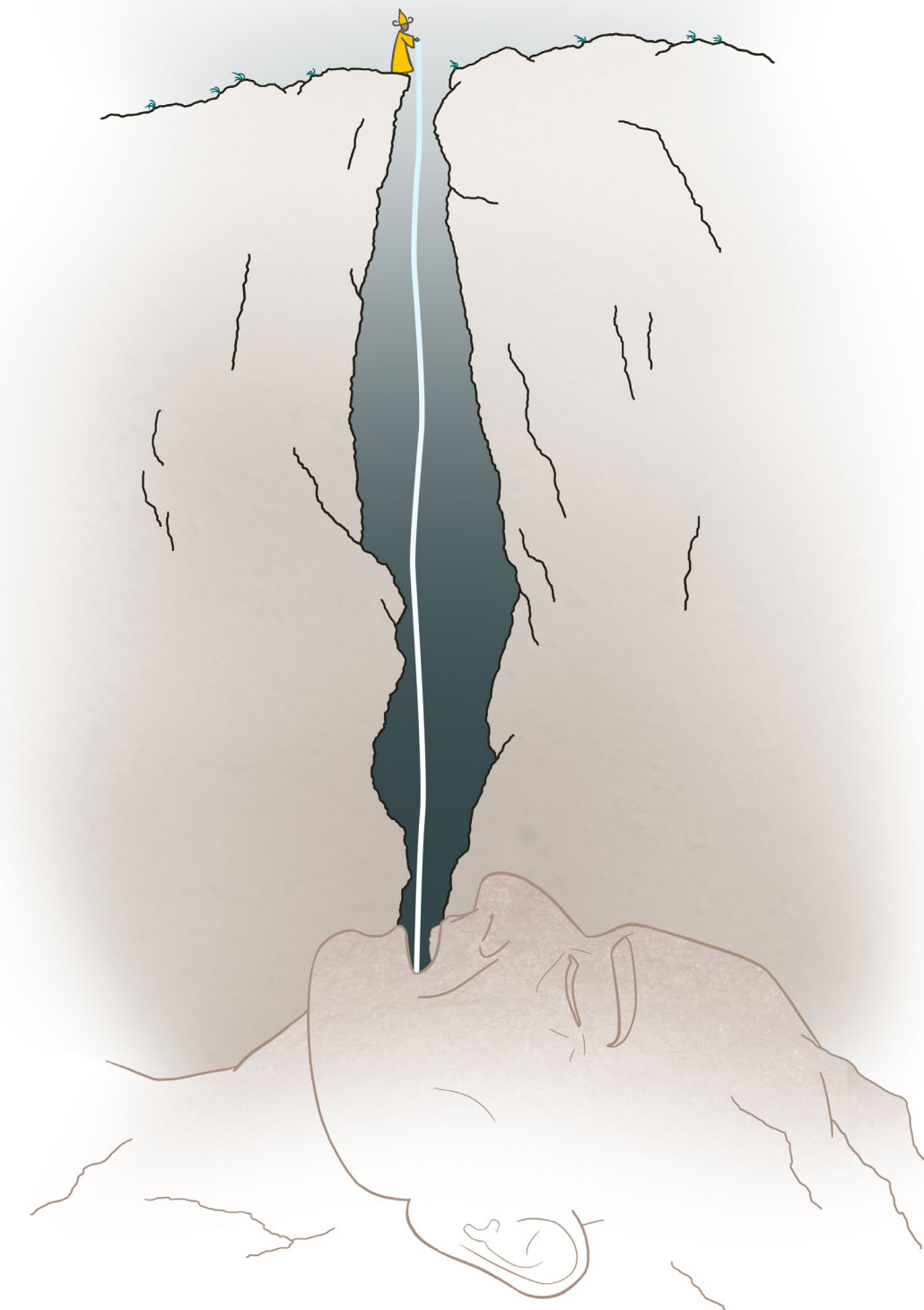
Culturally, the reformation redefined the city state's culture to the bone. It became a city often described as "boring"; even two centuries later, in the 1700s, the wealthy from across Europe and even North America sent their children to study

in Geneva knowing that distractions such as alcohol and prostitution were few and far in between (however, the Savoyan city of Carouge right across the river became a hotspot for such pleasures).

Socially, the reformation led to divisions between the Calvinist followers and Catholics. To this day, there is tension between the two groups.

Politically, the Reformation affected diplomacy and geopolitics around Europe. Calvinism played a role in the exile of the Waldensians from southern France in the 17th century, which further led to conflict between Britain and France. Having a Protestant Calvinist city on France's border was a thorn in the side for the Monarchy.

This example of the Calvinist Reformation should provide ample evidence of the effects that religion has on all of society.



Your religions require plenty of thought and originality to create. They must reflect the culture, society, politics, and heritage of your worlds, and in return they affect the culture, society, politics, and future of those worlds. Taking a copy and paste of an existing religion just won't do. There will be incompatibilities, things you can't fit in and explain.

If your world is an alternate history, the religions in your world may very well be based on Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and so on, but even then they won't be identical. Their beliefs will have changed. You must consider the point of divergence, and reshape the religion(s) of your scenario from that point to your present day. Consider what your alternate history scenario is, and consider how that event, and the thematic differences around it, will affect the direction of your religions. For example, a scenario that involves conflict between civilizations may see religion begin to be mobilized for motivation or propaganda, the way Christianity was thematic in the Crusades.

The other genre worth mentioning is science fiction, especially worlds that take place in an Earth future. In these worlds, it may very well be possible that religion does not play a dominant role, as atheism and secularism is growing in society today, but even then, don't ignore the topic altogether. Consider what has become of real world religions. Is religion still practised by a noticeable percentage of people? Has it evolved and made it a comeback? Has it been replaced by different religions that better fit the context of outer space? Is it held onto as more of a symbolic relic of the past?

It can be easy to forget to — or outright not want to — include religion in your worldbuilding. Equally, it can be easy to let your real world religious views influence your religions in your worldbuilding. Both of these are pitfalls in worldbuilding that should be avoided. Religion is an integral part of our world, and likewise, should be an integral part of your worlds.🐼

Credit: AnotherCollegeGrad

REALITY IS UNREALISTIC: A CURIOUS CASE OF REAL-WORLD WORLDBUILDING, VOL. 2

LordHenry

Many, many years ago, when Mankind first learned that you could make fire by rubbing 2 sticks together, and that hitting 2 stones made an interesting noise, there were a lot of things people didn't understand. What was that big yellow light in the sky that made things warm? Why did it go down at night, only to be reappear in the morning? What was that loud sound that sometimes appeared when it rained? Why were so many plants and animals so tasty? In lieu of an explanation, they began telling stories. Stories of great beings who controlled (and sometimes were) the world. Stories of monsters and heroes. In short, myths. Over time, these stories began to reflect the beliefs and customs of those who told them. In this issue, we're going to have a look at some of the sillier stories and customs.

One particularly interesting branch of mythology is that of the Greeks. These myths tell the stories of the Greek gods, oddly enough. The main character of many episodes of this divine sitcom is Zeus, king of the gods. And, boy oh boy, do his exploits sound like a poorly written fanfiction. We'll talk about that later. But first, we have to introduce the rest of the cast! There was Zeus's wife and sister, Hera, his brothers Poseidon and Hades, his other sisters Hestia and Demeter, and their various children, Ares, Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, Aphrodite, Athena, Hephaestus, and Hermes. There were also tons of minor gods. Between them all, there was a god of everything. Let's start with a criticism I had last issue: too many characters! I have just mentioned 14 characters, and that's not even counting all the minor gods, such as Nemesis, Janus, Pan, or Chiron, or other, non-god characters, many of which were only mentioned at all because someone (mostly Zeus, but occasionally other gods as well) couldn't keep it in their pants.

But let's get sillier. One of my favorite myths is from a different branch of mythology-the Finnish Kalevala. It's essentially all the myths of Finland, consolidated into one poem. The Kalevala tells the story of Vainamoinen, the first man, a fellow named Lemminkainen, and a whole host of characters. Again, there's way too many to keep straight. Not as many as the Greeks have, but still.

The Kalevala begins with the creation of the world. The goddess Ilmatar is floating in the ocean. Then a bird lays some eggs on her. She drops a few, which crack open in the water, and the stuff inside becomes land, sky, sun, and moon. Okay, fair enough, most landmasses do look like the contents of eggs got splattered everywhere. But... at some unspecified point, she gets pregnant with Vainamoinen, courtesy of the god Ukko. This kid waits for a few hundred years to be born. The whole time, he's just praying to other gods that Ilmatar lets him out. Eventually he gets fed up and climbs out- and it only gets stranger. As Ilmatar was carrying Vainamoinen, her footprints became fish. "But Henry", you say, "Footprints are defined by their absence of matter in a foot-shaped area! Surely a lack of something couldn't turn into a fish, which is defined by all the tissue inside of a fish-shaped body" Yes, I hear you, and before we should continue, let me explain magic.

Many myths have a concept known as magic, which is used as a workaround by beings, godly or otherwise, to do things that would be otherwise impossible, such as when Vainamoinen sung a boat into existence in the Kalevala. Magic is an interesting thing to have, but when it is used as excessively as it is in Earth mythology, it comes across as bad storytelling, low effort, and a deus ex machina. It seems that the worldbuilder couldn't come up with

an explanation better than "shut up, it's magic, and therefore unexplainable", such as people channeling the power of gods, natural processes we don't understand, or "he just hid the boat, then distracted everybody with a song while he uncovered it, that little David Copperfield".

Anyway, while we're talking about magic, let's have a look at a later scene in the Kalevala. At this point, Lemminkainen was killed, and his body has been mangled beyond belief. So, his mom, Louhi, goes to the afterlife, Tuonela, and, using a rake, gathers up the pieces. She then stitches him back together, then has a bee go grab some honey from the god Ukko to plug the holes and coax life back into him. How does this work? Magic. Okaaaaay... points for creativity, but minus 3 for the M word.

Now let's zoom on out, and look at mythology as a whole. When we do this, we see some interesting similarities all across the world. Every culture has a myth telling how the world started, and how it ends. Nearly every mythology has a character who rebels against the gods in some way. Prometheus gave fire to the humans. Loki is constantly tricking the Norse gods. Lucifer was cast out of heaven after he rebelled against god. Also, every myth has a flood story, oddly enough. The point is, this is where Earth's mythology is a little lacking, from a worldbuilding standpoint. It's a huge case of "insert name here".

All in all, Earth's mythology is pretty well done. While it suffers from a few minor points, such as its over reliance on magic, and the prevalence of similar myths across the planet, it may be one of the better done parts of this world. 🐉

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