

Cosmology of Domaria

By Jason Vey

In the Beginning

In the Beginning, there was the Pleroma, which is the Divine Light of Creation at the center of all things. Within the Pleroma resides the One, which is the consciousness upon which all reality depends. The One is perfect and all-seeing, but is not all-knowing. The One knows all paths a being may take, but may not know what path a being will take. Such is the price of Free Will, that which is gifted to all creations of the One.

In those early days, the Pleroma was surrounded by a formless, blackened Void. The One looked into this Void and felt alone. The One desired company and companionship. So it turned its thoughts to creation, and the fruit of its labor was Sophia, the mother of Wisdom. The One loved Sophia with all its vast essence, but Sophia did not return its love: at least, not to the same degree. Sophia, being created from the One, was less perfect than the One. While still vastly powerful in and of herself, she had not the capacity to love as did the One. She in turn became lonely and seduced the One into joining with her.

The Seed of the One within Sophia produced seven more Archons, all as powerful as Sophia and more powerful than any god we now know. But these Archons, being a generation removed and created of the joining of the One with a Mother Archon rather than of the thoughts of the One, were less pure than Sophia. Within their breasts burned a hunger and lust for more than their existence granted them.

At first, the One was angry with Sophia, but as the One looked upon these new children, it came to love them as it did its consort. It saw within them the fires of creation and destruction, and marveled at the chaotic beauty of their souls. At first, their mischief amused the One, and it looked on and laughed. Soon, however, this mischief brought darkness into the Pleroma, and the One was displeased. It created laws that bound the Archons, to keep the wonder of the Pleroma intact. And the Archons became jealous.

The Flight from Paradise

It was the First of the second generation of Archons, Urizen, who rose to prominence among his siblings, challenging the laws of The One. Why, he asked, should the Archons not be allowed to remain free as their spirits demanded? The One responded that the Pleroma was to be free from corruption, and the mischief of the Archons risked destroying that purity.

So it was that Urizen turned his sights on the Void. “Why, then,” he said, “can we not go into the Void to make our fun?”

“There is nothing in the Void,” replied the One. “It is naught but entropy. If you go there, you risk bringing back decay, and this I cannot allow.”

“Then we shall go, and not return,” said Urizen.

The One was saddened by this declaration, and forbade its children to leave, but their hearts were set. They stole from the Creator pieces of the Pleroma, so that they might create their own realms in the Void, constructing a universe as grand and chaotic as their own souls, and they departed.

So it was that Urizen took his siblings and departed the Pleroma, never to return. And then the One turned to its consort, Sophia. “You, of all my creations, are the most near and dear to my own nature,” it said. “Will you remain here, next to my heart?”

A tear ran down Sophia’s cheek at this question, and her soul was split asunder. To keep sadness from poisoning the Pleroma, she cast the tear into the Void, where it shattered as crystal, forming the stars we now see in the sky. Then she turned to the One and said, “I cannot stay. My children are chaotic and dark. They will need my wisdom to temper that which they form in the Void.”

With that, Sophia reached into her belly and pulled forth the Seeds of Creation. These she planted in the Pleroma, entreating the One to let them grow and form on their own, that one day they might come forth to restore the balance that would be upset.

And Sophia followed her children into the Void. And the One, overwhelmed with sorrow and grief, sealed the borders of the Pleroma so that none who leave that place may ever return, and fell into a deep slumber, where it remains to this very day.

The Creation of the Universe

And so the Archons came into the Void. They looked into the vast, formless nothing and felt sorrow. Even with the beauty of Sophia’s teardrops scattered throughout the heavens, it was still as the One had warned them: entropy incarnate. This, Urizen declared, would not do. The Archons loved chaos, and change, and upheaval. Entropy is a slow, ordered decline into nothingness. To balance this order, the Archons brought chaos into the Void. They took many of the pieces of the Pleroma they had stolen, and scattered them amongst the stars created by Sophia’s

tears, and as Creation met with Entropy, worlds sprang into existence, and life evolved on these worlds and the heavens became wondrous.

Yet still Urizen was not satisfied. With the Archons in tow, he rampaged through the Cosmos, driven mad with the feelings of emptiness, of incompleteness that he now suffered. Together the Archons destroyed thousands of worlds and wiped countless young species from existence. Still, they were not satisfied.

It was then Sophia came to her son and said, "My Son, might you not be more satisfied creating than destroying? These creations you have made, none of them share any part of you. They are random, generated by a scattering of Pleromic essence. Why not put your thoughts to work, and use what tiny shard of the Pleroma you have left, and create a world of your own?"

Urizen thought upon this suggestion and decided it was a good one. So it was that he called the rest of the Archons together and said, "My brothers, I have had an idea. We are incomplete because we have not put any effort into these creations. Together we shall create a world, and populate it, and use it to our own amusement. This world will be our Pleroma. It will be our home."

The other Archons thought this a good idea, and Urizen sent to work. But try as he might, he could not deliberately fashion a world to his liking, for worlds require laws and systems, and Urizen's soul was anarchy, the fire of creation without order. So again he turned to his mother. "You," he said, "Know the ways of creation. Why can I not succeed in making a world of my own?"

"You have not the means within you to nurture such," she said. "You are anger and chaos. Worlds need caring, order, and systems. Worlds are born, not made."

"Then you must help me," Urizen said. "You alone of all the Archons have the ability to give birth. You must be the mother to my world."

"If I do this for you," Sophia said, "You will grant me something in return."

"What is it you wish?" Urizen said.

"Whatever you and your brothers set about to create upon this world," Sophia said, "I am to be given half to mold in my own image."

"I agree," Urizen agreed.

"Think on your decision before you agree," Sophia said. "For you will be bound by this promise, else I will reveal your treachery to your siblings, and it will be your unmaking."

"And who, dear mother, would believe you? My siblings are loyal to me."

"All would believe me, for I am Wisdom and I can not lie."

Urizen thought upon this, and said, "So be it. I accept your terms."

"Bring me all the pieces of the Pleroma that your siblings still have," Sophia said. "and together we will make a world."

And Urizen went unto other Archons, demanding that they turn over the pieces of the Pleroma that they had stolen. The Archons were not pleased with this demand, and at first refused. They asked why Urizen wanted their pieces. "Because you have squandered yours," they said, "does not give you the right to take ours."

"With your pieces," Urizen said, "I will make a world for us all to share. Mine alone is not enough. It was I who guided you from the thumb of the One. Without my bravery and pride, we would still be enslaved within that realm, rather than masters of the universe. Go, and bring me your pieces of Creation."

But the Archons were treacherous, and in secret they agreed that each would keep a piece of a piece, enough to create beings to serve them alone. Unaware of the agreement between Urizen and Sophia, they presented Urizen with the pieces that he asked for and he in turn brought them to Sophia, who recognized that the pieces were not complete, but knew the wisdom in keeping this information for herself.

Sophia then lay down and allowed Urizen to place the shards within her belly, where she had removed the Seeds of Creation before leaving the Pleroma, and there they grew over eons and eons as mortals reckon years, but mere days by the reckoning of the heavens, and during this time Urizen kept his mother hidden from the other Archons, that they never know the subterfuge he had performed. In time, Sophia gave birth, and Domaria was her child.

And in the Pleroma, the One stirred in his fitful sleep, and from that stirring, the seeds Sophia had planted in the Pleroma began to grow.

Thus was the world of Domaria created by the Demiurge Urizen and Sophia, mother of nature and Wisdom, in the days before days. The earliest days of the world were dark ones, as Sophia set about teaching her child the means to shape the world, to separate night from day and the growing season from that of death. In time, the world set into a pattern, one of organized chaos. While the world worked upon reliable systems, within those systems were vast, uncounted random events such as earthquakes, tidal

waves, and other natural phenomena. The Archons were pleased, but knew that simply watching such a world unfold would become boring in time.

The Beginning of Life: The First Age

Thus, it came time to introduce life to the world. Alas, the shining shards from the realm of the One had been spent in the creation of the world, and the Archons lamented, going to their mother Wisdom to ask, "What shall we do? We have nothing of the Pleroma left with which to create life on this world."

Sophia saw the lie in the declaration, for she knew each of the Archons had kept some tiny shard of Creation when they turned it over to Urizen, but she smiled to herself and did not contest them. "Go unto the world," she told her children. "There you will find all the materials you need to build life from the world your brother has made."

And each of the Archons went forth into the world and saw that Sophia was right. From the building blocks of life they began to experiment with creation, building animals resembling their own faces. Thus the first creatures set foot in the world: felines, serpents, reptiles, fish, equines and bovines, canines, and apes. And with each fierce and vicious creature the Archons created, they marveled at the mysterious appearance of docile and beautiful creatures that bore resemblance of those creatures they made, for they were still unaware of the price Sophia had demanded in exchange for birthing the world.

Of all the Archons, two failed at these early attempts to create. Try as he might, the flame-headed Sabaoth could not create a creature to match his own visage, and succeeded only in introducing the purity and destruction of fire into the world. Saddened and enraged at his failure to make life, he went to his mother, who had already claimed the warmth and lightness of fire and began work on her own version of his efforts. She instructed him to use the air currents created by fire, its ability to lighten the air and cause it to rise above the world. She instructed him to combine that power with the softness of the clouds and the sharpness of shale, and go to work. Thus were the first birds introduced to the world.

Unlike his brother Sabaoth, the Archon called Eloeus found affinity only with decay and the realms of shadow, and, too prideful to approach his mother for help, sat brooding in the dark places of the world, dreaming of the day when his own powers might be useful in the corruption of the races of Domaria.

The Creation of the Races

As these animals were fruitful and multiplied, the Archons marveled at the ordered chaos below. But there was little long-term enjoyment to be had in creatures ruled by instinct and survival. The Archons desired

creatures they could manipulate and use to their amusement. So they returned to the world and began again to dabble in creation. And with each idea they tried, Sophia deftly claimed half of the material to form her own pure versions of the Archons corrupt vision. And since Sophia was the mother of the world, her knowledge outstripped that of the Archons, enabling her often to create her own children before the Archons completed theirs.

The first race, it is told, created by Sophia was the gnomes. An industrious race, who loved nature and beauty and who had their mother's lust for creation burning in their breasts, they exist to this day, a wise and cursed race who alone remember the beginning of days. Alas, knowledge without true wisdom is the first of the gnomes' curses. They know the truth of creation. They know the secrets of making and unmaking life. But they have not the wisdom to apply these secrets, being not of the celestial realms. If they could share this knowledge with a wiser race, like the elves or the dwarves, mayhap mortals could ascend to greater things than even the gods. Alas, the second curse of the gnomes prevents this from happening. It is said that any gnome to this day who speaks the secrets of creation will immediately return to the stone from which he was crafted, along with the one to whom he speaks this forbidden knowledge. Why this curse was levied upon the gnomes, none know, but Sophia is Wisdom, and must have had a reason.

From the gnomes, Sophia began experiments to amuse herself. She separated the gnomes into their three aspects, creating a race from each. The love of nature and beautiful things, Sophia combined with the spirit of the forest to craft the elves, to whom she gifted her great wisdom and a lesser knowledge of creation, the secrets of magic. From the industrious, hard working nature of the gnomes combined with the rock of the mountains, Sophia crafted the stout and hardy dwarves, whose brews and crafts are coveted the world over to this very day. And from the innocence and joy of the gnomes, Sophia created halflings, gifting to these small folk an innocent wonder, and the desire to experience the world, which is why halflings are possessed of such wanderlust to this day.

The Archons, seeing these goodly races come into the world, began to suspect their mother's treachery, but Sophia, unable to lie, merely sat quietly and neither acknowledged nor denied their accusations, pointing out merely that many of the creations of the Archons had evolved on their own since the earliest days. And the Archons returned to work. The first to be successful in his endeavors was Oreus, who stole and corrupted the dwarves' affinity with the halls of the underworld to twist and corrupt them into the orcs. Next, Oreus stole from the elves their affinity with nature, and a corruption of the halfling wanderlust, creating a mockery of their purity in the goblins. He spread orcs and goblins across the world, where they became the scourge of the elves, dwarves, and

other goodly races, and proclaimed himself supreme among his brothers for his creations.

Urizen and Astaphaeus would not have such bold claims made; the two of them thought long and hard and decided to make a contest of winning the race of creation. Each went to his own creation and raised them up on two legs. Urizen's creatures were the Rawdîr, who still roam the plains to this day. Sophia looked upon the Rawdîr and was touched that her son could create something so beautiful, and so she gifted to them Free Will, to choose between light and darkness.

For his part, Astaphaeus created the gnolls, twisted, humanoid versions of his prize creation the hyena. This, Sophia did not like and so she took half the gnolls and re-crafted them into the Dirdraug, to whom she also gave Free Will. As she looked upon the Rawdîr and Dirdraug, she saw that Free Will was good, and gifted it to all the races of the world, even those created by her sons to be evil and dark. She laughed quietly, knowing that she was using the very chaos her children loved so much against them.

The other Archons, too, dabbled in creation, and each of their creations Sophia gifted Free Will and created her own mirrors that would share and compete for the fate of the world. From Iao came the hydras and sea serpents, which Sophia turned into all the great serpentine creatures of the world. From Adoneus came the dragons, great creatures with the power to rule the world, which Sophia forced balance through the split into metallic and chromatic, and from whom she created the Saurians.

Thus it was that The Archons gave life to all beings in the world, and taught magic, art, and science, but also brought evil into the world, to torment the goodly races for no other reason than their masters' cruel amusement. The two exceptions were Sabaoth and Eloeus, who failed to create life like that of the other Archons and turned their sights to darker pursuits. Sabaoth went about teaching elves, dwarves, orcs, and others more powerful and darker magic, strengthening their connection with fire and darkness, until they rose above mortals and became demons, tormenters and tempters of the goodly races. In this manner, Sabaoth spread his influence throughout the world. Taking a cue from his brother, Eloeus, who also failed to create sentient life of his own, taught to the races of the world the secrets of necromancy, that they might live on beyond death and serve him for all eternity. Thus did the first liches and zombies enter the world.

The Coming of Man

For eons, the Archons ruled over all sentient life on the world, taking worship and tribute as they desired, and accepted sacrifices constantly. The sole exception to this is the lady Sophia, the matron of wisdom and sad virgin mother of Urizen. Eventually, Sophia tired of this

constant game of war and constantly changing rules, and tired of having to make her own races in secret, never able to take open pride in her creations, and she came forward, challenging her children that she could create a race that would come to rule over all others in the world. Laughing at her presumption, the Archons agreed, and Sophia set to work. But this time Sophia did not begin with the blocks of creation contained within the world. This time she began with what she considered her greatest accomplishment: these new creatures would be made from Free Will itself. From Free Will Sophia molded the essence of what would be her masterpiece. But she needed a shell for this essence. So she looked down onto the world and found a creature that was strong, agile, and adaptable, with a higher intelligence than many of the lower animals. She looked to the apes, and began to mold them, raising them to stand on two legs, stripping their fur and replacing it with skin that had the strength of dwarven skin and the supple softness of the elves, and altered their facial features to look more like those of the First Races. Into this primate shell she placed her essence matrix, and humanity was born.

To humanity, Sophia gave a shortened life span, so that mankind would always strive to better himself, having so few years to leave his mark upon the world. She took fire from Sabaoth and placed it in the souls of man, that they would ever be driven to greater conquests and victories, and so that the more adversity they faced, the hotter and faster they would burn, until they consumed this adversity and stood above all other races. From every race, she took qualities, and placed them into humanity. The dwarves' skill, the elves' wisdom and power, the gnomes' diplomatic skill, and the halflings' lust for adventure; all of these were placed into man. Unlike the early races, though, Sophia did not give these to man as gifts, but as potential. Each human was to find their own path in the world, which would guide them to spread across the world and achieve greatness in their individual fields, becoming masters of the very tasks that were so innate to the other races.

The other Archons looked on in fear as Sophia accomplished exactly what she claimed she could, and then became enraged when she did the one thing that the others could not abide. Sophia had been fashioned of the Pleroma, and so maintained a connection with that place even in exile. Thus, she called out and those shards of Pleromic essence that the Archons had kept back from Urizen flew to her. Sophia in turn placed a tiny spark from the purity of the Pleroma itself into the soul of every man. Within mankind, this spark had the ability to propagate itself, passing from generation to generation. This meant that every last member of humankind had the potential to not only conquer the world, but to transcend it. Within each human is the potential to return to the Pleroma after death, and to join with the One at the perfect center of creation. No other creature in the universe has this potential, not even the Archons.

In their rage and jealousy, the Archons turned on Sophia, who was weakened from her efforts, and bound and chained her in a deep cavern in the highest mountain in the world. They then turned their fury on mankind, making humans slaves subjugated to all other races, and issuing a decree that the races of the world were to treat humankind with cruelty and malice for all eternity. It is said that many the dwarves and elves stood against the Archons in this decree, and were in turn subjugated along with humankind. Others among the First Races, the remaining elves and dwarves, and the gnomes and halflings, simply ignored the proclamation and took no human servants. But the dark races of the world, the orcs and goblins and gnolls, and the saurians, who had long ago turned from their mother Sophia to worship Adoneus, took humans as work animals, cattle, and tools of pleasure.

Coming of the Gods

No one knows exactly how long humankind lived in suffering and squalor. For perhaps thousands of years they cried out to their helpless mother, Sophia, to save them and deliver them from their pain. And while Sophia was bound and helpless in the caves of the world, the cries of humans did not go unheard. In the Pleroma, the cries of humanity stirred the One once again, and his disturbed sleep caused the seeds of Sophia to leap to glorious life. The first gods to come to the world were the twins, Ormazd and Ahriman, who looked down on the suffering of humanity and puzzled. Ormazd was saddened by the plight of mankind, while Ahriman simply desired rule of the world for himself. The two set to debating while their brothers and sisters were born of the Pleroma, and as their debates continued, so did new gods and goddesses join the debate with each new generation born from the light of creation. In the end, it was decided that the two polarized sides agreed on one thing: the Archons had to be driven from the world, and to do that, one of the gods had to be elected as general. This duty fell to Ormazd, for while Ahriman was just as powerful as his brother, he was less ordered of mind and thought, and less able to lead an organized effort. Ahriman knew this, and for the time being subjugated himself to Ormazd.

Thus, the gods came from out of the light of the Pleroma, the divine ether to which all humans seek to enter when they depart this world, and made war upon the Archons with powerful magic and weaponry. Still, the Archons with their vaunted might were more powerful than the gods, and the war went badly. Just when it looked as though the gods were to be defeated and banished to the heavens, it was Aka Manah, god of secrets and deceit, who learned of the solution. The god looked into the hearts of the Archons and saw the truth of what they had done to their mother. He brought this knowledge to Saurva, and they in turn recruited from amongst the races

of the world a devious and stealthy party to go to Sophia and release her from imprisonment.

The details of this quest are lost to the annals of history, but what is known are the names of these heroes, and the reward bestowed upon them by Sophia upon her release. The heroes who rescued Sophia were Eleggua the elf, Orumila the gnome, Babalu the dwarf, Chango the half-orc, Oggun the Dirdraug, Yemaya the halfling, and Oshun the Rawdir. Their reward, bestowed upon them by the First Archon was to be granted the powers of the gods, and a portfolio over which each could preside. In exchange for this reward, Sophia took from them their natural racial forms, and gave unto them the forms of her favorite race: humans, though each retained the power to assume whatever form they wished when they walked the world. After granting this boon unto her rescuers, Sophia sent them into the cosmos, to learn to use and harness their powers responsibly, and to wait the time when they would be needed, as the other gods were needed now.

After her escape, Sophia came to Ormazd and lay with him in his tent. During their time together, she gave to Ormazd all the secrets necessary to defeat her son and his lieutenants. Through the wisdom of Sophia, the gods harnessed the magic of the world to call upon a powerful incantation that imprisoned the Archons deep within the earth, where they remain in enchanted slumber even to this day, dreaming their revenge through the destruction of that which they have wrought, the world of Domaria.

As part of the bargain, Sophia sacrificed herself to the incantation, knowing that her own power would be required to hold at bay the rest of the Archons, and wise enough to know that the temptation to create another offspring would be too much for her to bear, once her first child was defeated. She kept this knowledge to herself, however, aware that Ormazd would not allow her to fall victim to this incantation. When she, too, was imprisoned with her children, Ormazd was heartbroken and withdrew into his great mountain to mourn. It was during this time that Ahriman gathered unto him the Daevas, the gods of darkness and they moved against the goodly gods for control of the world. The goodly gods fought back, but Ahriman was strong, and beat them back time and again, for they were lost without Ormazd's leadership.

But all was not lost: deep within the bowels of the world, Sophia's duty was not done. The time she had spent laying with Ormazd had borne fruit within her, and her slumbering body gave birth to Vohu Manah, the god of enlightenment and animals, who sprang fully grown from her loins. Vohu Manah clawed his way up through the earth to the surface and came to his father in his tent.

"Father," he said, "I am Vohu Manah, the fruits of your love for Sophia. I come to beg you on mother's behalf to stand with your brothers against the dark gods, who even now sow destruction throughout the world."

Ormazd took his son into his arms and said, "My son, you have brought a piece of your mother back to me. I can now return to the world."

So it was that Ormazd returned and at the head of the Spentas, the gods of light, and stood against the Daevas. The two pantheons of gods battled fiercely throughout the heavens, until at last they fought one another to a standstill, with neither side emerging victorious. Ormazd and Ahriman met in treaty on the field of battle and agreed that this victory would not be settled by contest of arms in the heavens, but through the acts of mortals. Until the end of days, the gods agreed to cease their eternal war and allow the tides of light and darkness to play out among mortals. As part of the agreement, the gods were forbidden to directly control the affairs of mortals, though they could influence them through certain individuals. Finally, they agreed that humankind, Sophia's favored of all the races, was to be free from the oppression of the other races, and was to take its place alongside the great races of the world. To this end they chose a great man from the bowels of slavery named Zarathustra, and to him they gave their message of light and darkness, and the battle between good and evil. Zarathustra was to take neither side in the war, but to present both sides to all races, that each might choose his own path. Zarathustra was to live a hard and short life, but his message would spread, and in reward for his service to the gods, their pantheon and faith would be named for this great prophet.

Zarathustra went forth among the races of the world and told of the coming of the gods and the fall of the Archons. At first, the races of the world welcomed the gods, who took a much more hands-off approach to governing the world, demanding worship and tribute, but remaining largely in their otherworldly realms, supporting their followers through clerics and the divinely-touched. It eventually became evident, however, that not all the gods were goodly. Some were as dark and power mad as the Archons they'd usurped, and these were deadlocked in an eternal struggle with the gods of light. Human, elf, and dwarfkind were invariably drawn into this struggle as well, and champions of both light and darkness have risen and fallen throughout the ages, until the day comes when Ormazd faces and defeats Ahriman in the final battle.

For decades Zarathustra traveled the world, spreading his message of light and darkness, until one day, he simply disappeared. No one knows what happened to the great prophet; some whisper that he ascended to godhood. Others believe that he entered the Pleroma and resides with the One at the center of Creation. Still others believe that he sleeps, and will rise again one day to pass final judgment on the gods when their battles at last reach their climax.

Known collectively as the Zarathustrian Pantheon, or simply Zarathustra, the gods of good are the Spentas,

while the evil gods are the Daevas. Zarathustra recognizes no neutral gods, save the spirit of Zarathustra himself. While Zarathustra has never appeared or granted power to followers since his mysterious disappearance so many thousands of years ago, there still exist nevertheless cults dedicated to his worship, to spreading the message of all the gods and to maintaining the balance between light and dark, for all eternity.

Thus ended the First Age of the World.

The Second Age of Domaria

The Second Age of Domaria was a period of enlightenment and progress for all the races of the world, lasting for tens of thousands of years. Kingdoms and empires rose and fell, as did heroes and villains. These days were the stuff of legends; there were no great ruins to explore in the early days, no underground dungeons or hidden treasures, for it was in these days that the secrets of the Old World were made and lost. Wizards wielded great and powerful arcane magic rose in those days, and some say that there were sorcerers who held sway over the very forces of life and death, and that the necromancers of today are the shadowy mirrors that hearken back to these great men and women. Individuals took to the gods or goddesses that best suited their own outlooks, though some became patrons of entire races. Vohu Manah and Armaiti became patrons of the elves, while Asha and Ameretat took a liking to gnomes and halflings. Haurvatat became beloved of the dwarves, while Khshathra Vairya was beloved of humankind. Ormazd watched over all the goodly gods.

The gods of darkness, on the other hand, were drawn to the darker races, with Aka Manah guiding the goblins, and Saurva being worshipped widely by the orcs. Many of the evil gods found followers and entire cults among mankind, who are born of free will and rebellion, and seek the power to better themselves by any means.

As is inevitable with such things, the great achievements of the day were turned to instruments of war, and the day arrived when the dwarves and elves banded together to make war against the orcs and half-orcs. Humans, saurians, rawdîr and dirdraug were widely divided among the battles, with armies showing up on both sides, as best suited the mercenary tendencies of these races, and the halflings and gnomes went into hiding to await the outcome. This was known as the Blood War, and nearly tore the world asunder. In their eternal, fitful sleep, the Archons stirred, and mortals first heard the seductive call of their evil dreams.

Of the great kingdoms that rose and were destroyed in those days, only one name remains. The Elven lord Azeroth both was seduced by evil in those days, being seduced by the calls of the Archon Eleous in his fitful sleep. The elf became cursed with undeath through this

black worship, but found immortality as a lich. The kingdom turned on the world with a vengeance, and the other kingdoms of the world stood strong against Azteroth's incursions.

It was during this vast global conflict that the Orishas, the mortals-turned-gods and beloved of Sophia, felt the stirring of the Archons, and heard the sounds of destruction coming from the world, and knew that the gods had overstepped their bounds. This Blood War would awaken the Archons if allowed to continue unchecked, and Sophia's sacrifice would be in vain. The time of the Orishas, as prophesied by Sophia, had come. So they came to the world and intervened, stopping the conflict and wiping away much of the powerful and destructive magic used in the wars. The gods of Zarathustra tried to destroy the Orishas, but since the Orishas were beloved of Sophia, the Zarathustrans found they had no power over these newcomers.

So the end of days was delayed, and new religions rose in the world. The Orishas represent a wild card faction in the struggles of the gods. The dogma of Orisha says that mortals should not be tied up in the struggles of some great heavenly war, and should use the free will and independence granted to them by Sophia to make their own path in the cosmos. To that end the Orisha deities guide and help all mortals who wish to break free of the struggles of the Blood War between Ahriman and Ormazd. Yet even the Orishas are factioned, and represent several pantheons which have carved up the world amongst themselves. The Orisha faiths quickly spread among mortal kingdoms, and both the good and evil gods of Zarathustra became concerned, for deities depend upon followers. If their followers turn from them, the gods will quickly find themselves decreasing in power and exiled to the cosmos, deities without followers and without a home. And yet, the innate neutrality of Orisha's stance in the Blood War, and their status as beloved of Sophia has somehow held the Zarathustrian gods at bay, rendering them mystically unable to move against the Orishan pantheon. The Orisha gods represent a strong middle-ground and balancing force between the good of the Spentas and the evil of the Daevas.

As the Blood War came to a stalemate once again, the Orishas sent their followers forth to destroy the great and destructive magic and technologies used, their existence to be wiped from the annals of history. This, they decreed, would restore the balance between the races and allow the world a fresh start. The greatest of these artifacts, however, the Godslayer Sword, could not be destroyed. This weapon, it is said, had the power to slay gods, and transfer their powers to the wielder, but would drive the wielder mad in the process. Using this blade, a mad dwarven smith sought to wipe out the gods and take their place as the One God. Legend has it that he succeeded in using the blade, once, and that the sword's effect was so powerful that the sword erased the god from existence.

The Mad Dwarf, unable to cope with the sudden influx of the powers of the god, went utterly mad and sat quietly gibbering in a cave, where the Purifiers of Orisha found him and simply removed the sword from his lap.

So it came to pass that the greatest priest of the Orishas came to their temple and presented the Godslayer Sword on the altar and the Orishas took notice. Then a thing happened that has never happened since: all pantheons of gods came together to debate what should be the fate of this artifact. All agreed that it could not be entrusted to any deity, for the power contained in the blade was too dangerous to be entrusted to any one god, or group of gods, who would quickly fall to warring amongst themselves for possession of the sword. Yet, for all their vaunted power, the gods could not destroy the sword. It was Vohu Manah, the Son of Wisdom, who suggested the solution. The sword could not be destroyed, but it could be broken into its four pieces, cast to the four winds, and a powerful enchantment cast so that even the gods would be unaware of the locations of the blade. Thus it would remain hidden for all eternity. The gods agreed, and the sword was cast away.

Alas, the gibbering Mad Dwarf in his cave heard the council of deities, and the power dripping from him in his ravings became a book, chronicling the early days of the Blood War and the breaking and hiding of the sword. This book had the power to unmake the spell and reveal the blade to the world once again. The other gods, unaware of the book's existence, cast a spell to turn the Mad Dwarf to stone, and caused his cave to be sealed from the eyes of mortals. They then turned their vengeance upon Azteroth, and caused this great kingdom to sink deep into the world, to be forever hidden from mortals. Mortals began to pick up the pieces and rebuild the world. Thus ended the Second Age of Domaria.

The Third Age of Domaria: An Age of High Adventure?

The Third Age of Domaria, lasting from approximately 20,000 years ago until a single millennia ago, was an age of high adventure, where intrepid members of every race banded together to delve into the lost ruins of the Second Age, uncovering great treasures, lost magic, and ancient secrets. It is said that many an elf, dwarf, and human in those days became renowned after venturing into lost temples and returning with riches and untold secrets. Alas, the great sins that brought about the Scourge wiped the memory of much of the Third Age from the world, and even today adventurers seek lost books and scrolls that will tell the tale of these days.

The Scourge

1,000 years ago, legend has it that the Godslayer Sword resurfaced when a halfling found the book of the Mad Dwarf, and a group of heroes undertook a powerful quest

to stop the Archons from awakening and devouring the world. It is said that the finding of the book awoke the spirit of the Mad Dwarf, who sent forth his mind to possess a mortal. Along with Druj, the goddess of deceit and betrayal, the two built an army to recover the Dwarf's lost blade, and so to rule the world as King and Queen of the Heavens. The struggles half-awakened the Archons, who sent forth their own cults to retrieve the blade first, that it might be used to awaken the Dark Ones and bring forth the End of Days.

During the Godslayer Wars, agents of the Archons and Daevas were everywhere, and corrupted the minds and hearts of many. It was during this period that the world was re-shaped, and the kingdom of Azteroth leapt from beneath the Earth. The seeds of ancient enmities were sown, and the elves became envious of the riches of the dwarves. A war erupted between the dwarves and elves. It is said that the elves invoked powerful and dark magic rediscovered in deep caverns in an attempt to overcome their foes, just as the heroes completed their quest. No one knows what the completion of this quest was, but some say the heroes destroyed the artifact by sacrificing their own souls. Others say they merely succeeded in breaking and hiding the blade once again, and that they, like the Orishas before them, were rewarded with godhood for their efforts. No one knows for sure, but there are small sects today that worship a mysterious pantheon known as the Gods of the Blade, and claim these gods are the very heroes who saved Domaria from destruction.

The magical energies released by these two forces altered the entire world, and the elves responsible for the use of these magics were forever corrupted, becoming the Twilight Elves, or Morellon. This was the Scourge. Because of the Scourge, the energies of creation that infuse Domaria were unleashed and corrupted, and undead roamed freely over much of the world, a plague upon the living. Unfortunately, most of the records of those days were destroyed in the chaos that followed, and none now live who remember the dark times before and just after the Scourge. It was in those days that our fair continent was named Vêrfold, which means "land of blood" in the ancient tongue of the North, and the name seems apt. The Scourge marked the end of the Third Age, and a millennia-long darkness that heralded the beginning of the Fourth Age of Domaria, in which we now live. In this Eon of Darkness, the harmful magic of the Scourge was wiped once again from the world, but since magic is a part of Domaria, its secrets cannot be forever hidden. As the Fourth Age dawned, the secrets of magic returned slowly to the world, and wizards and illusionists once again walk amongst us, though the lessons of the past are hard-learned, and users of arcane magic, while highly respected, are ill-trusted in many places.

The Fourth Age: The Coming Eschaton

No one knows how long the Fourth Age will last, but it is prophesied that at the end of this age, the gods of Zarathustra are destined to clash in a final battle. On this day, some claim, Ormazd will finally defeat Ahriman once and for all, but that their cosmic battle on the material plane will free the Archons, who will rise up and renew their war upon the gods who defeated them. Others claim that the Orishas, fragmented by thousands of years of isolation in their individual lands, will come forth and a second Godslayer War will erupt in the heavens, resulting in the final destruction of Domaria and all her peoples.

In the end, how this final battle will end is uncertain. Some sages insist that it will spell the end of the world; others say that great cataclysms have shaken the world in the past, and humanity and her allies and enemies have always survived. The world, these sages say, will be irrevocably altered as it has been before, but that a new age of peace and prosperity will arise, where men, elves, dwarves, and their allies will at last be free of the rule of the gods for all eternity. The only thing that all agree upon is that a great reckoning approaches, one which will in some way be the End of Days, at least as we currently reckon them.

Until that day, the Archons speak to their followers in dreams, granting them power and corrupting their minds and souls in ways that even Ahriman cannot comprehend. These cults of the Archons are perhaps the deadliest threat to the world today, for if a worshipper of the Demiurge or one of his followers becomes corrupt enough, the Archon can create within the cultist a near-godlike avatar to sow chaos and destruction throughout the world.

As the races of the world slowly crawl forth from the Millennia of Darkness and rebuild civilization once again, these Archonic cults are perhaps the greatest threat to the world at large, made worse by the plots of the Daevas cults, who occasionally are used as pawns of the Archons, and whose own selfish ends often threaten to reawaken the demiurge and his lot.

The New Cults

In the early days of this new Fourth Age, several new and quite notable cults have been gaining prominence among the youth of the world. These cults are dedicated to the Archon Sophia, and to the One, the Creator itself, at the center of all things. Most cults choose to worship one or the other of these two powerful, divine figures, but there are those who worship the pair as the King and Queen of Creation; hence, cults to Sophia, cults to the One, and cults of the Mother and Father exist throughout the world. Followers of these religions claim that Sophia, the One, or both, have awakened from their eternal slumber since the Millennium of Darkness and have decided to take a direct hand in the affairs of the world. For the most part, members of these faiths thus far seem concerned with

helping people, healing, justice, and the spreading of the good word, and are viewed as mostly harmless by the majority of people in the world. However, their message is spreading quickly, to the point where several of the larger cities in the world have allowed small temples to be erected to one or both of these figures, and more than a few villages and hamlets have been dedicated to the Lady of Wisdom, or the Lord of the Earth, Sea and Sky. The deities are referred to colloquially as the All-Mother and All-Father by their followers, denoting their proper place as the two responsible for the creation of all things.

For the past several decades since these cults first appeared, they seemed harmless and ineffectual; their clerics were skilled healers without real mystical power, who traveled from place to place, spreading their message of justice, faith, and order to the world, and rarely causing any real sort of stir. Recently, however, reports have filtered in that clerics of the All-Father and All-Mother have begun to exhibit magical power, akin to clerics of the other deities. This means that some force, be it the real Sophia and One, or some other deity, has begun paying attention to these clerics. In addition, the cults of the All-Father have revealed what they claim to be the name of the One: Panádar. Is this a clue to the true identity of the deity granting these powers, or has the One truly taken on a name and a hand in the affairs of the world? Such questions are of great concern to the clerics of the Great Faiths of the world, as either option is troubling to the gods. If this Panádar and his consort are in fact the true Sophia and One, what does this mean for the behavior of the gods? Have they failed in their appointed task, or have the All-Father and All-Mother simply decided to take delight in their creation? If they have failed, does that mean that terrible retribution is on its way?

Perhaps most troubled by this development are clerics to Ormazd, who have for time immemorial presumed that one day Sophia would return to the world, to be reunited with her true love, Ormazd. If Sophia has returned at the side of this Panádar, what could that mean for their own beloved father? Will he, heartbroken, again leave the world to the mercies of the Daevas? Some clerics of Ormazd simply presume (and in fact preach) that Ormazd and Panádar are one and the same deity, and that eventually the followers of the All-Mother and All-Father will enter the fold of Zarathustra, under the umbrella of the Spentas.

Regardless of the truth, this new faith clearly has a role to play in the developments of the world. Time will tell exactly what that role is.

Besides these cults to Sophia and Panádar, a new faith that is gaining fast prominence and acceptance among young adventurers are the Gods of the Blade. Those who follow the tenets of this warrior-oriented religion believe that the deities in the pantheon are none other than the Seekers of the Blade, those great heroes whose many exploits resulted in the Scourge, but saved the world from total destruction in days past. As they tell it, there was another great pantheon of gods involved in that war, gods of dragons raised to deific status who were destroyed in the final battle to destroy the Godslayer Sword, and that the Gods of the Blade were raised to the heavens in the place of this noble pantheon. As with most histories of the Third Age, the Faith of the Blade is unable to provide concrete details, as these have been lost to history. They claim that the Gods of the Blade speak to them in dreams and portents, and that they represent the courage, pluck, ambition, and nobility of adventurers. The Pantheon of the Blade contains no evil gods, and their followers claim that they stand against the Archons, and the evil goddess Druj of the Daevas. More recently, in an effort to present a more balanced view of the cosmos, some sects of the Faith of the Blade have incorporated Saurva and Aha Manah into their ranks. Without fail, all view the Archons (save Sophia) and the goddess Druj as enemies of the faith, and seek to destroy their followers wherever they may be encountered. Generally speaking, the Faith of the Blade has good relations with the Orishan faith, but views the Zarathustrian faith with antipathy or even outright contempt; citing that the gods of these faiths simply use mortals as pawns, when the fate of the universe will one day rest in the very hands of those pawns.

The Zarathustran Gods

The Zarathustran pantheon, which was so instrumental in the forming of the world and the initial defeat of the Archons, in the modern times remains mostly worshipped on the continent of Vêrfold, mostly in the kingdoms of Danneland and Lightwolfe, though the faith is widespread and representatives can be found all over the world. It is without a doubt the most common faith in the world, though its worship has dwindled since the coming of the Orishas and with the rise of the new All-Father and All-Mother cults.

Table: The Spentas

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Ormazd	LG	Creator of all that is good and father of the gods
Vohu Manah	NG	Son of Ormazd and Sophia, god of enlightenment and animals
Asha	LG	Spiritual wealth, healing, keeper of divine law
Khshathra Vairya	CG	Promoter of the Divine on earth, god of wealth
Armaiti	CG	Goddess of love, goodness, and reverence
Haurvatat	NG	Strength on earth and spiritual perfection
Ameretat	NG	Immortality in the afterlife, growth and wholeness

Table: The Daevas

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Ahriman	CE	Creator of death and all evil beings
Aka Manah	NE	God of secrets and decay
Druj	CE	Goddess of deceit, wickedness, betrayal
Saurva	LE	God of darkness, destruction, power, and inevitability
Taromaiti	LE	Goddess of heresy, hatred, intolerance, and cruelty
Taurvi	NE	God of plague, famine, and pestilence
Zairicha	NE	God of entropy, drought, despair

The Orishas

There are five pantheons of Orishan deities: first among these are the **Lucumi**, who are believed to have been the first of the Orishas to come forth and challenge the Zarathustrans. The Lacumi, while their worship is spread throughout the world, enjoy almost exclusive worship in Quartoth and Celbeneru, though rumor has it the desert and jungle elves of these two communities still hold to the worship of the Saiva (see below). As jungle and desert elves are extremely reclusive, no one knows for certain if this is true. Next are the **Khemites**, who are almost exclusively worshipped in Khem, and seem content to limit their sphere of influence to this concentrated desert

realm. Third and forth are the **Annunaki** and **Mardukkian** gods, whose worship is found often mixed with the Zarathustrans on Verfold, and in deed, the Annunaki and Mardukkian may share common ancestry and bonds, for there are “crossover” gods that occupy places in both pantheons. The Mardukkian pantheon in particular is favored of dwarves and gnomes. Last, but not least, are the **Saiva**, beloved of the elves that inhabit Bartalaith and, if rumor and legend is to be believed, the elves of Quartoth and Celbeneru as well. The tables below show each major deity in the pantheons, their alignment, and the portfolio they represent.

Table: The Lucumi

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Eleggua	LN	God of Justice and Fate
Orunmila	N	God of Wisdom and Divination
Babalu	N	God of Disease and Healing
Chango	CN	God of Power, Glory, and Battle
Ogun	LN	God of work and warfare, strategy and tactics
Yemaya	N	Goddess of Life, Death, and the Sea
Oshun	CN	Goddess of Wealth, Love, and Ambition

Table: The Khemites

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Anubis	LN	God of Judgment and Death
Apep	NE	God of Evil, Fire, and Serpents
Bast	CG	Goddess of Cats and Vengeance
Bes	CN	God of Luck, Music, Protection, Rogues, and Bards
Isis	NG	Goddess of Fertility, Magic, Marriage, and Life
Osiris	LG	God of Death, Harvest, Earth, and the Underworld
Set	CE	God of Darkness, Evil, Night, and Drought
Thoth	N	God of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Learning

Table: The Annunaki

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Anu	N	God of the Sky and Air
Enki	CG	God of Water and Wisdom
Enlil	CN	God of Storms and Bounty
Ereshkigal	CE	Goddess of Darkness, Gloom, and Death
Inanna	N	Goddess of Love, War, and Magic
Ki	NG	Goddess of Earth and Life
Nammu	NE	Goddess of the Sea
Utu	LG	God of the Sun and Justice

Table: The Mardukkians

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Anu	N	God of the Sky and Air (believed to be Anu)
Apsu	NE	God of Underground rivers, Underworld
Enlil	CN	God of Air, Land, Earth, and Fate (Same as Enlil, above)
Enurta	CN	God of War, Battle, and Destruction
Ishtar	CN	Goddess of Love, Sex, Fertility, and War
Mammu	NG	Mother Goddess
Marduk	LG	King of the Gods, God of Creation, War, Fire, Knowledge
Tiamat	CE	Goddess of Dragons and Reptiles, Consort of Apsu

Table: The Saiva

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Brahma	NG	Four-headed God of Creation and Life
Ganesha	N	Elephant-headed God of Serenity and Knowledge
Hanumaan	CN	Monkey-headed God of Trickery, Mischief, Battle
Indra	NG	Four-Armed God of Storms, the Heavens, and Warriors
Kali	CN	Six-Armed Goddess of Life, Death, Rebirth, and Time
Shiva	NE	God of Change, Death, Destruction, and Turmoil
Vishnu	LG	God of Mercy, Goodness, Justice, and Preservation

The Pantheon of the Blade

The Pantheon of the Blade is believed to be the heroes who finally destroyed the Godslayer Sword at the end of the Third Age. While technically these gods fit with the Orishas, in the sense that they are mortals who achieved godhood through great deeds, they are generally separated from the other Orishas in that it is accepted that it was not Sophia who raised the Blade Gods to deific status. Indeed, no one knows exactly how these great heroes of old became deities, but they represent as a group the tenacity of mortals to make their own destiny, and are a religion revered by individualists, adventurers, and warriors the

world over. Their religion currently is not widespread, being restricted to mystery cults in major cities that are often mistrusted as possibly being in league with the Archons, though nothing could be further from the truth. The Pantheon of the Blade favors preservation of the world, and stands starkly against evil deities wherever they might raise their heads. It is unique in being the only pantheon that has no evil deities (even Zarathustra has evil deities, though they separate their good and evil gods into different pantheons).

Table: The Gods of the Blade

Deity	AL	Portfolio
Eibon	LG	God of dwarves, honor, strategy and paladins
Xaron	CN	God of fire, air, sorcery, and elves
Karlo	NG	God of warriors, sailors, the sea
Klieg	LN	God of minotaurs, gladiators, battle
Rasha	N	Goddess of nature, druids, earth
Trillian	CN	Goddess of rogues, shadow

The Archons

The Archons are the creators of the world, and the gods prophesied to one day destroy the same when a great battle between the gods awakens them. Until that day, the Archons speak to their followers in dreams, granting them power and corrupting their minds and souls in ways that even Ahriman cannot comprehend. These cults of the Archons are perhaps the deadliest threat to the world today, for if a worshipper of the Demiurge or one of his

followers becomes corrupt enough, the Archon can create within the cultist a near-godlike avatar to sow chaos and destruction throughout the world. Of all the Archons, only Sophia stands with mortals. They are a shadowy threat in their eternal prison, communicating their desires to their priests through dreams, and making their presence known in dark, black masses. The Archons are feared and despised the world over, but are often revered by morellon and drow elves, and by orcs and goblins.

Table: The Archons

Archon	AL	Portfolio
Urizen	CE	Lion-headed, Creator and King of Cats
Iao	CE	Seven serpent heads, Lord of Hydras
Sabaoth	CE	Flame-headed Father of Demons
Adoneus	CN	Dragon-faced Father of Dragons
Eloeus	CE	Mule-headed Lord of Undead
Oreus	CN	Ape-faced Father of orcs and goblinoids
Astaphaeus	CE	Hyena-faced Lord of carrion-eaters
Sophia	LN	Crowned with a halo, Mother of Nature and Wisdom