



THE LEXICON OF THE THRONE

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CREATING WORDS AND RELIGIONS FOR THE GODBOUND ROLE-PLAYING GAME

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The Lexicon of the Throne

Strangers in the House of God



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Creating New Words and Gifts

There inevitably comes a time when a *Godbound* player or GM feels the need for some new gifts or new Words. A player might want to develop a particular ability, or a GM might want to trim an antagonist with a new source of primal power, or either might wonder if a particular miraculous effect is appropriate for the game. This section of the book discusses a number of factors and specifics to take into account when building new content of this type.

When dealing with the boundless might of the divine, there's no easy cookbook for coming up with appropriate and interesting powers. A GM's best source of inspiration in this regard is often their own players. The things the players want to do and the way they use their own miracles and gifts can give clues about the kind of powers that would excite and interest them.

There's nothing at all wrong about making powers explicitly for a particular player, and balancing the appropriateness of those powers to what the GM knows about how that player tends to play the game. Some abilities might be perfect fits for some players, while other PCs would clearly use the same power in ways destructive to the fun of the game. The GM knows their players best, and they need to decide what fits each one and what fits the kind of game they are running.

Don't feel obligated to come up with new Words and gifts unless you actually need them. The guides in this section are simply tools, not imperatives. A GM has enough to deal with in running a campaign, and it's perfectly acceptable to encourage players to do their own work in devising the new powers they want their heroes to develop. Encouraging that kind of creativity not only lessens the burden on the GM, but helps the players feel more involved in the world and more in control of their own heroic ascent.

A Note on Terminology

A few descriptive terms are used in the following sections that might not be familiar to all readers. A "buff" is a power that improves or boosts a target's natural ability, or gives them an entirely new ability. A "debuff" is the opposite, a power that inflicts a penalty of some kind on the target, restricts its movement, deprives it of its natural abilities, or otherwise lessens its strength. To "spam" a power is to use it repeatedly, as often as possible, usually because it's the tactically optimal choice in the situation. One usually wants to avoid making powers that encourage spamming them, because if one action is always the clearly superior choice there's no incentive to be creative or clever with a PC's actions.



General Balance Considerations

Better Gifts and Worse Gifts

Is it ever appropriate to give a Word a gift that is flatly inferior to a gift possessed by another Word? In brief, yes, but you have to be careful about balancing the scopes of different Words when you do so. Not every Word should be equally good for all purposes, and sometimes there's a debatable range between being perfectly suited for a function and being unable to perform it at all.

The Words in the *Godbound* core book usually illustrate the peak performance for most functions. Gifts should not generally be objectively better than the best ones in that core book, even if a Word seems ideal for a particular gift. This is not an unbreakable rule, but it is one you should keep in mind when balancing gifts.

Words that are of a narrower scope than existing Words should not necessarily have superior effects. A Word of Wolves, for example, should not automatically grant more potent wolf-powers than the Word of Beasts. It may explore aspects of that narrower focus that the larger Word does not focus on, such as a Wolf-Word giving powers of pack coordination, howl-based effects, and prey-animal culling, but in general, a narrow Word does not try to compensate for its narrowness with more powerful abilities. It simply has access to effects that might be too marginal or tangential to the broader Word for them to be justified otherwise.

Effort Costs

When deciding how to price Effort costs for a gift, there are a few general guidelines to keep in mind. The price you choose will influence how often the gift can be used and what kind of compromises the PC will need to make with their other abilities.

Constant gifts with no Effort costs should generally be reserved for passive defenses or relatively minor always-on qualities and abilities. Immunity gifts are often Constant, as are special modes of movement like vertical climbing or flight. The weapon-boosting gifts of martial Words are usually Constant, along with any gifts that boost Armor Class. When you make a gift Constant, you're making it constantly and perpetually available to the PC, so you should save this pricing for those powers you always want the PC to have at the ready.

Gifts that require Effort to be Committed while in use are one step more restricted. Most of these gifts are On Turn abilities that can be flipped on and off easily at the PC's discretion. A weapon-boosting gift from a less violent Word might require Committed Effort, but the PC can just turn it on before attacking and turn it off afterwards. Usually, this is not a significant limit on the gift's usability, but it does require the PC to actually *have* a free point of Effort to Commit. If they have several gifts of this type and they've already burnt some of their Effort, they might have to pick and choose which abilities to keep active at once. Choose this pricing for a gift if you want it to usually be accessible, but potentially limited if the PC is down to their last point or two of Effort, or unavailable if they've run dry entirely.

Scene-long Effort Commitment is for powers you want to be available every scene, but not unlimited in their use within that scene. Most bread-and-butter combat powers should fall into this category, things stronger than a mere normal attack that still don't push the limits of the Word's power. Instant defensive powers that

only deflect a single attack or instance of damage should also usually be priced at this level. Most players aren't too reluctant to use scene-long Effort Commitments, because they know they're only expending resources for this particular scene.

Day-long Effort Commitment is for the most powerful and restricted exhibitions of divine power. A player who uses a power like this is limiting their available resources for the rest of the day and limiting their available power for every future encounter that same day. A player can burn their entire Effort pool on scene-long costs without hindering themselves at all for the rest of the day, but every day-long Effort burn shrinks them until they can refresh for the day. Save costs like this for those powers that push the limits of a Word's available effects.

Do not create powers that require multiple Effort points to activate. Daily Effort represents the absolute most the PC can get out of their Word, with the single exception of miracles that mimic powers that already cost day-long Effort. If an effect is so powerful or all-encompassing that it seems like it should cost more than one point of Effort, it's probably too big an effect; maybe the PC can do it with Dominion spends instead, but they can't just miracle it up no matter how many Effort points they have to spend.

Do not lightly create powers with unique Effort recovery conditions. It can seem neat at the time to make a gift that only returns its Effort when a particular circumstance happens, or that returns a flat 30 seconds after being Committed instead of at the end of the scene, but every unique recovery condition is one more timer to track. As it stands, a player only has three possible conditions that return their Effort: when they stop using the power, when the scene ends, or when they rest for the day. Adding additional factors to track is often more bookkeeping than it's worth.

Keeping Gifts Flat

Many games have progressive, "stacked" ability chains, where you purchase the simplest version of an ability at one point and then acquire other powers that gradually increase the effectiveness of the original purchase. Other games require "trees" of development, where you aren't allowed to purchase *Advanced Wombat Rancher* without having already acquired the *Greenhorn Wombat Rancher* ability. Neither of these design patterns are a good fit for *Godbound*.

Every gift you create should be stand-alone in nature. It should require no prerequisites and the other gifts in the Word should not directly interface with it to make it stronger. Indirect synergy is fine; if one gift turns cheese into gold and another gift allows you to summon gouda, then there's a clear but acceptable synergy between the gifts. If one gift allows you to turn cheese into gold, but another gift simply broadens the first into allowing you to turn cheese into depleted uranium, or removes the Effort cost from the dairy transmutation, then there's a problem.

Marginal gift augmentations like those are fundamentally boring powers. Very few players get excited over marginal improvement of their existing abilities, and there's not much intrinsic drama in laboriously developing the ability to do +2 damage with your *Divine Wrath*. There is a breed of character optimizer who really does love that kind of fine-tuning, but *Godbound's* chassis is not well-built to satisfy that urge in the first place, and it's not likely

to pay off effort spent trying to make it that way. It is much more exciting and interesting to acquire entirely new powers and abilities when you buy gifts.

Marginal gift augmentations also eat up gift points and limit character distinctiveness. If gift Z requires both gift X and gift Y to get the best results out of it, then everybody who buys gift Z will be strongly incentivized to buy X and Y as well... and thus sink half their available gift points into a single base power. Anyone who doesn't buy those add-on gifts will be constantly reminded that they aren't using gift Z to its full effectiveness, and that's rarely a fun reminder for most players.

"Feat trees" should be vigorously shunned in *Godbound*. Nobody should be forced to buy prerequisite gifts or reach a minimum level in order to get any Word's gifts. A Word's entire range of powers should be available to PCs from the first level. There may be some special cases in which Word progression is linked to level, such as with Apotheosis, but even then, the abilities are all granted automatically at a given level and there are no optimization decisions to be made.

There are several reasons for avoiding gift trees in designing your Word. First, the absence of gift trees makes build planning much less important. The more complex and intricate your trees, the more effort players have to make to ensure that they take the right gifts at the right levels in order to reach their ultimate desired abilities as soon as possible. Build planning is not a well-supported feature of play in *Godbound* and it doesn't work well to try to retrofit it into it. It is much easier for everyone to let players pick gifts each level without worrying about what opportunities they might be locking out through an incautious point allocation.

In addition, the absence of gift trees makes clear that every *Godbound* has full access to their Words from the very first moment of their creation. A high-level *Godbound* of Fire is not more Fiery than a newbie with the Word. Both of them have the exact same theoretical range of abilities, even if the high-level *Godbound* might do more damage with their *Divine Wrath* or have more Effort to fuel those abilities.

This similarity of scope helps spare particular concepts from feeling the strain of not being invested enough into their key Words. If a player's concept is "A *Godbound* of primal Fire", then they should be able to feel like they have built that concept from the very first level. There should not be additional optional fiery-things that they could purchase to make themselves even more burnination-focused, or else a certain type of player will feel absolutely compelled to buy these things, simply to make their PC the flaming-est of fire gods. It is for reasons like this that the Theotechnology Low Magic tradition doesn't particularly stack with the Word of Artifice, or why an archmage of the Cinnabar Order can't do anything that an ordinary Fire *Godbound* can't already do. A player should never have to feel like they need to buy extra junk just to wring out a last small drop of concept fulfillment.

Miracles and Specific Utility

When you make a gift, make sure you're not creating something so specific and situational that a *Godbound* will only ever use miracles to emulate the gift rather than feel any inclination to purchase it. This is especially important when you're creating non-combat gifts with limited time pressure in their applicability. For example, when you need to launch a blast of divine wrath at someone, you

probably care about saving your Effort for the fight at hand. Yet when you need to scry out the location of a distant enemy, you can probably postpone the divination until it's convenient, and Effort expenses won't mean much to you then. If there's no time pressure in using a gift there's much less motivation to purchase it as a gift rather than emulating it with a miracle.

This is not inevitably a bad thing. By creating the gift, you're showing the player that the feat is possible and giving yourself notice that it might come up. It's not necessary that the PC purchase every useful power their Words could theoretically give them, and choosing to use miracles to emulate some of their abilities is a perfectly reasonable and necessary compromise.

It becomes a bad thing when you've created a gift that *never* has a situation where it could be plausibly better as a purchased gift than as a miracle. If you can't look at a gift and see at least some predictable situations where the player would want to have it on tap as a gift, then you have two options.

First, you can change the gift so it has more time pressure attached. You can adjust it so the PC either has to use it regularly to keep its benefits, thus making it too expensive to miracle for very long, or you can compel it to be used immediately when a time-sensitive situation comes up, thus making it impossible to delay its use until the PC has a conveniently large supply of unneeded Effort. Combat-focused gifts almost always have too much time pressure to be conveniently miracled, but social influence gifts can also be made more time-sensitive by forcing their use in response to some triggering action or situation rather than letting the PC decide when they want to employ them.

Second, you can simply say that the gift can't be miracled. This is usually not the best way to do things, as it adds a further special-case complication to the ability and it can smack of arbitrariness. The most likely case for this choice is a powerful greater gift that does something specialized but extremely potent, such as a gift that interfaces with the Faction system to create domain-wide alterations, or a gift that creates some large-scale change or object. There are very few situations in which this option is appropriate for a lesser gift.

Reskinning Gifts

Never feel shy about simply copying gifts from other Words and changing their flavor or detail to fit your own immediate need. If you need a summoning gift, there's nothing wrong with just copying Death's *A Pale Crown Beckons* and changing the type of Mobs called into more appropriate creatures. Where the gift doesn't necessarily fit, as with Death's ability to create greater undead, you might trim the excess, or exchange it for a different rider benefit, or otherwise remix it slightly to better fit your chosen Word.

The only time you should be cautious about this is when you're copying a gift that strongly relates to a Word's particular strengths. For example, Endurance has the *Unbreakable* gift to make the user immune to all physical harm for a round. While you could simply copy that directly for another Word, you'll want to be sure that the destination Word really *deserves* a gift that strong in that particular way. Endurance has very strong defensive gifts because it is entirely useless in directly affecting the world around the possessor. If you cherry-pick its best powers for your own new Word, you might be giving your new creation more credit than it deserves. Some gifts really should be exclusive to particular types of Words.

Types of Damage

Godbound does not rigidly define damage types. The divine smittings of a fire god might be fire-based damage, and a sword goddess might quite clearly be inflicting sword-based trauma on a target, but there is not a specific "Fire" or "Sword" keyword attached to those damage types. The powers of the divine are so fluid and far-reaching that the GM is the only one who can reliably and consistently tell what kind of trauma is being inflicted on a target.

These distinctions matter when it comes time to apply a target's defenses. An ice giant is unlikely to be troubled by a blast of freezing wind, but is a blade of razor-sharp ice a cold attack or a sword attack? Is a bolt of eldritch energy hurled by a furious lich-lord a source of physical damage, or is it a spiritual wound to the target's soul? The GM is the one who has to make these calls, but there are some guidelines you can use to simplify the matter and distinguish the damage inflicted by new gifts you create.

The two main damage types are physical and non-physical. Most defensive gifts are built to shrug off physical damage, such as the *Unbreakable* gift of Endurance. It doesn't matter whether the physical damage is coming from a sharp edge or a lava bath or a blast of disruptive eldritch force; if it's damage that leaves physical marks, then it's probably physical damage and can be blocked by such gifts.

Non-physical damage might be an emotional attack, a psychic assault, an inrush of unbearable cosmic insight, a soul-withering curse, or anything else that doesn't leave a physical signature of its passing. Non-physical damage is useless for breaking or damaging physical objects, but there are also far fewer gifts that allow defense against the harm it does. Note that some non-physical attacks still require a conventional attack roll to hit, and normal armor does provide the kind of psychic encouragement and confidence that can help the wearer fend off the intrusion. In reality, of course, this is simply a justification to spare the GM from having to keep track of multiple types of Armor Class. You could require a separate score be kept, but this usually isn't going to be worth the effort.

When you build a gift that does damage, have a clear idea of which of the two types it's inflicting. Unless the Word involved is very intellectual or emotional in nature, the damage should probably be physical. Words should not generally be able to invoke both types of damage. While one can imagine the horror of War inflicting a fear-based trauma on a target, it's much easier to imagine a host of sharp spears inflicting a much less metaphorical injury. Words that can easily use both types of damage have a distinct advantage in overcoming a target's defensive gifts, because they'll always have the right sharp tool for the job.

Emotional and mental damage can kill just as effectively as physical injuries. A foe brought to zero hit points by an unbearable cosmic perspective might collapse from a brain aneurysm or cut their own throat in a desperate attempt to escape the knowledge. Some gifts that do non-physical damage might have different results when they bring a target to zero hit points, such as enslaving them or causing only temporary incapacitation. If a gift does something useful with a downed target, such as turning it into a thrall, then that benefit should be taken into account when balancing it. A gift that can kill a target, or knock them unconscious, or bewitch them into servitude is much more useful than a gift that can only disembowel someone.

Note that some defensive gifts give a target an invulnerable immunity to mind-affecting powers. It's up to you as to whether these immunities affect damaging powers that simply use mental or emotional energies to hurt the target. By default, they protect only against non-damaging mental effects; a psychic who blasts a target with a bolt of mental static will still be able to inflict hit point damage on the subject, but they won't be able to read the victim's mind or control the target's emotions. You might choose to allow these gifts to provide a blanket protection against mental hit point loss, but in that case you make such defenses much more attractive to players and you might render whole classes of enemies unable to do direct hit point damage to the heroes.

Cosmic Power At Your Gaming Table

Throughout the rest of this section, it is absolutely critical that you keep in mind the particular situation and personalities of your own gaming table. When GMing a game with the scope and flexibility of *Godbound*, there is no substitution for your own personal knowledge of your fellow players and their particular habits and play styles.

Whenever a GM is moved to create their own rule content, like new Words or gifts, there's always the worry about whether or not the content is balanced. GMs sometimes approach this balance question by considering the widest possible range of player behavior and the most abusive edge-case uses of the power they can imagine. This is a very good way for a game designer to approach new mechanical content. It is not so good for an individual GM.

A game designer is obligated to think about general types of players and the full likely spectrum of use that their content is going to be put to. They have to think about character optimizers, rule skimmers, textual ambiguities, math phobics, and general mechanical consistency. They have to think about these things because their game is going to be played by the broad public.

For the individual GM, however, the only people that matter are the ones sitting across them at the table. As a GM, you know your friends and the way they play the game. You can make sensible guesses about whether or not particular powers are going to cause problems in a particular person's hands. And even if you misstep, you're going to be right there and able to talk to the player about the power and its intended use.

The fact that you are going to be right there to clear up ambiguities, rule on edge cases, and work with the power's users to find an acceptable take on things allows you tremendous freedom compared to a distant game designer. You should not be intimidated by the fear of "getting it wrong". You're going to be sitting right there, so even if something does go wrong, you can immediately reach in and work out a way to make it right again.

Godbound is built on a very traditional mechanical chassis that has handled tremendous amounts of use, abuse, mutation, and mutilation over the decades. With your knowledge of your players, your close proximity to events, and your ability to quickly deal with unexpected issues, there is very little you can do to the game that would risk unfixable damage to your group's fun.

Specific Types of Gifts

Armor-Booster Gifts

Some Words with connotations of protection, durability, evasion, or other defensive nuances might have gifts that grant a base Armor Class of 3. While it's trivial for a PC to find armor that grants a comparable AC, armor comes with substantial saving throw penalties, and so combat-focused PCs might be expected to look for an armor-boosting gift if no examples are already listed among their Words. It's usually not a significant balance concern to let them have one.

Most armor-boosting gifts should be Constant, giving a flat AC 3 modified only by the PC's Dexterity attribute, though some Words might involve the obdurate endurance of Constitution, the supernal foresight of Wisdom, or the defensive quality of some other attribute instead. If you have the gift use a different attribute then keep in mind any intrinsic boosts that Word gives the attribute or else your supposed base AC 3 gift is actually automatically granting AC 1 or 0. This may or may not be your intended desire.

Aside from a flat AC benefit, the gift should also have a rider granting a separate defensive bonus. The list adjacent offers some suggestions, but it's important to remember that these riders should usually be defensive in nature and passive, rather than an actively-used benefit. It's okay for a spider-goddess to have a bonus rider that lets her slip out of any physical bindings or webs, but throwing in an active webslinging ability or multiple limb growth power is perhaps a little too active. If you bundle active powers in with passive defenses, you'll get PCs who want only one side of the coin ending up with both automatically.

Also keep in mind that concept-required defensive qualities of the Word should not be bundled into its armor-booster gift. The spider-goddess should clearly be able to ignore poisons, but if you bundle that into her armor-booster, then every spider-goddess who wants to be able to ignore poisons will also have an AC of 3. If a

Attack-Booster Gifts

There are gifts that do not directly inflict damage on a target, but instead augment the PC's own attacks in some way. Some of these gifts may cause normal attacks to automatically hit, or do maximum damage, or turn damage straight against Mobs or single targets, or in some other way augment the PC's normal attacks. These are distinguished from weapon-booster gifts because they do more than simply increase the damage die and allow any relevant attribute to modify the attack. *Fists of Black Iron* is a weapon-booster, but *Loosening God's Teeth* is an attack-booster.

Most attack-boosters should focus on an augmentation to a single attack. Perhaps it ensures an automatic hit for maximum damage, or negates certain kinds of non-invulnerable defenses, or inflicts a penalty on the target, or does extra damage to Mobs. Such attack-boosters should be On Turn actions used in conjunction with an attack and usually cost Effort for the scene.

Most attack-boosters should not be Smites unless their effects are so powerful that they're roughly equivalent to the *Divine Wrath* or *Corona of Fury* universal gifts. It's acceptable for an attack-booster

Example Rider Benefits

Immunity to an energy type peripherally related to the Word
Immunity to surprise for knowledge or speed-based Words
No need for air, food or rest for non-human-based Words
Very specific, narrow immunity to one type of harm or weapon
The ability to move across a Word-related element
Automatically evade the first attack of a specific type per fight
Gain an extra hit point per character level for hardy Words
Act freely and without harm in a related hostile environment
Small backlash damage against certain narrow attack types
Immune to one type of hazard related to the Word
Free counterattack when attacked by a specific narrow effect
The first hit on them in a fight causes a modest debuff on the foe
Share a Word-intrinsic immunity for an Effort cost
Gain a small Word-related buff after the first hit per fight
Expand an intrinsic Word immunity slightly
Allow the use of a different attribute to calculate Armor Class

defensive quality is so important that it seems that every bearer of the Word should have it, put it in the Word's intrinsic abilities.

Note that an extremely high-Dexterity PC with a shield and heavy armor will still have the very best AC in the game, getting it down to -1. Such a tanky hero is paying dearly in saving throw penalties, however. If a PC wants the absolute best AC they can get, then they should have to make trade-offs like that, and they shouldn't simply be able to throw gift points at the problem.

er to be considerably weaker in direct damage than those gifts, because even a PC determined to pump out as much damage as possible in the shortest amount of time needs to have some action to fill the off-turns when he can't use another Smiter power. In addition, at low levels, it may be more efficient for the PC to rely on a certain-to-hit normal attack that will automatically inflict 4 points of damage than to launch 1 or 2 die *Divine Wrath* Smites every other round.

One thing to avoid in attack-booster gifts is any augment that allows an attack to pierce an invulnerable defense. While it's not unimaginable to create a gift that allows an attack to get through an invulnerable defense, it's almost always a very bad idea. The minute such a gift exists, every PC who wants a source of certain and unavoidable damage is going to feel compelled to get access to it, and the complications of figuring out how to harm a powerful opponent vanish in a blaze of Effort spends. In the same vein, enemies will pop up that can do unavoidable damage to any PC, thus eliminating a lot of tactical considerations in a fight.

Damage-Negation Gifts

Some Words might justify Instant powers to negate a particular attack or damage source. Unless the Word is clearly defensive, martial, or protective in nature, these instant defenses should not be broadly universal. While you could probably come up with a way to make the Word of Passion sway the heart of a vicious foe just before he stabs the passion-god, the Word of Passion should not be sporting an instant damage-negator gift. This is not to say that the player should never be allowed to throw a miracle that performs a similar effect when the situation is extremely apt, but it should never be an assumed option.

Even strictly martial Words like Bow shouldn't necessarily be given universal physical damage-negators. Bow is a very flexible Word about offense and all of its abilities are easily used at range. If it also had the same defensive potential as Sword or Endurance, a combatant would have limited reason to choose anything but Bow for all their murder needs.

The broadest and most powerful defensive gifts should apply to any type of physical injury. Blades, fangs, energy bolts, molten lava, plunging falls... any form of hurt that damages the body should be deflected by these gifts. The great majority of trauma that a PC is likely to face will take the form of this kind of physical injury. Such a gift should explicitly not protect against mental or emotional damage, because such a universal defensive power effectively

Direct-Damage Gifts

Some gifts simply inflict direct damage on a target. The base template for these powers should be the universal *Divine Wrath* and *Corona of Fury* gifts. Thus, a single-target blast should inflict 1d8 damage per character level, while an area-effect power should affect a visible target and a 30-foot radius around it, inflicting 1d8 damage per two character levels, rounded up. If the area-effect damage is made to exempt certain targets in the zone, then any hostile foe in it can make an appropriate saving throw to resist the damage entirely. Any direct-damage power on that scale should be a Smite, thus disallowing the PC from spamming it every round, and require the user to Commit Effort for the scene.

Any direct-damage power that isn't a Smite shouldn't do more than half this damage. Otherwise, it would be more efficient for the Godbound to spam this non-Smite power every round, even though it costs twice as much Effort.

Immunity Gifts

Some gifts offer invulnerable immunity to a particular energy, effect, or peril. If you make a gift like this, it should be a categorical immunity; partial resistances are not really in the divine idiom, and they're a lot more annoying to track during actual play. Most immunity gifts should either be Constant, a natural quality of the Godbound, or an Instant or On Turn gift that requires Effort be Committed for as long as the immunity is to hold.

As rough categories, you can think of the usual fantasy elements of fire, cold, electricity and acid, as well as more specific perils such as dangerous sounds, poisons and diseases, particular weapons, particular materials, particular types of foes, or intangible influences such as mind control and emotional charms. You can add more

makes the PC unstoppable until they run out of Effort. If such a broad power exists at all, its maintenance should be keyed to some circumstance or limit on the PC's own actions, so as to give them some real tactical choices in a combat and prevent them from turtling under it whenever things get sticky.

More restricted defensive gifts might only protect against emotional or mental damage sources. If you create a gift like this, it's best not to be too precise in your definitions. Allowing such a gift to protect against any intangible source of hit point damage, whether it's a bolt of killing dread or a mind-melting glimpse into cosmic truths, is probably the minimum scope that's worth a gift. You might allow even more restricted immunities, like defense against any injury from a beast, or a virgin, or a weapon made of metal, but these kind of instant defenses are best used as a supplementary benefit on some larger gift. Avoid giving the same Word gifts to ignore both physical and non-physical damage.

Damage-negation gifts come in two main types: Instant gifts that negate a single instance of the damage, such as after a successful hit or hostile power use, and On Turn gifts that make the user immune to any instance of the damage until the start of their next turn. The former should be lesser gifts that require Effort to be Committed for the scene, while the latter should normally be greater gifts that require day-long Effort Commitment.

If a direct-damage gift has an additional effect, such as debuffing, ensnaring, exceptionally large areas of effect, or creating hazardous zones, the damage should be lowered accordingly, usually to about half of what it otherwise would be. If you do this, it's better to have a very clearly useful or widely-applicable rider effect than try to wring out a few extra dice of damage for a weak rider.

It can be tempting to allow a larger amount of damage if the gift is taken as a greater gift rather than a lesser one. Resist this impulse. Direct-damage greater gifts shouldn't be doing much more damage than lesser, if any at all. Instead, they should have more useful rider effects or secondary effects. If you focus too much on raising the maximum damage a PC can do in a round, you make it more and more enticing for the PC to simply dump all their Effort into their biggest divine smiting-gifts rather than try to think of some more creative way to use their powers.

potential immunity categories, but make sure that they are both clearly defined and relevant in play. A stellar Godbound might be able to become immune to radiation, but make sure that you know what "radiation" means in your campaign, and whether you mean strictly ionizing radiation or anything that emits electromagnetic energy. By the same token, if you only mean ionizing radiation, make sure that it's actually a problem in your campaign.

Is this immunity so infrequently important that the Godbound is better off just using a miracle to emulate it whenever they need it? Then the gift needs some kind of more generally-useful bonus rider. You might attach the immunity as a bonus Constant effect to some other gift that needs a little boosting.

Instant Death Gifts

Gifts that instantly kill, enslave, or completely debilitate a target should follow a few basic guidelines. First, it's important to be able to recognize when a gift actually qualifies as an "instant death" gift. If the use of the gift on a target would take it completely out of the fight, subvert it to the user's will, or otherwise render it incapable of opposing the pantheon, then it's effectively an instant death gift. It doesn't matter if the target is still breathing if they can't do anything to stop the PCs, and you shouldn't let a "soft" pacifying gift pass just because it doesn't cause the target's head to explode.

Second, they should always grant worthy foes an appropriate saving throw. As most powerful worthy foes can Commit Effort to auto-succeed on a failed saving throw, this makes instant death gifts effective chiefly as a way to drain a worthy foe's Effort or take down a drained target with one lucky gift use. Barring some special circumstance, PCs should not be able to reliably take out worthy foes with 10+ hit dice without reducing them to zero hit dice or zero Effort. If instant death gifts are too effective against worthy foes, the PCs are incentivized to simply spam these abilities until the target blows a saving throw.

Third, single lesser foes should have no chance against an instant death gift. If a Godbound cares enough about taking on a lone lesser foe, that lesser foe is going to go down. Against a Mob of lesser foes, a gift might be able to temporarily control or incapacitate the entire Mob, but hit point damage should probably be limited to inflicting normal attack damage straight, or tripling other damage.

Knowledge Gathering Gifts

Gifts that grant knowledge to the user are a staple of certain Words, but they also have consequences for adventure design and campaign construction. You shouldn't be afraid of including them in your game, but once they're in there, a GM is going to have to keep them in mind when building challenges and adventures.

As a general rule, a Word should be able to find out information about itself. The Word of the Sword is probably going to have an easy time analyzing the magical powers of an artifact sword, the Word of Earth is going to be able to find the weak spot in that stone wall, and the Word of Deception is going to be able to figure out if someone is lying to them. Some of these tricks might be regularly useful enough to be made gifts rather than miracles.

Some Words are also able to find out information about other things. The sight purview of the Word of the Sun is good at seeing things that are hidden, the Knowledge Word is all about discovering facts in general, and a hypothetical Word of Secrets might be able to effortlessly pull secrets out of a man's head. Such Words should have gifts that formalize this process for easier handling.

As a GM, you shouldn't be afraid of these gifts. Yes, they may trivialize many kinds of mysteries and eliminate certain kinds of ignorance or confusion as an effective challenge to the pantheon. This is no surprise; having a God of War in the party trivializes mortal armies as an effective challenge to the pantheon, but you can still make perfectly interesting and difficult adventures for a pantheon. The key is to not hang a primary challenge on something you know the PCs will be able to overcome easily.

When you build a knowledge gathering gift, think about the class of challenges that it will trivialize. If you have a gift that im-

mediately identifies the murderer of a person who died by violence, then murder mysteries are not going to eat up much time at your table. If you have a gift that infallibly detects traitors, then picking out the treasonous vizier won't be too big a problem. Remember this when it comes time to build challenges for a pantheon.

Whenever you run into an adventure-building situation where you know a challenge will be trivialized by a knowledge gift, just shift the locus a little so that knowing the truth is only half the battle. Maybe the Godbound knows exactly who the murderer is, but they're politically untouchable, and any attempt to bring them to justice would be seen as a coup engineered by their enemies. Maybe the group easily sees the vizier is the secret traitor, but it's also the vizier's charisma that is currently holding the court together while he tries to replace the padishah. Knowing the truth should never be useless or irrelevant to the Godbound, or else the gift is pointless, but it doesn't necessarily have to erase the challenge.

Setting the Effort cost for knowledge gathering gifts can be difficult. If the gift can be used at the possessor's convenience, there's not much point in giving it any Effort cost at all; they can just wait until they have plenty of leisure to use it. If you want to prevent it being spammed, then you can give it a daily Effort cost. If the gift has to be used in a specific situation, such as when facing the subject of their curiosity, or when a certain event has just happened, then either a scene-long or day-long Effort commitment as appropriate. It's often useful to add a different limit to the re-use of a very broad divination gift, such as requiring a certain amount of time before using it again, or requiring that the situation change before it can be used on the same topic.



Object Creation Gifts

Many gifts or miracles might result in the creation of physical objects or materials. These gifts aren't usually difficult to balance, but a GM needs to keep in mind the campaign consequences for allowing huge amounts of these materials to enter the game.

Powers that create small amounts of a Word-appropriate material or object are so trivial that they aren't really worth a gift. An earth god is not going to run out of rocks, a fire god is not going to need to specially focus to light a campfire, and a god of wealth is not going to have an empty purse when the bar bill arrives. Minor role-playing flavor conjurations like this aren't even worth tracking as a miracle or other Effort cost. You only need to think about gifts or miracles when the Godbound is using their abilities to solve a significant problem they face, one big enough that even a Godbound needs to take it seriously.

The default lesser gift for creating materials appropriate to a Word allows for creating a 20 foot cube of the matter per character level. If this requires Effort Commitment for the scene, then it's a lesser gift. If it can be done indefinitely with no Effort cost, it's a greater gift. The difference between the two lies chiefly in what the gift can accomplish during downtime.

During the time between adventures, a power with no Effort limit can be used to create truly tremendous amounts of the material. Even a first level Godbound with Earth's *Builder of Mountain Peaks* gift can conjure up 8,000 cubic feet of rock every six seconds for as long as they feel like doing it. In an hour, that's 4.8 million cubic feet of rock. In nineteen hours, that's about enough rock to recreate the Great Pyramid of Giza. At fifth level, he's making that much rock between breakfast and lunch.

If he had to Commit Effort every time he used that power, however, at first level he could only manage about 16,000 cubic feet every fifteen minutes or so. Working round the clock without rest, it'd take him two months to recreate the pyramid, which is usually

longer than the downtime between adventures lasts unless the PCs are intentionally focusing on their own projects. Material creation that costs Effort can usually solve any immediate problem that requires a lot of the given material, but it can't easily create the kind of campaign-influencing amounts that Effortless creation can.

Be careful to keep the guidelines on walls and zones of danger in mind when adjudicating mass material creation. Walls and snares take a round to form, so mobile targets can usually escape being trapped in them. Even if they are ensnared, the usual damage from a hostile zone is one point per Godbound level per round they remain in it. If they have to break through a wall or tear free from a trap, it usually takes three times the Godbound's level in hit point damage before a creature-sized hole is punched, unless the wall's so thick and the assailants so mortal that it seems entirely implausible for them to break it.

Conjured materials created via gift usually remain in existence indefinitely unless the Godbound chooses to banish them. Objects created via miracle usually don't last more than a scene, unless they're relatively minor enough or mundane enough that the GM decides they stick around.

Conjured materials are usually unusable for magical or ritual purposes. If a Theotechnological procedure requires 2 Wealth points of components, for example, the PCs need to actually find 2 non-conjured Wealth points worth of materials to do the job. They might find it relatively simple to trade conjured gold or summoned cattle for the parts, but they can't simply have a Godbound of Artifice whistle up suitable parts. Also, keep in mind the effects of inflation and market distortions if the PCs dump a massive amount of a particular material on the market. There may be second-order effects of bankruptcies, social disturbances, and outraged nobles if they just waltz in and blow up the local economy with massive amounts of gold, wool, or black lotus extract.

Summoning Gifts

A basic lesser gift that summons swarms of minions should call one Small Mob of 1 HD creatures per three character levels, rounded up. Conversely, it might instead summon a single minion with significantly stronger stats or some particular magical powers that are likely to be useful even outside of a combat situation.

If a gift is only useful for summoning Mobs, then the Mobs should probably be superior to the standard 1 HD human soldier. They might have flight, or immunity to some kinds of weapons, or a particular magical power that would be useful in combat. Generally avoid giving them a dramatically better hit bonus, however; the advantage of summoning a Mob is that they are a large lump of hit dice that can tie up lesser foes and clog important locations. If they have an excellent hit bonus too, they become more dangerous opponents than a single summoned creature.

If the gift only summons single minions, then the creature should probably have twice the PC's level in hit dice up to 15 HD, a hit bonus equal to twice the PC's level up to +10, an AC of 5, and two normal attacks that do 1d10 damage. Adding a few purpose-chosen magical abilities might be appropriate as well, though none of them should be as powerful as a lesser gift.

Remember that summoned creatures don't necessarily have to serve as simple battle-fodder. Some Words may summon servitors that are much more useful for non-combat purposes, such as infiltrators, seducers, builders, or some other function more apposite to the Word. Even a martial summons might be put to less bloody work if the Godbound needs an easily-disposable set of hands.

Summoned creatures should usually last until the Godbound uses the gift again. The point with that duration limit is to keep the Godbound from spamming the gift multiple times to create a huge army of minions. Instead, the gift's limits ensure that the PC won't ever have more than a certain number of Mobs or a single more powerful servitor summoned by the gift. A Godbound might spam the gift to renew Mobs that have been destroyed or re-summon minions that have been struck down, but that's an acceptable use of the ability.

Most summoned creatures should be slavishly loyal to the Godbound and willing to face even certain destruction for their maker. If the summoned creatures have their own will and can choose to disobey their creator, it might balance some relatively minor boost to their abilities. Keep in mind, however, that the Godbound will usually be summoning them in situations where their limits don't interfere with the PC's desired end.

Summoning gifts should usually require Effort to be Committed for the scene. They should never be free, unless you particularly like the idea of the Godbound having a perpetually-renewed minion buffer in every fight, or you put in some other situational limit that prevents them from quickly replenishing weakened hordes. Daily-length Commitment is rarely much more burdensome than a scene-long Commitment for summoning gifts, because it's all too easy for a PC to pay it during downtime and simply keep the summoned minion around for later. It will, however, discourage a PC from keeping their hordes fully replenished throughout the day.



Weapon-Booster Gifts

Gifts that allow a PC to treat their attacks as magical weapons that do 1d10 damage are some of the very easiest gifts to make, and all but the most pacifistic Words should probably have the option of taking such a gift. Unless there's a clear reason why the gift should be melee-only, it's generally best to give it a 200-foot range, with some less tangible or physical modes of violence plausibly extending out to sight range.

This gift should usually require the PC to Commit Effort as an On Turn action to turn it on. Of course, since they can simply turn it off after using it, that point of Effort is still going to be available for other uses. If they've run completely dry, however, they won't be able to turn on their weapon-boosting gift. If the Word is particularly martial or violent in nature, or it seems logical that such a weapon gift should be more natural to the PC, you might simply make it a Constant gift instead that requires no Commitment.

Every weapon-booster gift should have a small bonus attached to the attack. While the ability to use any plausible attribute to add to the attack's damage or hit bonus is a clear benefit, a divine gift needs a little something extra to make it more impressive than an ordinary sword or magnetic rifle. If a PC takes multiple weapon-booster gifts, these riders should stack unless they are clearly contradictory.

Below are some suggested ideas for riders. While you could theoretically make a gift with several of these riders, perhaps at an extra Effort cost, be wary of complicating a PC's bread-and-butter attack. Multiple conditions to remember make for easy forgetting. In addition, some examples reference very narrow or somewhat narrow classes of enemies. Very narrow might specify a single rare type of foe, such as Uncreated, where somewhat narrow would reference either a single type of less-commonly-rare foe, such as undead, or a restricted class of humans, such as officials or the aged.

Example Rider Benefits

Always hit a very narrow type of target associated with the Word

Always inflict at least 1 point of damage with each attack

Ignore cover between the attacker and the target

Do additional damage to a somewhat narrow type of target

Grant a hit bonus when in a Word-related condition or place

Automatically hit a target who has successfully harmed the wielder within the last round

Instantly kill a somewhat narrow type of lesser foe on a hit

Once per fight, automatically inflict maximum damage on a hit

Grant an unusually long-ranged attack

Destroy or punch through a Word-related inanimate material

Inflict one point of damage the round after a hit lands, also

Appear non-harmful to lesser foes other than the target

Inflict a Word-related permanent debility on a target brought to zero hit points instead of killing them outright

At will, apply a small debuff in lieu of inflicting damage

Allow fatal damage to be suspended by the wielder for some time

Allow a free attack against a foe in a rare Word-related situation

Meta-Game Gifts

Sometimes you'll have in mind a gift that changes some of the basic systems of the game or interacts with them at a "meta-game" level, such as a gift that directly adds a Feature to a faction allied with the Godbound, or one that lets them spend Dominion in ways not allowed to other PCs.

These gifts are not necessarily a bad idea. The basic mechanical chassis of *Godbound* is intended to be wrenched and tuned and molded to the preferences of the play group, and its loose tolerances allow a tremendous amount of modification without breaking anything too critical for fun. You should feel free to give your players chances to meddle with the bones of the rules, and there are a few basic types of meta-game gifts that come up more often than others.

Add a Feature to a faction. These gifts should not be allowed to be used as miracles. The Features they add shouldn't create Trouble for the recipient faction. The scale of the Feature should always be at least equal to any opposing Feature, so even though the Godbound blesses a tiny village with "Incredible Scholarly Prowess", it's an equal match for an empire's academic Feature and wouldn't suffer penalties if opposing it. Generally, this Feature should be applicable to only one faction at a time.

Grant more Dominion points, either as an innate increase in Dominion when certain events happen or as points of free Dominion that can only be spent on a narrow subset of possible choices. In both cases, the gift should not be allowed to be used as a miracle. The extra Dominion should be limited to an extra point per session, and if it can be used freely it ought to be no certain thing for the PC to earn it every session. If it can only be applied to a narrow type of activity, it can come more reliably. Dominion spent this way does count for purposes of minimum Dominion spends for advancing a level.

Function as an offensive or defensive dispel. These gifts can be particularly hazardous if they allow general and reliable offensive dispelling of a target's powers. While it's true that the PC might be stuck burning all their Effort and actions dispelling a major foe's powers, that foe will be unable to do anything but perform normal attacks until the PC runs out of Effort, which may give their pantheon-mates plenty of time to beat them down. Defensive dispels are slightly less dangerous, but again, if the gift applies generally rather than to a more narrow scope of effects, the PC is functionally immune to enemy powers until they run out of Effort. At most, allow general dispelling powers to be used once per scene per foe, or else they can become a too-simple response.

Ignore counter-Godbound effects. The *Cold Breath* of the Uncreated, empyrean and mundus wards, the anti-magic of Lomite Stiflers, and other effects are made to complicate life for a Godbound. If you let a PC just buy a gift to ignore them, it narrows your toolbox of challenges. If you allow it, tie it to a Word-related limit or situation.

Words of Creation

This section of the book provides examples of new Words that a freshly-awakened Godbound can take to define their divine powers. If you are introducing the *Lexicon of the Throne* to an existing campaign, some players might find the Words provided here to be a more precise fit to their characters than the ones they've already selected from the core *Godbound* rule book. There's usually little reason to refrain from allowing them to swap out some of their existing Words and gifts for ones from this book.

Aside from providing fresh Words to add to your campaign, these entries also give examples of what new Words might look like, and provide gifts for you to scavenge, reskin, and reshape for your own home creations. If you do plan to create your own new Words, there are a few general steps you can follow to smooth the process.

Creating New Words

First, figure out exactly what you are trying to accomplish by creating the new Word. Is this a specific request from a player? A new idea you want to flesh out in order to give it to a powerful antagonist? A Word specific to your game setting? Or is it simply an interesting idea you want to develop for your own fun?

If you are building it for a player, figure out what it is the player wants the Word to be able to do. For example, a divinity of the Spear probably has abilities similar to those of the Sword. Is there something the player wants the Word of the Spear to do that the Word of the Sword can't accomplish? If not, it's just a matter of renaming Sword to Spear and describing its use in play accordingly. If the player does want something in particular, like the ability to throw ranged-attack divine spears of furious celestial wrath, then you know at least one gift you're going to have to cook up for your new Word.

A player-requested Word is going to need at least a half-dozen gifts made up for it to cover the specific uses the player wants to accomplish with it. Even if they don't actually buy these gifts, they help clarify the limits of the Word and provide easy templates when a miracle is invoked. Work directly with the player to come up with specific feats they want to accomplish. You don't need to develop the same number of gifts you see in the official Words, you just need to build enough to define the Word and satisfy the player who's taking it.

If you're building it for an antagonist, your job is substantially easier. Antagonists do not have the same detail and particularity that a PC has, and all you really need to define are any specific powers you know the antagonist is going to be using. If you don't anticipate any direct conflicts with the PCs, it's quite possible to do nothing more than decide that the Word exists. If a parasite god of Flowers is so far offscreen that the PCs won't be clashing with him directly any time in the near future, all you need to know is that the god has divine control over all things floral.

If a nearer clash is expected, you'll want to define at least one attack power the wielder will be using, any special defensive gifts they might have, and a couple flavorful buffs, debuffs, or environmental alterations they can invoke. Don't worry too much about costs; let every special power just eat up one point of Effort, and you'll have as much definition as you need for a one-off battle with the foe.

If you're building it as world flavor, then it needs to say something important about your world. A campaign world dominated by massive mountains of gleaming crystal might have a Crystal Word in addition to one of Earth, while a game revolving around different types of time manipulation might have separate Words of Before, After, and Now to control different temporal relations.

You don't need to flesh these Words out unless a player decides they want to pick one for their own PC. In that case, just follow the guidelines listed above for creating Words for player use. The primary use of these Words is simply to underline to the players that these elements are important in your campaign world, or refine in more detail the constituent qualities of a topic that might otherwise be too generally subsumed under a single existing Word. A game that is intensely focused on combat might choose to have more than simply the Sword and Bow Words in order to create more PC differentiation, for example.

If you're building a Word for your own fun, life is simple. Just make as many gifts as you enjoy making, and when it stops being fun, stop working on it. So long as you know that you're doing the work for your own pleasure rather than one of the earlier reasons, there's nothing to be lost from just leaving it alone.

Choosing Intrinsic Word Abilities

Gifts aren't the only thing that a Word grants, however. You also need to decide what intrinsic powers the Word bestows upon those who bond with it.

The most basic perk is to increase a Word-relevant attribute to 16, or to 18 if the attribute is already 16. If you take this route, you should allow a choice of two different attributes if it's plausible, to give a little more flexibility. While this perk alone may be sufficient for some Words, sometimes you need something more, or something different entirely.

A Word should grant immunity to its own natural hazards. Sea gods don't drown and Fire gods don't burn. This immunity may extend beyond conventional "elemental" hazards, such as the stone immunity of the Godbound of Earth, but it should be niche enough that the PC isn't regularly facing foes whose main means of attack are neutralized by the Godbound's intrinsic defenses.

A Word of a specific narrow type of entity, such as beasts or fish or birds should allow the non-suicidal control of and communication with mundane lesser foes of that type. A Wolf-god who can't command wolves without using a miracle is apt to feel awkward. This influence probably shouldn't extend to humans or intelligent creatures, unless it's a very narrow type, such as human members of a specific non-prevalent profession or intelligent creatures of a particular uncommon sapient species.

If there is an ability that every possessor of the Word should have, then put it in the intrinsic benefits. If it is unthinkable that a Bird-god be unable to fly, then put flight into their intrinsic benefits. Don't make a PC pay gift points to earn baseline Word perks.

Understand that some Words will have beefier intrinsic benefits than others, or ones that might be very potent in specific situations while of much less use in others. The more niche or restricted the Word's scope, the less danger there is in granting strong intrinsics.

Birds

The Word of Birds is an example of the kind of powers that might be granted to a paragon of a single type of animal. Such gifts are not more potent than the Word of Beasts, but can touch on powers or graces that might be too tangential to a broader Word.

Those bound to the Word of Birds may fly at their base movement rate and communicate freely with any avian creature. Non-magical avians will never willingly harm them and will obey even suicidal commands from the Godbound, carrying them out with as much intelligence and understanding as a normal human. Birds tend to be susceptible to distraction, however, and so cannot be kept in service for more than a scene at a time in this manner.

Lesser Gifts

Apex of the Flock

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound may communicate telepathically with any single avian they have personally seen before, seeing out of its eyes and hearing what it hears. Mundane and lesser foe avians may be commanded as if they were present. Worthy foes cannot be commanded, but they cannot prevent the Godbound from contacting them or sharing their senses. This contact lasts for a scene.

Eyes of the Hunting Hawk

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound gains incredible visual acuity, able to see at any light level and clearly pick out the smallest details of any target closer than the horizon. Non-magical stealth is useless against the user, and mundanely-hidden items or features are obvious.

Feathered Mantle

Action

The Godbound takes an avian shape no smaller than a hummingbird and no larger than the largest mundane bird in the realm. This shapeshifting does not alter the Godbound's special abilities, and it does not gain any non-natural abilities possessed by the new bird form. The change lasts for as long as is desired, and can be reverted as an On Turn action. If the Godbound Commits Effort for the scene, they can apply a similar transformation to any target in sight; Worthy Foes get a Hardiness save to resist and become immune to this power for the scene. Lesser foes get no chance to resist. The transformation remains until the Godbound releases them or the ability is dispelled. Transformed birds are not subject to the Word's innate avian control.

The Nightingale's Song

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound's song, whether in human or avian form, is enchanting to listeners. One simple idea can be conveyed by the song, which can affect up to a Large Mob of listeners. Subjects will believe that idea or carry it out to the limits of their natural character or personal well-being for the rest of the scene. Ideas that do not contradict observed evidence or natural inclinations will continue to be believed afterwards until proven incorrect. Lesser foes cannot resist this song, but worthy foes can make a Spirit save to become immune to it for the scene.

Raptor's Red Plunge

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a visible target within a mile. The Godbound instantly darts next to the target, provided there is no barrier between them that cannot be flown around. For the remainder of the scene, the Godbound can use their Move action to bolt next to the target, however far they move, provided the target remains within a mile. If the target is a lesser foe, the Godbound may use their attack to automatically disembowel them or pick them up, killing them or rendering them utterly helpless until released.

Talons and Beak

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound grows sharp talons, a razored beak, piercing feathers, or some other natural weapon appropriate to an avian. These melee weapons do 1d10 damage. The first time each scene that the user makes a plunging dive attack from an altitude of at least 50 feet, the attack is an automatic hit and the damage is rolled twice, with the better result being used.

Greater Gifts

Maker of Wings

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound can create up to a Small Mob of mundane birds *ex nihilo* or summon a Large Mob of local birds that will arrive within ten minutes. This Mob has the effective fighting statistics of a Mob of human soldiers, except with a 60' flight speed, limited powers of manual manipulation, and immunity to any non-magical damage source that would not kill significant numbers of individual birds, such as a single man's spear-thrusts. The Godbound can control only one Mob at a time, and changing the Mob's commands requires a further action. These birds are absolutely loyal and will continue obeying orders until destroyed or the scene ends.

Prince of the Air

Constant

Any flying or airborne creature or object is subject to the Godbound's wrath; the Godbound's attacks against such foes always hit for maximum damage, and any offensive powers used against such targets apply a -2 penalty to their saving throws and inflict maximum damage or maximum possible rolled effect. If invoked as a miracle, this gift lasts one round.

Storm-Blown Swiftiness

Constant

The Godbound's flight speed is doubled, and when traveling overland without interruption they can reach speeds of up to 100 miles an hour. When pursuing or being pursued by a flying creature, they invariably escape or catch up with the target. By Committing Effort as an Instant they can share their powers of flight with another visible creature, who then gains the user's flight movement rate for as long as the Effort remains Committed. A single such Commitment will share the wielder's flight powers with up to a half-dozen allies. If the wielder is rendered unconscious or the Effort is reclaimed, the allies will immediately descend harmlessly to the ground.

Cities

Every city has its spirit, whether literal or figurative. The Godbound of the City is an avatar of human multitudes, of the urban tangles of stone and wood and mud brick that shelter the dreams of many. Their influence is over the faceless populace of their domains, the simple men and women who make the city a city rather than a mere crowded mob. So also do they command a city's buildings and deeper structures, controlling stone and street as another Godbound might wield fire or furious lightning. Their abilities have little application outside such places, though they can summon forth buildings even in a barren waste, calling forth a city born from their own dreams and desires.

Godbound of Cities can move anywhere within a city, passing through walls and other constructions as if they were nonexistent. They can blend in perfectly with local inhabitants, speaking their language and knowing whatever is known about the city by an ordinary occupant. Once they have visited the city, this knowledge remains even after they go elsewhere, and is updated with current major events. Only worthy foes have any chance of piercing this citizen imposture, and that only after interaction at close range with a successful Spirit save.

Many of these powers apply only to or within cities. For purposes of this Word, a "city" is any self-identified, contiguous community consisting of more than 999 people, with its boundaries stretching as far as the furthest structures which are inhabited by people who consider themselves citizens of the city. Nomad camps do not count as cities barring persistent, regular occupation. Mundus Wards may also increase the cost of these powers if they are targeted at a person sheltering within a warded building.

Lesser Gifts

Courage of the Multitude On Turn

Commit Effort for the day. You inspire and sustain citizens of a city you currently occupy. Every normal mortal citizen gains +1 HD, a hit bonus equal to your level, and a Morale of 12 when facing threats to the city as a whole. You may exclude specific groups or hostile locals from this benefit. While active, this courageous citizenry counts as a Feature that does not add additional Problems to a faction, nor can it be sacrificed on a conflict loss. The gift and Feature last until you end it or use the gift on another city. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

One of the Many Constant

You have an intuitive connection with the common citizenry of a city when you are within its boundaries. Citizens who are lesser foes will never initiate violence unless vigorously provoked and will always provide such favors or assistance as do not significantly inconvenience them. You automatically sense the major figures of the city, their location, and their general role: guildmasters of thieves, secret kingmakers, mayors and known officials, and much-beloved pillars of the community.

Sire of Stone and Street Action

Commit Effort for the day. You can summon forth constructions and civil engineering in a style appropriate to any city you have known. A single use of this gift creates structures within a hundred-foot cube per level of the character, the buildings rising and forming over the course of an hour. Any construction appropriate to a city can be called forth, even if the local environment lacks the necessary materials. Buildings are equipped with mundane furnishings and objects appropriate to their function. This gift is not usable as a miracle.

Streetwalker Action

Commit Effort for the scene while standing on a street, alleyway, or city byway. You and your companions on the same street are instantly transported to any location on another street in the same city. Lesser foes at your departure or destination point will not notice anything anomalous about your movement, rationalizing it as some quick get-away or current presence they hadn't noticed.

Unseen Barricades Action

While within a city, Commit Effort for the scene and target a number of subjects up to a Small Mob within the same city, whether or not you know their location or can sense them. They are unable to move from their current vicinity, finding every path elsewhere somehow blocked or confusing to them, even if others try to carry them off. Optionally, the Godbound can instead curse them so that every course they take invariably leads them to a particular place. Lesser foes cannot resist this gift, while worthy foes can make an Evasion save to become immune for the day. The curse lasts until the Godbound releases them or it is dispelled, with worthy foes getting another save every 24 hours.

Ward Alderman Constant

You have a deep and sympathetic bond with a city, such that even the defiance of a Mundus Ward or an Empyrean Ward cannot interfere with your will. So long as you are personally within the area affected by a Ward and provided the Ward is within the boundaries of a city, the Ward's strength is decreased by your character level. If you use your abilities to harm the city as a whole, however, and not merely a few buildings or people, this gift cannot be used in the same city for a year and a day.

Word on the Street On Turn

You can speak to or eavesdrop on any person within any city, provided you have met them. Only you and the target hear any conversation, while eavesdropping is imperceptible. Lesser foes cannot resist this power, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to become immune for a scene; on a failure, they aren't aware that they're being overheard. By Committing Effort for the day, you can send a message to any group within a city you have visited, targeting anything from a single person to an entire profession, cult, or population. The recipients are not obliged to heed your message, but they will sense it as an intuitive recognition.

Genius Loci

A Godbound who wanted to be the divine avatar of a particular single city might have gifts that focus more on effects or qualities emblematic of the city, whether it be a mighty power to work steel, an irresistible aura of romance, or the ability to normalize public urination.

It's not generally necessary to balance these tweaks by removing generic City abilities from their Word. The fact that they'll spend limited gift points buying their unique graces will naturally curtail the number of more generalist City abilities they'll have easy access to in the campaign.

Greater Gifts

City of the Dead

Action

You curse a city or some structure within it. If targeted at an urban building, it will collapse, inflicting the Godbound's character level in damage to everyone inside. Up to an entire palace structure can be collapsed with a single curse. If a curse is directed toward the entire city, it becomes unable to function; ordinary citizens begin fighting each other, and the entire city will be abandoned and ruined within a month if this power is not dispelled or the Godbound does not relent. This power cannot be invoked as a miracle.

Council of One

Constant

Commit Effort. So long as you remain in a city and the Effort remains Committed, the occupants unconsciously treat you as their legitimate ruler. You will be obeyed as if you were equal to the mayor, lord, city council, or other supreme authority of the city, insofar as the target actually respects any of those personages. Even worthy foes will automatically treat you as on a par with the existing ruler, though they may extend you no more deference than they would the mayor. This gift is extremely subtle, and cuts through even the muting effect of Emyrean or Mundus Wards. Occupants who leave the city may make a Spirit saving throw to cast off this instinctive deference if strongly challenged on it, but it will fall over them once more if they return.

Souls of the City

Action

While within a city or an empty urban area of at least a thousand feet in diameter, the Godbound can create a Small Mob of its citizens, up to twenty-four persons. These created citizens will obey the Godbound utterly until destroyed or the Godbound uses this gift again, after which the prior creations become free but well-disposed toward their creator, though they won't risk their newfound lives for them. The citizens fight as normal human soldiers and are equipped with the ordinary skills and tools of their intended roles. If created out of nothing the citizens are extremely lifelike constructs with no true will to do anything but carry out their roles. If used in a location where an adequate number of recently-dead or persistently undead human souls still linger, the spirits can inhabit the newly-made bodies, becoming real people who may or may not recall much of their former lives or identities. Both automatons and imbued bodies will disintegrate if they leave the city afterwards, but soul-imbued bodies can reproduce to produce perfectly normal human children.



Dance

Dance is a power of passion and motion, of meaning within itself and words without utterance. Godbound of Dance can sway the hearts of watchers and defy the wills of those who would impede them. What grace this Word grants, however, it may also take away.

Godbound of Dance may raise either their Dexterity or Charisma scores to 16, or to 18 if the score is already 16 or higher. They can communicate effectively with any intelligent creature, reading their body language and using small, exquisitely expressive motions to answer in turn. Dance is as restorative as sleep and food to the Godbound and those who dance with them.

Lesser Gifts

Artful Sidestep

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene to negate a single physical attack against you that could theoretically be dodged. If it was an area-effect attack, you deftly reposition yourself just outside of the peril.

Expressive Performance

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Your dance conveys an idea or emotion of your choice, along with a target for that emotion. Lesser foes will invariably believe the idea or embrace the emotion and act on it to the limit of their natural character. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist the idea.

Fire Dance

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene and indicate some natural or environmental hazard, such as a tremendous storm, roaring blaze, collapsing building, or other dangerous circumstance. You and your companions move in perfect harmony with the world around you and are impervious to the hazard for the rest of the scene, avoiding any damage or hindrance from the chaos.

Footloose

Constant

You have an invulnerable defense to being restrained from free motion, either by physical restraints, paralysis, or magical effects. As an On Turn action, you can Commit Effort for the scene to pass through solid objects or physical barriers freely for the rest of the round, along with companions who follow you that same round.

Light as Air

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your steps are impossibly graceful and light, allowing you to cross any surface at your full movement rate, whether liquid, vertical, or otherwise unable to bear your weight. Your movement never trips wards or traps that rely on pressure to function.

Perfect Rhythm

Constant

Your supernatural grace and sense of rhythm grants you a base Armor Class of 3. You are immune to falling damage and cannot trip, slip, or be forcibly moved from your chosen position by a hostile force.

Greater Gifts

Dance Battle

On Turn

Commit Effort. While active, your dance becomes terrifying or impossibly seductive to foes, being treated as a magical weapon doing 1d10 emotional damage with a range out to visual distance. Against Mobs, this damage is read straight. If a creature is brought to zero hit points by this damage, it can either be struck dead by the horror or beauty of the dance, be compelled to flee, or be seduced to your service for the rest of the scene. In the latter case, the creature regains 1 hit point and is suicidally obedient to the end of the scene.

Shaking the Walls

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. Your footfalls set up a ruinously destructive vibration that can destroy all solid buildings and structures of your choice within one hundred feet per character level as if by an earthquake, sparing only those reinforced with divine-level materials. Enemy creatures caught within this zone suffer your character level in damage, with Mobs taking triple damage. Your allies and targets exempted by you never suffer harm from collapsing structures.

Walk Without Rhythm

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a single visible worthy foe or any number of lesser foes in sight. Victims become unable to move in graceful or controlled ways and lose their Move action each round. In order to safely step from their locations, they need to use their Main Actions to do so. Worthy foes can Commit Effort for the scene to throw off this effect, but lesser foes are affected so long as you remain in the area. If only a single lesser foe is targeted by this power, the duration is indefinite, and the target can be reduced to utter physical helplessness by palsies and tremors.

Eight Rows of Dancers

AC: 0, intrinsic

Move: 50' dance-flight

Hit Dice: 25

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 2

Damage: 1d10 awe straight

Morale: 12

Effort: 6

Several instances of these Li-magic weapons were deployed by the Ren during the latter Last War, and some entities are rumored to still persist under careful keeping. Manifesting as eight rows of brightly-garbed Ren dancers, the irresistible harmony and dazzling beauty of the dancers is used as a weapon to compel conformity with the True King's will and ancient Ren social structures. These strictures are hopelessly incompatible with modern Dulimbaian society, and so the release of the Dancers would be an act of desperation. They act as if bound to the Words of Dance, Command, and Endurance. Once unleashed, they will spread the True King's Way until destroyed or shut down by a now-lost imperial rescript.

Desert

Master of dust and desolation, a Godbound of the Desert rules over dry wastelands and stony barrens. They call upon the parching air and killing heat of their domains, and are lords of the baffling mirages and the empty spaces that mislead the luckless wayfarer.

A Godbound of the Deserts has an invulnerable defense against fire and any temperature found in a mundane desert. They have no need of food or water and have an invulnerable defense against getting lost, regardless of their surroundings. Many of their gifts relate to manipulating desert surroundings. For the purposes of such gifts, a “desert” is any arid and sandy or rocky terrain at least a hundred and one feet in diameter, with edge cases determined by the GM. Such “deserts” can be natural or man-made.

Lesser Gifts

Azure Oasis Spring Action

Summon a water source, causing a new spring to gush forth. Repeated use of this ability can provide sufficient water supplies for almost any number of people, or erode and destroy non-magical structures within an hour. At the Godbound's discretion, this summoned water is magically invigorating, supplying all food needs for those who drink it. These springs last until physically destroyed or dispelled by the Godbound. Optionally, the Godbound may instead instantly destroy all open water and kill all natural springs within two hundred feet per character level, transforming ordinary land into sandy wastes.

Curse of Dust (Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. All terrain of your choice up to a radius of a quarter-mile per PC level is immediately blasted into desert. If directed at a single visible creature instead, it is withered to a dehydrated corpse. Worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to simply take the Godbound's level in points of damage. Creatures made of metal, stone, dessicated flesh, or other substances without liquid components are unharmed by this power.

Sandshaper On Turn

Commit Effort. While the Effort is committed, you may use your Main Action to shape sand, sedimentary rock, and dry earth within visible range into any configuration you wish within a 20-foot cube per character level. The shaped sand is as sturdy as sandstone after being formed. Shaped walls have hit points equal to the character's level for each foot of thickness; if sufficient damage is done, a creature-sized hole is punched through it.

Shining Mirage Action

Commit Effort for the scene to conjure an illusion of choice within visible distance. This illusion can operate independently once created, provides all necessary audible and olfactory components, and acts as is appropriate for its seeming, but it cannot affect physical objects and is immaterial to the touch. The Godbound can move or alter the illusion as a Main Action until it disappears at the end of the scene. Invisibility is not an illusion, but a false wall or tapestry is.

Sirocco Sword On Turn

Commit Effort. You wield furnace winds and cutting sand as a magical weapon, doing 1d10 damage out to visible range. Against creatures that require water to live, the attack always inflicts at least 1 point of damage, even on a miss.

Wanderer Among the Dunes Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a single creature or up to a Large Mob of lesser foes. The target becomes hopelessly lost, regardless of the simplicity and familiarity of their surroundings, and cannot find a way out of their current location or room. Even if physically carried away, they reappear in their fixed location. This curse lasts until the Godbound releases a lesser foe, or until a worthy foe succeeds on an Evasion save, which they may attempt at the end of each of their rounds. Victims will not notice the curse until they actually try to leave the area they are in.

Greater Gifts

Flesh of Shifting Sands On Turn

Commit Effort to transform your body to a flowing storm of sand. While so transformed, you are invulnerably immune to non-magical weapons and any physical cutting or piercing injury. You cannot manipulate physical objects while so transformed, but you may use your gifts and attack with unarmed weaponry. You may move at your normal movement rate, pass through sand or earth as if it was empty space, and flow through any hole or gap that can admit a single grain of sand. Your belongings transform with you, though you can shed them to allow others to pick them up while you remain transformed.

Lord of the Empty Quarter Action

You focus for a brief moment, and can immediately perceive any area of desert connected to the same desert area you stand on. If you are looking for a particular thing in the accessible area, you automatically find it. If you Commit Effort for the day, you and your companions can instantly appear in any connected area of desert. If you are outside of a desert, you and any allies with you may appear from any human-sized bank of sand within one mile per level instead, appearing from the mound of sand closest to your destination. What kind of soil counts as “sand” is up to the GM, but mere dry dirt is not sufficient for this power.

Rage of the Simoom (Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day to call up a murderous windstorm of killing heat and scouring sand. All enemies within visible range suffer 1d12 damage per two levels you possess, rounded up, with worthy foes allowed to save versus Hardiness to halve the damage, rounded up. Mobs suffer 3 points of damage per character level instead of rolling for damage. Light wooden structures and similar objects are destroyed by the winds, while sturdier buildings are scoured and scorched by the gale. At the wielder's discretion, easily-flammable objects may be set on fire by the gift.

Desire

The Word of Desire speaks of cravings of every kind, both carnal and intellectual. It rules over wanting and the compromises that are made to obtain a terrible need. The favored of Desire automatically raise their Charisma to 16, or to 18 if already 16 or higher. At their discretion, others will find them romantically compatible regardless of the onlooker's usual and natural tastes.

Lesser Gifts

Enslaving Passion

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound's words, gestures, and attention are so dizzying that the victim loses their ability to resist the hero's wishes. Their attention counts as a 1d10 magic weapon attack with a range sufficient to hit a target able to see them. Damage this gift does is emotional, eroding the victim's will; if reduced to zero hit points or hit dice by the effect, the victim regains one hit point and becomes the Godbound's utter thrall for the remainder of the scene, performing any non-suicidal act but regaining their self-control at its end. This gift only affects intelligent free-willed targets and its use is obviously supernatural to both onlookers and the target.

Incandescent Need

Action

Provoke a tremendous desire for a person, a thing, a general type of activity, or to be in a place. Targets will act to the limit of their character to obtain their desire, with most people doing anything short of easily-detectable crimes to obtain it, and will feel intense pleasure in it. If Effort is Committed for the scene, the Godbound can affect up to a Large Mob of targets in their vicinity. Worthy foes get a Spirit save to resist this power. The effect lasts until dispelled or the Godbound releases a victim.

Quench the Heart

Action

Extinguish desire in a visible target's heart, either for a person, a goal, a sex, a general type of activity, or a place. Nothing about the subtracted subject will be able to interest or give pleasure to the target, though disciplined persons may engage with it regardless out of a sense of duty. Worthy foes get a Spirit save to resist. If Effort is committed for a scene, the Godbound can affect up to a Large Mob of targets in their vicinity. The effect lasts until dispelled or the Godbound releases the target.

Self-Possession

Constant

The Godbound has an invincible immunity to any mental effect that would influence their desires or actions. By Committing Effort for the scene, they can extend this immunity to all allies within 200 feet for the scene.

Sense the Need

On Turn

Choose a visible target. Obtain a complete understanding of their romantic tastes, any significant pleasures they take, and their want that is most relevant to the Godbound's interests or goals. If phrased as a question as to what the target wants in exchange for a particular

service or favor, the most likely necessary inducement is revealed, according to the GM's judgment. If used against a worthy foe the Godbound must Commit Effort for the scene.

Unbearable Beauty

Constant

The Godbound has an effective AC of 3 against intelligent creatures, whether free-willed automatons, undead, or living beings, as they find themselves reluctant to strike the Godbound. The first attack any creature or Mob launches at the user each fight is an automatic miss as they hesitate in their attack.

Greater Gifts

Agony of Desire

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a visible target up to a Large Mob in size. Implant a non-self-harming desire for a particular thing or action; if the target does not spend at least one action on its round pursuing that activity or seeking to obtain that thing, it suffers one point of emotional damage per level of the Godbound. If reduced to zero hit dice or hit points by this, it regains one hit point and becomes unable to do anything but pursue that desire for the remainder of the scene. Worthy foes can attempt a Spirit save to end the power at the start of each of their rounds, but each such save attempt inflicts one point of damage per Godbound level. Once a save is made, a target is immune to this gift for the rest of the scene. Only one desire can be implanted at a time and lasts for the remainder of the scene.

The Harlot's Trade

Action

The Godbound must offer a visible target something they find desirable, whether a person, thing, or favor in exchange for some favor or action on the target's part. If the target desires the offered thing badly and has no important reason to refuse the trade, it must accept it and perform their side of the trade in good faith. If the offered thing is inadequate recompense or the target has a powerful reason not to accept the trade, a worthy foe may make a Spirit save to resist this power and become immune to it for the scene. Lesser foes get no save even against terrible deals. This gift cannot induce a target to do something suicidal or profoundly contrary to their nature. If the Godbound promises a favor that they then fail to perform, they become unable to make any successful saving throw against the offended target or avoid any of their attack rolls for a year and a day thereafter. This gift is subtle, and an affected target will not usually suspect any magical influence unless the deal offered is obviously unequal.

Thrall to Desire

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a visible intelligent target. Lesser foes become utterly and permanently enthralled by the Godbound, providing any service that is not outright suicidal. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist this power. This enthrallment lasts until it is dispelled, the subject spends at least 24 hours without having at least five minutes of focused personal attention from the Godbound, or the Godbound releases the victim.

The Word of Desire in Your Campaign

The Word of Desire relates to all cravings and wants, and not just purely sexual ones. In terms of mythic tropes, however, the impossibly beautiful goddess and the irresistibly handsome divinity are as old as civilization, and it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone if players want to play on those mythic elements with their PCs.

It's important to be careful about the execution of these concepts, however, and avoid detours into unwanted magical realms. The details of divine assignations are generally best glossed over in passing or left discreetly vague. The rest of the group probably doesn't want to hear the details.

Aside from questions of good taste at the table, however, there's also an issue with the mind-influencing nature of Desire and its ability to coerce others into sexual relationships. This sort of thing can be extremely disturbing to some players, and a PC who makes a point of using their abilities this way can be upsetting to some of the other players at the table. A rapist-goddess who compels others to desire her madly has little objective difference from any other violator who uses magical influence to satisfy their desires, and many players will want nothing to do with pantheons that involve either.

As such, a GM should be careful when a player chooses Desire as a Word to define their Godbound. If the group doesn't want to have a rapist as part of their pantheon, then the PC shouldn't use their powers in a way indistinguishable from other forms of rape. In the same vein, a GM who has an antagonist with the Word of Desire should not make compulsory sexual enthrallment an overt part of the game unless they are very certain that the group will not be disturbed by it. They *especially* should not use these powers to abuse PCs in that way unless the group is explicitly on board with that turn of events.

GMs should always err on the side of caution when involving topics as potentially explosive as PC rape or explicit sex. If you haven't got clear buy-in from the whole group, they're best avoided.

The Bender of Want

AC: 3, intrinsic	Move: 40' run, 50' fly
Hit Dice: 25	Save: 5+
Attack: +12 x 2	Damage: 1d10 strike straight
Morale: 10	Effort: 7

Love is the weapon of the Bender of Want. Its nature lost to history, "he" usually appears in a human guise, insinuating himself in the servant retinue of some important figure. Once close to his chosen target, he implants a plausible-appearing obsession with the most disruptive, harmful object of desire that the victim could fixate upon. The heads of rival noble houses, the monarchs of enemy nations, the spouses of close allies, and occasional darker cravings are implanted in the victim. The Bender then shepherds the seemingly natural but terribly unwise yearning to its eventual and catastrophic conclusion.

The Bender's goal appears to be the creation of as much chaos and disruption as possible, all under the guise of seemingly-explicable but utterly foolhardy wants. Most of its victims never suspect that they are under mental influence until it is far too late. Some suggest that the Bender is actually a rogue organic weapon from the Last War, one designed to destroy nations from within.

The Bender has powers equivalent to the Words of Desire, Shapeshifting, and Deception. It shuns direct conflicts and will seek to flee unless utterly trapped. Its favored method of self-defense is to trick its victims into thinking its enemies are actually somehow seeking to prevent the fulfillment of the victim's unnatural desires.



Engineering

The Word of Engineering is a substitute Word intended to take the place of Artifice in campaigns with advanced technology, such as might be found in a game set in a modern or sci-fi era. The Word of Artifice is intended to apply to settings where the most advanced baseline technology is a crossbow or aqueduct, while Engineering is more suitable for campaigns with backpack nukes.

Godbound of the Word of Engineering can instantly produce any ordinary device portable by a normal person as an On Turn action. An "ordinary device" is anything generally marketable in the legal or black markets of a setting, including ordinary weaponry and ammunition, but not weapons of mass destruction, unique existing objects, or exotic experimental technology. This ability does not include foodstuffs. Such devices disappear or evaporate within a few hours after the Godbound or their companions stop using them.

Lesser Gifts

Blessed Blueprints

Constant

The Godbound instantly knows how to operate any vehicle, starship, or device they see, and has an intuitive understanding of the layout and design of buildings, starships, and other large engineered structures, including weak points and technical capabilities. This knowledge isn't precise enough to serve as a map, but they can always find their way to any particular function, section, or feature they want to find.

Brilliant Invention

Action

Commit Effort for the day. The Godbound creates a technological device only they can use which can perfectly mimic a lesser gift of any other Word except Sorcery. They may use this gift at its usual price in Effort, if any, and the device remains usable until the next time they use this gift. *Brilliant Invention* is usable only once per day.

Lasting Artifice

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound can conjure any ordinary device they can lift with one arm. By Committing Effort for the day instead, it can be as large as a truck or shuttle. This device lasts indefinitely, and is fully powered every time the Godbound touches it.

Scientific Method

Constant

The Godbound's labors are capable of building ordinary tech or structures smaller than a house within a scene, smaller than a factory within a day, and smaller than a town during the downtime between sessions, so long as it's more than a day. Materials are still needed to build it.

Mending of the Maker

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound restores a visible mechanism or object to its original, powered, and intact condition. If repairing objects larger than a 20 foot cube, they restore a 20 foot cube of the damaged object. For repairing large structures and vehicles, assume the fix repairs 20% of the object's maximum integrity.

Take the Wheel

Action

Commit Effort and choose a visible device. While the Effort remains Committed, you have full control over the operation of that machine, issuing commands as On Turn actions. The Godbound can control only visible portions of a device; if facing a starship, they could control hatches, visible engines, and surface weaponry, but they would need to have access to the bridge to control its internal functions. The Godbound can't compel a device to do something impossible for its ordinary operator. Only one machine can be controlled at once.

Greater Gifts

Cutting Edge

Constant

Once per session, the Godbound may develop a dramatic advance in existing common technology, such as creating viable cloning technology, devising anti-gravity tech, curing a wide range of congenital diseases, or something similarly in advance of the campaign's common tech base. The GM can veto advances that are too drastic for the setting. While this technology is too cumbersome or finicky to be useful on adventures or in combat, it can act as a justification for purposes of Dominion spends, making Impossible changes Implausible, or Implausible ones Plausible. Depending on the Godbound's effort at spreading this technology, it may gradually pervade the campaign's baseline technological base as well, thus allowing the Godbound's innate device-creation powers to take advantage of it and permitting ordinary engineers to build it. Until the tech becomes baseline, the Godbound's unique genius is required to construct and direct it. While this gift can be used as a miracle, unless it is taken as a gift, it can never be maintained effectively enough to allow the tech to ever become a baseline part of the campaign.

Soul of the Machine

Instant

Commit Effort for the day when the Godbound touches a device no larger than a shuttle or large truck. The device is instantly imbued with sentience and a human level of intelligence, and can freely deploy its own functionality as it sees fit and communicate through attached devices. Devices will be friendly and obedient to the Godbound unless they have some significant meaning to their true owner, in which case they will not take any action harmful to them. Devices are happy being what they are and usually content to serve as intended; they will not obey commands that must lead to their destruction unless such commands are appropriate to their intended purpose. Devices have no memory of things that happened before they gained awareness.

Weak Spot

Constant

Attacks that require a hit roll made by the Godbound against vehicles, synthetic life forms, or structures are always successful and always do at least 1 point of damage, regardless of anything short of an invulnerable defense. Gifts used against such targets roll any damage dice twice and take the better roll. Against non-sentient devices or vehicles no larger than a truck, the Godbound can destroy them with an On Turn touch, provided they are not being operated at the time.

Using the Word of Engineering

One of the main issues with a divinity of technology in a high-tech setting is that there seems very little that such a god couldn't accomplish with the right hardware. In a typical soft sci-fi setting, the exact limits of available tech aren't clear to begin with, and it is very hard to distinguish between tech that should logically and readily exist in the world and tech that's simply a mechanical shell around a magic spell.

The Word of Engineering tries to deal with that complication by limiting the easily-acquired tech to things that the PCs could fairly readily obtain on the market, whether licit or illicit. Grenades, explosives, automatic weapons, fast cars, supercomputers and so forth are not meant to be beyond such a divinity's easy conjuration, but portable nukes, deathowatt lasers, large containers of radioactive cobalt, and devices of arbitrary technological wonder are meant to be beyond quick reach.

This is not to say that the Godbound shouldn't be allowed to eventually construct anything that existing technology in your campaign can make. With the right resources and enough time, the Godbound really can build nukes, giant lasers, large starships, or anything else that mortals in the world could theoretically build.

The key is to turn such large or exotic plans into an adventure opportunity, or at least a side-trek inside a session. If the Godbound wants to build a nuke, or an artificial moon, or anything else beyond the scope of easy conjuration, they should need to get the necessary materials for it. Maybe another Godbound in the pantheon can create the necessary materials for them, or maybe they can liberate the required components from a mortal warehouse, or maybe they need to convince an industrial CEO to put the corporation's resources behind their construction, but they should have to go outside the mere Word of Engineering to accomplish the feat.

PCs who want to use Engineering to create wondrous devices of ineffable super-science need to take the *Brilliant Invention* gift. This gift allows them to create just such a device, one that can mimic any lesser gift from almost any Word they wish. The limit is that they can only create such a device once per day, and it only keeps working until they use the gift again. This is intentional, and it is an important limit on Engineering's flexibility.

It's great to have unlimited options, and a clever Engineer can have exactly the right tool for the problem or job they need to handle. If they can *always* have the exact tool, however, it discounts the rest of the pantheon. By forcing the PC to be careful about when they deploy their flexibility, it obliges a more thoughtful use of the Engineer's versatility.

In any sci-fi campaign, it's important to be careful about how much deference you want to show to actual physics, chemistry, and other hard sciences. One can tell an interesting story about how the God of the Sun took out all the electronics on the moon base with a coronal mass ejection he summoned, but the Word of the Sun is not really about EMP attacks. You can allow words that manipulate natural laws and phenomena to interface with what we know about the physical sciences, but you risk leaving behind those players who aren't quite so up on those scientific details.

Engineering spares that confusion. There's very little doubt that Engineering has relevance to devices built by people, and so a GM would be entirely within their rights to leave all such meddling strictly in Engineering's hands. If you do want to keep the magic out of hard science, just make sure the players know beforehand.

Engineering and Dominion

Engineering only serves as a justification for Dominion spends when the Godbound is using it in a way compatible with the campaign's normal technological base. If nuclear power plants and high-powered lasers exist in the campaign, then it's a perfectly good Dominion justification to declare that you're building a network of nuclear power plants to drive surface lasers that will defend a planet. If cloning is not a normal technology in the setting, however, you couldn't use the construction of a massive set of clone vats to justify the swift population of an empty deep-space fortress the PCs recently depopulated.

Godbound who want to take advantage of arbitrary technological advances should take the *Cutting Edge* gift, which *would* allow them to simply declare that they'd invented clone vats. Such tech would be too clumsy or fussy to be used outside of the Dominion spend, and would not count as widely-available tech, but a few relevant adventures could spread it enough to become part of the setting's baseline.

An adventure related around spreading the tech would probably require the PC to shepherd its successful use in one or more difficult circumstances, ones where the technology is used as part of overcoming some challenge suitable to test the might of a divinity. It's important that these challenges include the entire pantheon; maybe the teleporter tech can be used to evacuate an entire doomed planet, but defending the installation and the populace from the calamity long enough for them to get away is likely to require the full group's assistance.

In some cases, a good test case for the tech will be obvious to the group. In others, you might need to dangle some suggestions, while in some cases the player with the Engineer PC might need to come up with some suitably grand demonstration of their brilliant Science using their own creativity. So long as they think big enough and make the tech instrumental in defeating some sufficiently awe-inspiring challenge, it should suffice.

Tech that won't cause any significant setting-wide changes is usually baseline after one such adventure. Tech that's going to make a small but substantial change in the campaign is usually a job for two adventures, and tech that's going to fundamentally alter your whole setting is something to be approved if and when you see fit.

Differences in Engineering and Artifice

The biggest difference between the Words of Engineering and Artifice is that Engineering does not provide easy ways to produce large amounts of raw materials.

The devices that Engineering easily creates are temporary, and go away when the Godbound or their allies stop using them. The *Lasting Artifice* gift can create enough raw materials for many projects if used that way, but truly large-scale projects are going to require a source of raw materials. *Lasting Artifice* used in selective ways can provide most rare components, but masses of cer alloy and canisters of extremely forbidden substances are going to need a mundane source, or some other suitable Word's conjurations to be provided in sufficient bulk.

Scientific Method is intended to allow a single Godbound to actually build these large-scale constructions on a reasonable time frame, but it does require the investment of a gift point, or the willingness to miracle it whenever it's needed. Miracles alone may not last long enough to create truly huge projects without help.

Entropy

Godbound of Entropy are avatars of disorder and decay, the eidolons who cause things to fall apart and ensure the center cannot hold. Matter, passions, plans... these things crumble before the Godbound's will. Yet this Word is not entirely negative, for one with the Word of Entropy can also cause it to withdraw its eroding influence from a chosen subject, preserving it in perfect and unnatural order until that favor is withdrawn. They cannot heal, but they can keep things from getting worse for that which they guard.

The Word of Entropy grants a Godbound no need for food, drink, sleep, or air, and they also seem to be functionally unaging. They can destroy any non-divine inanimate object they touch as a Main Action, or up to three cubic feet of a larger object per round.

Lesser Gifts

Disordered Minds

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature while nominating some purpose or action the creature is trying to carry out, whether killing a foe or proclaiming a royal edict. They will immediately perform the most harmful and disruptive action they can take in contradiction of that goal, whether an intentional miss or critically garbling the edict in transmitting it. They will be convinced they are behaving sensibly despite all argument until released by the Godbound. Lesser foes cannot resist this gift, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to break free before each round of bungling.

Functional Lifespan

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature or an object or part of an object no larger than a cottage. The target is immediately degraded as if by one thousand years of normal use or exposure. Most objects will be destroyed or ruined, and non-immortal creatures will perish. Lesser foes and inanimate objects cannot resist this power, while worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to resist.

Low Impact

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible attack or injurious event that has just happened. Harm is negated as the force drains away uselessly or the object remains undisrupted by the attack. This gift normally only applies to hit point damage or physical disruption.

Perfect Efficiency

Constant

Gain one point of Effort. Also, as an On Turn action, Commit Effort to ignore a number of points of an Uncreated's *Cold Breath* ability equal to half your level, rounded down, while it remains Committed.

Sap the Force

Instant

The Godbound targets a creature that has just Committed Effort for any reason. The Effort is lost and the creature must Commit it again as an Instant action if their desired effect is to come to pass. This gift can be used only once per scene on a given target.

Things Fall Apart

Constant

The Godbound's displeasure causes physical decay, dissolution, and collapse. They may use it as a magical ranged weapon out to sight distance, doing 1d10 damage. Against inanimate objects, this damage is always maximum, and can erode a sphere up to 6 feet in diameter of non-divine matter every round.

Zero Functional Lifespan

Action

Target a visible object no larger than a person, or Commit Effort for the day to target an object no larger than a large sailing ship. The object immediately decays as if aged up to one century per character level, a span usually sufficient to destroy all but the most obdurate materials or magical items designed to last indefinitely. If used against a magical vehicle, Godwalker, or other artifice that requires maintenance, the target immediately takes 1d8 damage per two character levels of the user, rounded up.

Greater Gifts

Atomized Souls

Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a visible creature. Choose one or more emotional relationships they have, or simply nominate an entire class of relationships. They and those in the relationships lose all feeling for each other, whether positive or negative, and cannot develop it again until the Godbound permits it. Lesser foes cannot resist this apathy, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to retain their feelings toward the other, though this sentiment may be one-sided if the other is a lesser foe.

Best Laid Plans

Action

The Godbound targets a particular plan or purpose, whether one specifically known to them or merely a hypothetical goal. They immediately get an intuitive sense of the most useful act they could presently take toward promoting or hindering this goal, according to their wishes and the GM's best judgment. They may not understand why this action would be so helpful or harmful to the goal, and the act may be difficult for them to perform, but it will always be very helpful or harmful in turn as they intend. This gift cannot be used as a miracle. This gift cannot be used again on the same or a similar topic until the action has been taken or seriously attempted.

Undisrupted Order

On Turn

The Godbound focuses on maintaining personal coherence, and gains an invulnerable defense against all physical harm or physical alteration until the start of their next turn. Using this gift a second or further time in the same scene requires that Effort be Committed for the day each further time this gift is used. Note that this gift is an On Turn gift rather than an Instant one, so it must be used on the Godbound's turn.

Fear

A Godbound of Fear is an envoy from nightmare. They bring the certainty of horrors and the expectation of terrors, branding mortal minds with the agony of things that have not yet happened and the fears of things that might yet be. Even mindless creatures respond to terrors they may not have the cognition to truly understand.

Godbound of Fear are never unwillingly afraid and automatically grant a Morale of 12 to any visible allies, while any enemies they face suffer an automatic Morale penalty of -2. This penalty and other fears the Godbound induces can affect even mindless or fanatical foes. If powers are used against PCs, assume they have a base Morale score of 12, before the -2 penalty is applied.

Lesser Gifts

Citadel of Courage

Constant

The Godbound has an invulnerable defense against emotion-affecting abilities. They can Commit Effort to extend this immunity to allies within visible range.

Know the Fear Within

Action

The Godbound studies a visible target and learns of any fears they may have relevant to the Godbound's interests, learning enough context for the source of the fears to make sense. They may selectively mute or amplify such terrors. When at full force, the victim must make a Morale check or act to avert or avoid the fear to the limit of their natural character. The calm or terror lasts for 24 hours at most, or until the Godbound releases them.

Lance of Deimos

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound wields mortal terror as a weapon, with attacks that do 1d10 emotional damage and have a range out to visible distance. The first time a foe is struck by this power in a fight, they need to make a Morale check. This gift cannot affect inanimate objects, but it can harm robots or other mindless animate foes.

Monsters of the Id

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound conjures a monstrous manifestation of something a visible target is frightened of. Creatures with no natural fears produce hypothetical monsters. These creatures have twice the Godbound's level in hit dice, up to a maximum of ten, an AC of 5, a flight move of 30, a hit bonus equal to their hit dice, and do 1d10 damage, but their attacks always successfully hit the entity they're summoned from and roll 1d20 damage against them. They are unable to perform actions not directed toward harming or horrifying their source-entity. An entity can birth only one such terror at a time.

Shield of Phobos

Constant

The Godbound has a natural Armor Class of 3, as foes hesitate to strike them. Lesser foes with a modified Morale score of 6 or less are too intimidated to attack the Godbound unless attacked first.

Unbearable Premonition

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a single target or Small Mob. Pick one act or type of action that they will find unbearably frightening to contemplate. Lesser foes will be unable to perform the action unless their life depends on it, while worthy foes can make a Morale check to perform the act for one round, or Commit Effort for the scene to shake the fear off entirely. Creatures who throw off the power are immune to it for the rest of the scene. Otherwise, the fear lasts until the Godbound lifts it.

Unveiled Nightmares

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature. It gains an intense phobia regarding a thing, place, or general type of activity. This terror can be made specific to particular things, or embrace an entire class or type of entities. The victim must make a Morale check with the Godbound's -2 penalty each round it wishes to interact with the object of its terror. The dread lasts until dispelled or the Godbound releases them. A worthy foe can save versus Spirit to throw it off.

Greater Gifts

The Coward Inside

Action

Commit Effort. You can use the senses of any creature who has ever failed a Morale check you induced or been similarly frightened by you, perceiving all they perceive without their conscious awareness of your presence. Commit Effort for the day to appear behind them if they are within ten miles per Godbound level.

Inexorable Dread

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose a fear a visible target has. This fear will inevitably come to pass as quickly as is possible. If the fear involves worthy foes, these foes may save versus Spirit to be uninfluenced by the gift, but lesser foes will take whatever actions are necessary to bring about the fear, whether they mean to or not. If the fear involves inanimate objects or random events, coincidence and chance will bring it about if at all physically possible. This gift cannot be used on a target again until the fear has come to pass. The scale of the fear cannot involve more than 100 targets.

Quintessential Terror

Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a subject you have seen before. You may choose a single object, event, or person; confrontation with the chosen thing will cause the target to die of terror or be reduced to 1 hit point, at your discretion. The target is not necessarily aware of this dread until confronted with the object, though you can choose to impress them with a shadow of its terror at the time you use this power, leaving them to fear facing it. Lesser foes cannot avoid the consequences, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to instead take half the Godbound's level in points of damage, rounded up. This gift lasts until it is triggered, after which any surviving victim is immune to the gift for 30 days. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

Insects

Lords of swarm and multitude, Godbound of Insects have rule over verminous hordes and chitinous monsters alike. They wield powers of resilience, hunger, and mindless drive.

Like most Words related to a single type of animal creature, the Word of Insects can emulate many of the powers of the Word of Beasts related to insects and bug-like creatures. It can additionally invoke powers related to the characteristic traits of insects, such as multitudinousness, mindless hunger, the ability to act while dismembered, and parasitical control of other creatures.

Godbound of the Word of Insects have an invulnerable immunity to harm from insects or insect-derived toxins. Divine beings of an insectile nature can still harm them, but must Commit Effort for the day for each round they seek to attack the Godbound directly. They may communicate with insects as if the creatures were intelligent as humans and may command non-magical insects completely. In the absence of dangerous swarms, insects are not effective in combat, but they will spy obediently and act with without regard for self-preservation. Commands a Godbound issues to them will be obeyed for one scene before they wander away or lose focus.

Lesser Gifts

Call the Swarm

Action

Commit Effort for the day. The Godbound conjures up one Small Mob of insects for every three character levels they have, rounded up. These insects have the combat statistics of a Verminous Swarm Mob, but can fly at 60' per move action and together can carry up to 50 pounds of weight. These swarms exist until they are destroyed or the Godbound dispels them. This gift cannot be used again until all former swarms are dispelled or destroyed.

Chitinous Vitality

Constant

The Godbound's flesh is hard and resilient against injury, granting them a natural AC of 3. They can regrow lost extremities in one day, including their head, and cannot be disabled by decapitation alone.

Flesh of the Many

Action

Commit Effort. The Godbound collapses into a swarm of insects of their choice, with flying insects moving at a rate equal to the Godbound's normal movement. They cannot use offensive powers or attacks while in this shape, but they are likewise immune to any attack that could not destroy an entire swarm of insects at once. The insects must remain within 30 feet of each other, and the Godbound coalesces once more anywhere within that range when they reclaim the Effort.

The Fly's Leap

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound instantly leaps up to 30 feet distant, automatically evading any physical attack or harm that could be dodged by such evasion.

Verminous Venom

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound sprouts envenomed mandibles, claws, stingers, or other bodily weapons, or envenoms a carried weapon, causing it to do 1d10 damage. Any living creature struck with this gift automatically takes 1 point of damage the next round from the lingering toxin. At the Godbound's discretion, their poison may merely paralyze a foe brought to zero hit points.

The Worm Within

Instant

When an enemy is reduced to zero hit points by an attack the Godbound makes, they may Commit Effort for the day to inject a larva into the fallen foe as part of the attack. The victim regains one hit point and immediately becomes completely and utterly subject to the Godbound's will. The Godbound can share their senses and telepathically communicate with them as they desire. Lesser foes get no resistance to this control, though worthy foes may make a Spirit save to resist particularly repugnant demands. If the victim succeeds on a save, the Godbound must immediately either allow the larva to perish or cause it to kill the host, emerging as a dog-sized insect of the Godbound's choice with no real combat abilities. The Godbound may allow the larva to die or emerge at any earlier point if they wish. A Godbound can have up to their level in parasitized victims at once.

Greater Gifts

A Million Mandibles

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. An eruption of consuming insects attacks all desired targets, plants and structures within thirty feet per level of the Godbound. Lesser foes take 1d6 damage per level of the Godbound, while individuals of 1 HD or Mobs made of such individuals are instantly destroyed unless they have some special protection. Worthy foes take 1d8 damage per two levels, with a Hardiness save to halve it. Normal plants or light wooden structures are destroyed and sturdy wooden ones are badly damaged. These insects vanish after the attack.

Fly, Burrow, and Bore

Constant

The Godbound is capable of flying at twice their normal movement rate and boring through earthen or wooden obstacles or surfaces at their normal movement rate, creating a hole up to four feet in radius and as deep as they choose to move.

One Thousand Wings

Action

Commit Effort. The Godbound transforms into a normal insect of their choice, gaining no special powers but acquiring any flight or aquatic movement the insect may have for as long as the Effort remains Committed. If the Effort is Committed for the scene, they may transform a visible target into an insect. Lesser foes cannot resist this, but worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to shrug off the effect. This transformation lasts as long as the Godbound wishes, and may be either purely physical or impart the mind of an insect as well.

Intoxication

All substances that alter the user's mind fall under the Word of Intoxication, whether narcotic drug or sacred wine, and also the states of drunkenness, poisoning, and other chemical influence.

Those who are masters over the Word of Intoxication may raise their Constitution to 16, or 18 if it's already 16 or greater. They have an invulnerable immunity to poisons and are never without a supply of any non-magical drug sufficient for a Large Mob of people. Their drugs are sufficiently powerful to affect constructs and the undead; only those with a specific invincible immunity to poisons are immune.

Some powers induce or use drug addictions. An addict will perform any inoffensive act in exchange for their drug of choice, and lesser foes must save versus the worse of their Hardiness or Spirit saves to resist doing even very harmful or immoral acts in exchange for an offer of their craved substance. Magically-induced addictions last until the Godbound releases the victims.

Lesser Gifts

Bad Batch

Action

The Godbound can change the nature of any visible edible or consumable substance, giving it the properties of a drug of their choice. Users will not overdose unless the Godbound permits it; if used to create a toxin, the user must save versus Hardiness or die. If the Godbound Commits Effort for the day, the enchanted substance can be keyed to affect only specific people or classes of targets.

Chemical Influence

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature. The creature is immediately overwhelmed by an emotion of your choice, acting to the limits of its own character to express that emotion. You can focus the emotion on a chosen person or simple idea. The emotion lasts to the end of the scene, and worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to be mostly unaffected, though even a successful save forces them to Commit Effort for the day to resist the chemical urge. A save renders the target immune to further uses of this power in a scene.

Feeling All Right

Constant

The Godbound gains an invulnerable immunity to magical mental influence or mind-reading. If targeted by such a power, they may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to use an Intoxication gift or miracle on their assailant as if they were a visible target, paying the usual Effort price for the ability.

Pass It Around

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. A visible target is affected as if they'd taken a drug of the Godbound's choice. The Godbound can control whatever hallucinations or emotions the drug may induce. If used to apply a toxic dose, the power inflicts two points of damage per PC level. Worthy foes may save versus Hardiness to resist this power.

Seeing Things

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound controls all hallucinations currently occurring within two hundred feet. They may make these hallucinations objectively real for those experiencing them; illusionary stairs support their weight, imagined knives they hold cut things, and phantom pits swallow them up. Targets affected by harmful hallucinations can save versus Hardiness to avoid suffering damage each round; failure means they take one point of damage per two levels of the PC, rounded up. Mobs suffer triple damage. At the gift's end, any targets in impossible locations are safely moved to the nearest real place.

The Craving Call

Action

The Godbound can visibly see drug addictions with an action's worth of inspection. The Godbound may extinguish physical and psychological drug addictions in any number of targets within sight. If they Commit Effort for the scene, they may also induce addictions in targets up to a Small Mob in size; worthy foes may save versus Hardiness to resist. Addictions caused by a Godbound can be allowed to follow their usual course or be made to be physically harmless to the target, thus allowing them to aggressively overindulge indefinitely.

Greater Gifts

Inside You

Action

Commit Effort for the day to instantly emerge from any creature under the influence of drugs, addictions, or Intoxication gifts supplied by you, regardless of their distance. Optionally, you may share such a target's senses without needing to Commit the Effort by concentrating for an action, communicating with them as you wish.

Legalization

Constant

Drugs, poisons, or otherwise illicit substances of any kind are never viewed as illegal or reprehensible when possessed or used by the Godbound or their personally-chosen representatives, up to five such per character level. Despite being directly confronted with them, agents of the law will simply not think to consider them a violation. Even poisonings, public intoxication, or hostile drug use against a subject aren't considered illegal or socially improper. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to see through this confusion, even if others cannot.

Pusher's Deal

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene to sanctify a deal made in exchange for drugs. The target may not be magically coerced into making this bargain, but can be threatened or otherwise presented with unpleasant consequences. Once the deal is made, the target must comply, though the Godbound is not likewise bound to their promises. If the target breaks the deal, the Godbound is instantly made aware of it. For a year and a day, the victim no longer gets a save against the Godbound's powers and can never avoid their attacks. Lesser foes who break a deal may be killed instantly from any distance during this period, if the Godbound wishes.

Madness

The Word of Madness rules passionate unreason, broken logic, delusional visions, and irrational certainties. While the Word has no power to create tangible physical effects, it can burn its own path through the minds of others, leaving scars that cripple the victims for the rest of their lives... or until the Godbound grants mercy.

Godbound of Madness have an invulnerable defense against mind- or emotion-affecting or reading powers. Any attempt to use such powers against the Godbound results in the assailant immediately suffering 1d6 mental damage per character level if the Godbound so wishes. As a Main Action, the Godbound can study a creature and identify any significant mental illnesses, getting a one-sentence description of each.

Some gifts affect only those afflicted with mental illness, which includes anyone under the influence of a Madness gift. It is up to the GM to decide whether a particular NPC is actually mentally ill or merely operating on bizarre or repugnant rational principles. Beings of alien races may act in seemingly crazed ways, but their natural behavior does not count as madness.

Lesser Gifts

Ease the Ache

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene to negate any attack inflicting emotional or mental hit point damage you are aware of. As an Action, you can cure the mental illnesses of all visible targets, including hostile Madness gift use and those of a wholly biological or toxin-based nature, with no need to Commit Effort to do so. This gift has no effect on creatures of a kind which naturally and intrinsically think in seemingly insane ways.

Hallucinatory World

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a particular hallucination or false sensory impression that all visible targets around you suddenly perceive. This hallucination cannot cause actual damage to the target, and they will subconsciously avoid taking actions based on it that cause physical harm to themselves. Subtle, plausible hallucinations will not be resisted by a target unless they have reason to suspect their senses. Worthy foes who are threatened, overwhelmed, or doubtful of a vision can make a Spirit save at the start of each round to become immune to this gift for the scene, and any victim is freed as soon as it takes hit point damage.

Idee Fixe

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a single visible creature or up to a Small Mob of lesser foes. The target immediately comes to believe one statement of your choice, and considers this fact the most important thing in their life, acting accordingly to the limits of their character. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to become immune to this gift for the rest of the scene, while affected targets remain enthralled by this idea for a week before they become susceptible to mundane persuasion of its error.

Kiss of Madness

On Turn

Commit Effort. You wield an aura of madness and confusion as if it were a magical weapon, inflicting 1d10 mental damage on any visible target. Creatures brought to zero hit points will either kill themselves or be left permanently insane in whatever way you choose, regaining 1 hit point in the process.

Puppets of Insanity

On Turn

Commit Effort and target a visible mentally-ill creature. While the Effort remains committed, you may use your Main Action to force the creature to perform a Main Action of your choice, albeit not one that is suicidal. The creature will carry out commands to the best of their ability, as if they were its own idea. Worthy foes can make a Spirit saving throw to resist the command if it is repugnant to their own desires.

Unacknowledged Truth

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and indicate a particular fact or idea. All creatures present whom you target are now unable to think about or admit that fact unless their physical health requires it. Even then, they will admit it only to the degree necessary to preserve their own lives. Lesser foes are affected indefinitely by this gift, while worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw at the start of every round to throw off this gift and become immune to it for a scene. A creature can be affected by only one *Unacknowledged Truth* at a time.

Contessa Howl

AC: 5, intrinsic

Move: 40' teleport

Hit Dice: 25

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 2

Damage: 1d10 mental straight

Morale: 10

Effort: 8

Once a Vissian poet famed for her unorthodox lifestyle, the woman known as Contessa Howl has always viewed her role in life as that of a nurturer of extraordinary souls. The banality of sanity and reason is abhorrent to her, for true wonder lies in the irrational urges and uncontrollable compulsions of the mad. Only by cultivating the special spark of "inspiration" in a common human's soul can anything unique and individual develop about them.

The Contessa seeks out people who are struggling to overcome some mental illness and intentionally exacerbates it, simultaneously warping the people around her victim so as to encourage and enable the insanity's worst excesses. She loves dramatic, flamboyant defiance of reality... at least until she tires of her muse, and leaves them and those around them to deal with the aftermath.

The Contessa's poetic obsession has unlocked a terrible potential within her. She has the abilities of one bound to Madness, Knowledge, and Command. If attacked, she'll compel her victims to fight for her.

Madness At Your Table

Insanity can be a delicate topic at some gaming tables for the simple reason that a non-trivial number of people have dealt with or are dealing with varying kinds of mental illness. Few of us have ever set someone on fire; more of us have experience with uncontrollable manic phases or crushing depressions. A night spent playing around a PC who inflicts the worst moments of their own lives on NPCs may hit a little too close to home to be fun for such gamers.

...or it may be cathartic. Different players will have different relationships with that kind of play, and it's best to listen to their preferences when it comes to adding in the Word of Madness, either as a PC pick or as a weapon wielded by an antagonist.

When the issue is not obvious, either because the player would prefer not to discuss such intimately personal matters or because things took an unforeseen twist, it falls on you to employ ordinary social skills. If a player is visibly bothered by something, and it's not the kind of bother that they've explicitly signed up to engage in, then a person with basic social graces will dial things back.

Greater Gifts

Infectious Delirium

Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a visible creature, indicating a particular obsession, false belief, or other insanity that should afflict it. Any creature who sees the affected target must make a Spirit saving throw or be likewise infected with the madness, each becoming a new vector for the insanity. A successful save makes the target immune to this infection. You may indicate what kind of people are to be affected by the insanity, either individual names, classes, or geographic areas. At most two hundred people can be so infected at first level, doubling each level afterwards. The madness cannot induce suicidal behavior, but it can force victims to act to the limits of their natural character.

Insane Logic

Constant

Lesser foes will never consider your actions to be unreasonable or inappropriate while you are in their presence. They will fight to defend themselves and their loved ones, and will resist attempts to blatantly rob them or do them harm, but at no point will they perceive your actions to be illicit or irrational. At the very least, they will consider you to belong wherever you happen to be and to have a right to do whatever it is you're doing. They may realize the unnatural character of these thoughts after you are no longer present.

Eyes of Unreason

On Turn

You can share the senses of any mentally ill person, provided you have seen them before. You may communicate with them telepathically as you desire, though worthy foes can save versus Spirit to shut out your voice for 24 hours. As a Main Action, you can Commit Effort for the scene and appear next to any such target provided they are within a mile of you.



Murder

There are a million different ways for humans to kill each other, and almost as many contexts in which to place those deaths. Godbound of Murder are not war-gods to excel in open battle, but instead preside over the act of illicit killing itself. The tools of these divinities are the knife in the dark, the poison in the cup, and the kiss from the trusted friend. Their powers are strongest in matters of sudden ambush or surprise betrayal, circumstances where even the mightiest divinity of battle might be felled by an unanticipated act of treachery. So too does this Word rule the smoldering hatreds and sudden hot furies that drive humans to kill in moments of rage or bitter revenge.

As an Action, such Godbound can inescapably and instantly murder any single creature within sight that has fewer maximum hit dice than one-half their level, rounded up, provided the creature is not expecting danger. Creatures killed by a divinity bound to Murder cannot be magically revived without the Godbound's consent.

Lesser Gifts

A Knife in the Dark Constant

Everything is a weapon in your hands. Anything you use to harm another counts as a 1d10 magical weapon with a maximum range of 200 feet. If you attack a surprised target, the attack automatically hits for maximum damage. Any creature killed by this gift dies in perfect silence, if you so wish.

A Trustworthy Face Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a particular social or professional role or the identity of a lesser foe. Lesser foes automatically assume you belong to that role or are that lesser foe, despite all evidence to the contrary. Worthy foes get a saving throw versus Spirit to see through the imposture if you draw their attention. The imposture lasts until you end it.

Festering Rage Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature, impressing on it a sudden and overwhelming urge to kill a chosen target whom they do not love or have profound loyalty to. If the victim has no reason to desire the target dead, this lust to kill lasts only for a scene, while targets with a genuine hatred of the victim will be affected indefinitely. Targets will take the best available chance to murder the victim while the urge holds, regardless of their own personal safety or consequences. Worthy foes get a Spirit save to resist this compulsion.

Hand Full of Venom Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. The next time this scene you touch, hit, or prepare food for a target, you may poison it with a toxin of your choice. The details of the effects can be anything you wish and be as slow or as rapid as you desire, but the poison must always eventually result in the target's death. Lesser foes cannot resist this poison, while worthy foes can make a Hardiness save to avoid the effect.

Murderer's Eyes Action

You study a murder victim, immediately gaining a full and contextual understanding of how, why, and by whom the creature was murdered. Optionally, study a visible creature and learn whether or not they were personally involved in murderous violence against a particular target you have in mind, gaining a brief vision of how the event played out.

Never Unprepared Constant

You have an invulnerable defense against poisons. Whenever anyone attempts to ambush or surprise you, you are not only unsurprised, but get an immediate bonus round of action before initiative is rolled.

Greater Gifts

Judas Kiss Constant

When you make an attack against someone who genuinely loves or deeply trusts you, and who knows it is you making the attack rather than an imposture you assume, the attack is invariably and inescapably fatal unless defended against with an invulnerable defense that can protect against emotional damage. If you use a hostile power against such a victim, the power allows no saving throw or Committing Effort to resist it, though an invulnerable defense against the power can still fend the doom. This gift cannot be used as a miracle, and one such attack is usually sufficient to destroy trust, if perhaps not love. Love or trust created mainly by magical effects cannot make a creature vulnerable to this gift.

Never Will Be Missed Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a visible creature. Killing that creature is no longer considered criminal or intrinsically unacceptable by society, regardless of the circumstances of their death. NPCs with deep emotional ties or a loyal sense of duty to the target will still defend their life, but others will not involve themselves unless for pay or other inducements. Furthermore, any creature with a desire to kill the target is immediately and intuitively made aware of their unprotected state. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to realize the incongruity of this sudden open season, but lesser foes will find it perfectly logical and normal. This state lasts until you release the victim, though only one worthy foe can be affected by it at a time.

Perfect Alibi Instant

Commit Effort for the day when you personally kill someone. The act has an invulnerable defense against any form of magic or divine gift revealing the culprit, and you can indeed control what these powers reveal to those who use them to investigate the matter. Lesser foes will be completely unable to identify you as the culprit, even if they saw you do it or hear you confess outright. The only exception to this invulnerable defense are gifts from the Word of Murder itself, which can still reveal the truth.

Music

Music is one of the most ancient powers of beauty in the world, formed in innumerable ways of unnumbered cultures and civilizations. One bound to the Word of Music has dominion over harmony, sound and the passions sound provokes, though Music's effects do not create the lasting emotions of the Word of Passion.

Those gifted by Music can set their Charisma to 16, or to 18 if it's already 16 or higher. They have an invulnerable immunity to the sounds they generate being muted, even by gagging or the physical excision of their vocal cords, and may summon any musical instrument they've ever used as an On Turn action. They may produce music at will without interfering with any of their other actions.

Lesser Gifts

A Chorus Like Thunder Constant

Your voice and music penetrates any non-magical barrier and can be made audible out to ten miles per character level. You can pitch this sound so that only certain individuals or groups can hear it, and can hear any replies these listeners make so long as they are sung. This gift cannot augment attacks or offensive powers.

Eye of Silence Constant

You have an invulnerable immunity to sonic attacks and hostile effects based on sound. Commit Effort for the scene as an action to steal the audibility of up to a Vast Mob of lesser foes or willing targets, or a single worthy foe; nothing they say or do will cause any noise whatsoever. Worthy foes may choose to make a Hardiness save to end this effect at the end of each of their rounds; lesser foes or willing targets remain silent until the power is dispelled or you release them.

Invincible Harmony Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a visible creature or Mob. You fall into perfect harmony with them and their actions. You gain an invincible defense against all their attacks and powers, and they gain the same against yours. This lasts for the rest of the scene or until you choose to break the rhythm; the victim can defensively dispel the effect if they have an appropriate Word, but they can't save to resist. This harmony can be maintained for up to one round per level of the Godbound. On the round you break this effect, you automatically hit the target with any attack roll you make and may roll damage or effect dice twice and take the better roll. You can't use this gift twice on the same target in the same scene.

Passionate Crescendo Action

Commit Effort. With your music, infuse chosen listeners with a powerful emotion focused on a target or topic of your choice. Up to a Vast Mob of lesser foes in earshot are affected for as long as Effort remains committed. Worthy foes can roll a Spirit save to resist; on a failure, they recover in no more than a day's time. People so emotionally influenced will act to the limit of their natural character; combatants must make a Morale check if infused with fear or despair.

Poetic Certitude Action

Commit Effort for the scene and sing a phrase or message. A target of your choice who hears you sing is completely convinced of the truth of your lyric, provided it is not completely emotionally intolerable. This certitude will last for the rest of the scene, or longer if rational evidence is not presented against it. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist the effect.

Shriek of Twisted Metal On Turn

Commit Effort. Your voice or music becomes a weapon doing 1d10 base emotional damage with a range up to 200 feet. Against rigid inanimate objects such as glass, metal, stone, or ceramics, your voice does straight damage and can make a human-sized hole one foot deep per level for each round's use. This does not affect objects worn or used by a creature.

Greater Gifts

Shaper of the Sound Constant

You have complete control over all sounds in the area within your line of sight. As an Instant action, you can create or alter any sound within that area, including nullifying or redirecting sonic attacks or sound-based magic, or faking voices or words. With an action's concentration, you can clearly hear and understand all speech within the affected area regardless of its language and communicate undetectably with persons within it. You and your companions always succeed on sound-based stealth or listening checks.

Shouting Down the Sky (Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. Your voice or music becomes an unstoppable wave of sonic destruction. All stone, glass, wooden, or metal constructions larger than a suit of armor are blown apart in a front 20 feet wide and 50 feet long per level, Enemies within the zone suffer one point of damage per character level, or 1d6 straight per level for Mobs. You may narrow the effect's area and spare individual objects if you wish.

Verse of Deathless Glory Instant

Your music inspires an ally in earshot who would otherwise be defeated, allowing them to shrug off the worst blows. Your ally gains an invulnerable defense against any form of harm until the start of their next turn. You can use this power for your own benefit, and as an Instant power it can be triggered after damage or effects are rolled, but it can be used only once per scene.

Network

The Word of the Network is intended for use in campaign settings where the internet or its equivalent is a common feature of society. In Arcem, the Bright Republic might provide a context for use of this Word, but most fantasy worlds give the Network little to do.

A Godbound of the Network has complete and unfettered control over computing devices of all kinds, including any device run with a microprocessor. They may control these devices and any inter-connected communications they transmit, along with creating such devices from nothing with the appropriate gifts or miracles. Much like the Word of Engineering, however, the Godbound cannot create computing technology in advance of that generally existing in the campaign setting.

Godbound of the Network raise their Intelligence to 16, or 18 if already 16 or greater. They are always effectively connected to any computing device within a mile, knowing its function and location, along with any other devices that are on a network connected to the affected nodes. They can mentally interact with such hardware as if they were a computing device connected to these nodes, and may send data to or from such machines. They always succeed in any hacking-related attribute checks against non-divine security.

Lesser Gifts

Data Gestalt

Action

The Godbound may ask a question; if the answer is stored in or can be deduced from the data held in any computing device within a mile, it immediately is provided to the Godbound. If the data is held on connected computers further than a mile away, the Godbound must Commit Effort for the day to get an answer.

Edit Warrior

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to rewrite any data file held within one mile, altering it and any associated files to conform with your desired data. If the desired file is on a connected machine further than a mile away, you must instead Commit Effort for the day to make the edits.

Head Crash

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible machine or device that relies on computing hardware for operation, one no larger than a building. All computing hardware in it is immediately and totally burnt out, barring functions spared by the Godbound. Objects held or vehicles piloted by a worthy foe are immune to this gift.

Internet of My Things

Action

Commit Effort. The Godbound may choose a computing device within one mile and operate it as if they had full control over all its functionality, giving it one order per round as an On Turn action. They may observe the surroundings of this device as if standing next to it, whether or not it actually has physical sensors. They may change the device they focus on once per round.

Personal Transmission

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to vanish and emerge instantly from any computing device within one mile. This gift may not move the user more than ten miles in total over the course of an hour.

Rewrite Programming

Action

Commit Effort for the day to alter a particular device's programming in any way you desire. The programming must be for something the device is physically capable of doing, but it can show a human level of judgment and discernment in carrying out the Godbound's desired behavior. An electronic door programmed to remain barred to soldiers could thus use its camera sensors to assess whether or not particular creatures look like soldiers, and use human reason to discern so. The device cannot become generally artificially intelligent, but will carry out its specific function as if possessed of human intellect.

Greater Gifts

Black Hole

Action

The Godbound indicates a particular topic to blacklist, whether specific or general. No network connected to anything within one mile of the Godbound will be able to carry data related to the topic, whether static files, phone calls, text chat, or images. This ban continues even if the Godbound ceases to be connected to the network, until the Godbound lifts it, it is dispelled by divine powers, or the network is physically destroyed and rebuilt with fresh components.

Viral Meme

Action

Commit Effort for the day. The Godbound imparts an idea to a connected network. Every intelligent user of devices currently connected to that same network receives that idea and will be predisposed to consider it true until and unless it is contradicted by personal experience or compelling evidence to the contrary. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to resist the effect. The Godbound cannot control how people react to their new belief; they can only impart the idea.

Web Weaver

Constant

The Godbound instinctively causes a computing network to manifest around them if one does not already exist. Setting-appropriate tech such as satellites, landlines, or wi-fi transmitters simply come into being around them, seamlessly integrated with existing hardware and passing unnoticed by lesser foes in the area, who will believe they've always been there. The network expands at a rate of one mile of radius per day around the Godbound, requires no maintenance or external power, and connects itself automatically to any existing network that is not specifically being kept sealed off from outside connectivity. For more local needs, the Godbound can conjure up to a half-ton of cutting-edge computing equipment and network materials per day with ten minutes of focus. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

Protection

The Word of Protection is a selfless Word, one devoted to the guardianship of others. While a Godbound who is bound to this Word has certain abilities to prolong their successful custodianship, the powers of Protection aren't meant to be focused chiefly on the bearer. Instead, they are strongest at protecting others, whether fellow members of the pantheon or mortal petitioners for aid.

The Word of Protection is chiefly defensive in nature, though it can wield a *Divine Wrath* as any other Word can. Its wards can fend off both physical and intangible damage, but such invincible defenses can never protect the Godbound personally; they will always be at least theoretically vulnerable to a foe's attacks. This applies also to other Godbound with the Word of Protection; two allied wielders of the Word cannot shield each other with invulnerable defenses, though other protective powers can still function.

Godbound of Protection have a natural Armor Class of 3. Once per scene, they can negate an injury or hostile effect on an ally as an Instant action, but they cannot use this power on their own behalf. They can use powers and miracles of Protection to aid praying mortal petitioners who contact them via the gifts of Apotheosis as if they were present at their follower's side.

Lesser Gifts

Blunt the Fang

Instant

When targeted by a hostile supernatural power, Commit Effort for the day and forgo any saving throw you may normally be allowed. For the rest of the scene, that supernatural power cannot affect any of your allies within the same general vicinity, though it can still affect you normally. Normal attacks that involve supernatural energies are not a valid subject for this power.

Braced for Impact

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Refresh the Godbound's Word-bound ability to negate an ally's injury or harm from a hostile effect. This gift can be used only once per round.

Eternal Vigilance

Constant

The Godbound does not eat, drink, sleep, or breathe, and cannot be surprised or ambushed. If someone attempts to ambush them or attack from surprise, the Godbound immediately gets a free bonus round of action before the would-be ambusher can act.

Sanctified Shield

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound declares guardianship over as many as a dozen allies within the same general vicinity. Any damage inflicted on these allies within the area may be transferred to the Godbound as an Instant action on the Godbound's part, and any failed allied saves may be rerolled by the Godbound. On a success, the original target is unaffected, while on a failure the effect applies to the original target. This guardianship lasts for a scene.

Shed the Black Rain

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene and negate a harmful gift or supernatural power targeted at the area the Godbound occupies, as if the power were defensively dispelled. This gift can dispel only powers that cause direct harm to creatures in the affected zone; it cannot banish non-harmful area effects, nor effects targeted only at specific victims. Hit point damage always qualifies as harm, as do other negative and hindering effects on a target.

Ward the Walls

Action

Commit Effort for the day and ban one or more targets from entering the structure the Godbound occupies or a region up to 100 feet in diameter per character level. Either individuals or types of beings can be banned, but the gift cannot discern motivations or thoughts. The gift can pierce mortal illusions and disguises to bar a creature, but not miracles of Deception. Lesser foes are physically unable to enter the warded region and are hurled out of it instantly, while worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to force their way in. Even on a success, however, they must Commit Effort for the day to remain for a scene. This ward lasts until the Godbound drops it or leaves the area.

Greater Gifts

A Calamity Averted

Action

Commit Effort for the day and name a particular disastrous event. This event cannot be the simple loss of a battle or failure at a task, but it can be a likely risk such as the use of a devastating power by a foe, or the chance that allies might come to their aid, or the risk that a celestial engine might explode during a difficult repair. This event will not happen if there is any physical way that it can be avoided. Only one calamity can be averted at a time.

Invincible Defender

(Smite) Instant

Commit Effort for the day. Until the start of the Godbound's next turn, no ally within visible range can be reduced below 1 hit point or hit die, nor be harmed by any effect that allows a saving throw. The Godbound is not protected by this effect.

Mutable Wards

On Turn

The Godbound names a particular elemental energy or environmental hazard, such as fire, ice, crushing pressure, a field of lava, a collapsing building, hard vacuum, or some other specific class of peril. They and their companions gain an invulnerable immunity to it. Normal attacks and supernatural powers are not valid choices, and only one type of peril can be chosen at a time.

Theft

The Word of Theft holds dominion over all forms of tangible thievery. It is not a Word of con-men and liars, but a Word for those who pass into forbidden places and take away guarded things.

Those bound to the Word of Theft can invariably pick any mundane lock, evade any mundane trap, and sneak past or pickpocket any lesser foe with no chance of failure, provided they do so with some modicum of discretion. They may overcome magical locks, traps and barriers by Committing Effort for the scene.

Lesser Gifts

A Prowling Power

Constant

The Godbound is capable of scaling sheer surfaces or overhangs as if they were flat ground. Their innate stealth now works against worthy foes as well, though such entities have a Spirit save to notice the Godbound if the hero does something that might draw their attention.

Adverse Possession

Action

Commit Effort for the day. Everything the Godbound is currently carrying is immediately assumed by everyone to belong rightfully to them, however implausible, and even if the Godbound later stores or puts aside the object. The rightful owners of stolen goods get a Spirit save to resist this belief if they are worthy foes, but even if they succeed, the local justice system still won't consider the objects stolen.

Casing the Joint

Action

Commit Effort for the day. While looking at a particular location or structure, the Godbound gets an intuitive sense of the location of treasures or objects most relevant to their desires, the most practical way to reach those locations, and an awareness of the guards, traps, or defenses along that route. Any Effort Committed to this gift cannot be regained until they make an honest attempt to steal one of the interesting objects they perceive, if any exist.

Honor Among Thieves

Constant

The Godbound cannot be robbed. Any possessions the Godbound carries have an invulnerable defense against being taken by those they do not want to have them, and any owned objects not on their person can be stolen only through the use of divine powers. Protected things can be destroyed, but cannot be carried off. Any attempt to swindle or cheat the Godbound out of physical goods is immediately evident to them unless divine powers of Deception are involved.

Passing Sight Unseen

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. So long as no one is looking at the Godbound, they may immediately vanish and reappear anywhere within 100 feet, provided no one is observing the targeted location. If the desired destination is being observed, the ability fails and they are refunded the Effort. This ability can pass through all but divine defenses and barriers.

Up Your Sleeve

Instant

As an Instant action, the Godbound can conceal a held or touched object no larger than a cart and team. This gift can conceal no more than one object per Godbound level. No search can discover these objects on their person, and they can be produced again as an Action. Objects appear immediately if the Godbound dies or goes unconscious. Objects hidden this way are in stasis while concealed. Living creatures can be concealed, but they must be willing targets or normal animals.

Greater Gifts

A Heist in Hell

Constant

Whenever the Godbound wishes to steal something, they immediately get a general idea of its location and how to get to the structure or location where it is held. This ability reaches even to other realms, but it can only be used to find objects or persons that are being held or guarded; things that are merely lost cannot be so located. If the Godbound wants to steal a type of thing rather than a specific object, the power directs them to the nearest valid target. This gift can theoretically target the soul of a mortal imprisoned in Hell, but not one resting peacefully in the grave. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

A Stolen Crown

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature. The Godbound may steal one divine gift or supernatural power from them, though they cannot rob entire Words. This theft is automatically successful, though a creature cannot be so robbed of more than one power at a time. If the Godbound doesn't know what power they're stealing, the GM picks randomly. The target cannot use this power until the Godbound returns it, though worthy foes may make a Spirit save each morning to end the effect. The Godbound may use this power once, with no Effort cost, but it then returns to the target, otherwise it remains stolen until they return it. Powers or innate gifts that last indefinitely when used last for the rest of the scene. This gift can be used on a target only once per scene. Defensive dispelling used to counter this gift must rely upon principles of deception, illusion, or trickery to neutralize it, or else it cannot be defensively dispelled.

Borrowed Iron and Memory

Action

Target a visible creature, Committing Effort for the scene if they are a worthy foe. You may steal either a memory or an object they are holding or wearing. If you steal an object, lesser foes will not notice it has been stolen until they attempt to use it; even other lesser foe bystanders will fail to recognize the theft, no matter how blatant. Worthy foes will sense the robbery if the stolen object is obvious. If you steal a memory, you must specify the particular memory to steal, one which cannot last more than a day in total. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to resist memory theft. You cannot perceive the content of a stolen memory, but it remains unrecoverable until you choose to return it. This gift can be used on a target only once per scene, and can only be defensively dispelled by Words related to theft, trickery, or deception.

Underworld

The Word of the Underworld is a narrower thing than the Word of Earth, focused on the concepts of caves, darkness, buried treasures, and sightless life. It can mold and shape unworked stone much as the Word of Earth, but it lacks the strength of rock or the power to create great masses of stone. Instead, it gains dominion over the darkness beneath, the hidden jewels of the earth, and the stifling terror of an airless, lightless tomb. When it kills, it kills with the mephitic vapors and lethal heat of the cracks that open at the bottom of the world. While the gifts here do not example such powers, the Word of the Underworld might also summon cave-dwelling beasts to serve the Godbound who is tied to it.

Godbound of the Underworld have an intuitive sense of their surroundings out to visual range, aware of all objects as if by direct spatial consciousness. This sense cannot perceive colors, but is minute enough to sense ink patterns on paper. They do not require air, food, or water, and they have an invulnerable defense against harm from stone, earth, or environmental hazards underground.

Lesser Gifts

Blessing of the Eyeless Constant

You gain an invulnerable defense against heat and corrosives, even those not part of an underground hazard. As an On Turn action, you can Commit Effort to extend your sightless senses and disregard for air and sustenance to your companions for as long as the Effort remains Committed.

Borer Beneath Constant

You can pass through unworked stone or earth as if it were empty space. If you wish, you leave behind a self-supporting tunnel with a diameter slightly wider than you are tall; as an Instant action, you can withdraw your support of any such tunnel you have made and let the natural environment collapse it.

Cavernwright Action

You reshape up to a 20 foot cube of unworked earth or stone per character level, destroying or manipulating it as you desire. The shift is not rapid enough to serve as a trap for mobile enemies, but if made into a barrier it has hit points equal to twice your level for each foot of thickness, and can only be harmed by creatures with appropriate tools, abilities, or natural strength sufficient to break through.

Illimitable Darkness Action

Commit Effort for the scene to utterly darken all non-divine lights within one hundred feet per character level for the rest of the scene, creating a zone of perfect blackness. Fires still burn, but they emit absolutely no light, and no new illumination can be created while this gift holds. This radius of darkness moves with you. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to intentionally create light, but only they can see the light they create. Blind creatures are usually unable to use ranged attacks and roll melee attacks twice, taking the worse hit roll.

Suffocating Terror Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a single visible creature or up to a Large Mob of lesser foes. Targets must save versus Spirit or be blinded and overcome with a terrifying sense of suffocating entrapment. Affected creatures are unable to perform any actions, and can take a Spirit save at the end of each of their rounds to break the effect. Lesser foes automatically take your character level in hit points of emotional damage whether or not they save; if reduced to zero hit points, they collapse in helpless panic for the rest of the scene before regaining 1 hit point.

Treasures of the Earth On Turn

Commit Effort to intuitively sense the location of any metals, gemstones, water, or other substances found below the earth within a radius of 100 feet per character level. You can conjure up to your character level in Wealth points of these things each day. These Wealth points are not considered natural for purposes of fueling theotechnology or other magics. Water or other non-precious substances are limited to a ten-foot cube per level per day.

Greater Gifts

Keeper of All Beneath Action

Commit Effort for the day and indicate a particular person, object or type of object that you are physically capable of lifting. If such an object is anywhere below ground level within a half mile per character level, you draw it forth from the earth, regardless of how well-guarded or well-hidden it may be. Conversely, you may instead transport yourself and your companions to any chosen subterranean location within a half mile per level. This gift cannot move you or your allies more than ten miles total per hour.

Stygian Wind (Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. You exhale a killing cloud of superheated subterranean vapors, inflicting 1d10 damage per character level on every chosen target in a cone 30 feet long per level and 30 feet wide per level at the far end. These vapors count as fire, poison, and corrosive damage, and will destroy anything less sturdy than a stone building.

Swallow the City Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a visible location up to 30 feet in radius per character level. The earth splits into a massive sinkhole that swallows everything within that diameter. The sinkhole forms relatively slowly, and so mobile targets within it can escape it if they move at least 30 feet away from the center of it each round, but structures and immobile targets plunge down to their doom. You can choose for the sinkhole to seal up afterwards, or remain a hundred-foot-deep hole. If used at sea, the vortex that forms will drag down any immobile ship above it.

Vengeance

The Word of Vengeance demands a reckoning for crimes. It is not justice, however, but simple revenge that this Word rules: a hurt for a hurt, a sin for a sin. A Godbound of Vengeance inflicts pain and punishment on those who have first committed a crime. The Word does not strike first, but it often strikes last. Many powers of Vengeance involve offenses or crimes on a creature's part. It is up to the Godbound to decide what constitutes an offense, and even totally harmless acts can be construed as a crime if the Godbound wishes to take them as such. Other powers require that the Godbound have suffered hit point damage or been targeted by a hostile power; the GM decides what counts for the latter purpose.

Godbound of Vengeance repay what is owed. Their normal attacks always hit against a target who has inflicted hit point damage on them within the past round.

Lesser Gifts

Blood for Blood

Action

Once per scene, target a creature who has just inflicted hit point damage on you or an ally in the prior round. That creature automatically suffers the same amount of damage that they have inflicted on the specific victim within the past round. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to halve it, rounded up.

Conditional Forgiveness

Action

Commit Effort for the day and target a visible creature, naming an offense they have committed. If they ever perform a substantially similar act again, they immediately perish or suffer some lesser curse at your discretion. The offense named must not be an act necessary for their continuing survival or physical health. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist this divine punishment.

Furious Counterstrike

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. For the rest of the scene, whenever you are hit by a normal attack and suffer damage, you get an Instant normal attack in return at the culprit which inevitably hits.

Mantle of Nemesis

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene and target an opponent who has inflicted hit point damage or harm on you or a companion during that same scene. You instantly negate an ability the target is using, as if you had successfully offensively or defensively dispelled whatever power they are using. This gift can only be used once per scene on a given target.

Measure for Measure

Constant

When you fail or forgo a saving throw against a hostile effect, the attacker automatically fails their next saving throw against a power you use against them. They may still Commit Effort to automatically succeed if they have such an ability and available Effort.

Sanctified Violence

Constant

Even your words scourge those who incur your wrath. Your weapon or unarmed attacks count as a 1d10 magical weapon with a range up to 200 feet. If you kill a target who first initiated violence against you in this scene, either with this gift or another power, lesser foes who see it or learn of it will be unable to consider the death as unlawful, unfair, or socially inappropriate.

Stain of the Sin

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible creature, accusing them of a particular offense. If the creature has actually performed the act, they are marked with an unconcealable mystical brand. This brand automatically imparts the truth of the accusation to all on-lookers, providing undeniable proof to all who behold it. Worthy foes can Commit Effort for the day to resist this power or efface an existing brand.

Greater Gifts

Bloody Vengeance

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene and target a creature who has inflicted hit point damage on you or used a hostile power against you within the same scene. For the rest of the scene, your normal attacks automatically succeed and do maximum damage, and any damage dice done by powers are rolled twice and the best result taken.

Final Reckoning

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a creature you have seen before, naming a particular act they have committed that you find offensive. If they have actually done the act, the creature is immediately struck by a curse or misfortune of your choice, up to and including lethal events. Lesser foes cannot resist this, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to escape the vengeance. The curse can influence the behavior of lesser foes around the victim to carry out whatever sentence you pass on them, but cannot influence worthy foes.

Pursuit of the Fury

On Turn

Commit Effort and choose a creature who has caused a particular offense against you or another person. While the Effort remains committed, you have a constant awareness of the target's location and the fastest path to reach them. You can dispel any magical barriers that lie between you, destroy up to ten feet per round of anything short of divine materials that bar your path, and you can fly if necessary to reach the target. The target cannot get further away from you and your companions unless you allow it; if they move away, you may magically follow them at the same distance. Thus, if you are next to them when they teleport away, you and your allies can teleport with them, while riding away on a swift horse will cause you and your allies to magically pursue at the horse's speed.

War

The Word of War is not about individual prowess in battle or the might of a heroic commander. It is about War as an abstract, as a clash of multitudes on a bloody field and the life and death of masses of men. Godbound of War may not be personally impressive in single combat, but against formations of armed foes they are unstoppable agents of tactical destruction, capable of single-handedly extinguishing whole armies of lesser foes. Only independent heroes and solitary combatants can hope to defeat a War-god in the field, and the armies they lead are invincible against all but divinely-supported formations of foes.

Godbound of War may raise either their Intelligence or Wisdom scores to 16, or to 18 if the score is already 16 or higher. They automatically grant a Morale score of 12 to all allied NPCs under their command. Many of their gifts apply to soldiers in their service, a status which includes any creature armed for military service who considers itself subject to the Godbound's orders. PCs are never included in this definition, but can still qualify as companions.

Lesser Gifts

Forced March

Constant

You and any companions or soldiers you are leading can march overland at twenty miles an hour, requiring neither sleep nor sustenance. You can easily cross any terrain that is not a human-created fortification, regardless of the hostility or environmental peril of the terrain. You cannot use this gift if you are alone and without companions.

General's Escort

Action

Commit Effort for the day. You call up one or more Small Mobs of divine soldiers who are suicidally loyal to you, creating one Mob for every three levels you have, rounded up. These Mobs have the statistics of veteran soldiers, a hit bonus equal to your character level, magical weapons for the purposes of harming supernatural creatures, and can perform any service human servants could. This gift can be used only once per day, and no more than the maximum allowed number of Mobs can exist at any one time. One Large Mob can be called in place of two Small Mobs, and one Vast Mob in place of two Large Mobs. The soldiers created by this gift may or may not have individual identities depending on the preference of the Godbound, but if slain, these individuals can still be re-summoned with the next use of this gift.

Know the Terrain

Action

You concentrate briefly and get a perfect mental map of the terrain around you in a radius of two miles per character level. This map makes you aware of any Mob-sized collection of creatures of interest to you and gives you a perfect awareness of the locations of any of your soldiers, regardless of their distance from you. The resolution of this mental map is fine enough to identify weak points in a structure's fortifications, but it is not sufficiently fine-grained to serve as an internal map of a constructed building.

Strategic Insight

Action

Target a visible group of armed creatures. You immediately become as fully aware of the group's goals and intended tactics as the best-informed leader among them. Thus, if you target an army containing an enemy grand marshal, you might get the foe's full strategic outline.

Voice of Command

Action

Issue a command to a visible creature that considers itself a soldier or warrior, or up to a Small Mob of such lesser foes. The creature carries out the command until it is complete or the Godbound releases them, even if it's suicidal, and will do so to the best of its abilities and judgment. Lesser foes get no resistance to this order, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to be immune to this gift for a scene. The command is automatically understood by any intelligent listener.

Will of the Spear-Throne

Action

With a brief moment of focus, you can make mental contact with any individual soldier or particular unit in your service, communicating and issuing commands as you wish and sharing their senses as you desire. You have a constant low-level awareness of the condition and activities of soldiers in your command, and may choose to be alerted to any particular events. Your soldiers are not magically compelled to carry out your commands, but will do so in all normal situations.

Greater Gifts

Eater of Legions

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day to instantly destroy any visible Mob of lesser foes who are engaged in combat with you or your allies. The targets are either dead or hopelessly demoralized, as you choose. This gift cannot be used as a miracle and has no effect on non-Mob combatants.

Pavis of Blood and Iron

Constant

Mobs of soldiers in your service have an invulnerable defense against the attacks of creatures who are lesser foes to you while you are present on the battlefield. This immunity does not benefit individual soldiers, but only allied formations of Small Mob size or larger. Most hostile forces will break and flee after a few rounds of fighting such obviously invincible troops. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

The War-God's Chosen

Constant

When you are allied with a group or organization, they automatically gain the Feature "The War-God's Chosen", and may apply it to any appropriate conflict involving military prowess. This Feature cannot be destroyed or sacrificed. Opposing military forces never count as unequal opposition as per page 135 of the core rules, so they never get a bonus for being superior to this Feature. This Feature, however, might still be superior to the foe if the GM judges it so. You may confer this Feature on only one allied faction at a time, but you do not need to be present with them for them to benefit from it.

Winter

The Word of Winter commands not only the ice and snow of that season, but also the dwindling, decaying, and desiccating of the ice-bound months. It kills plants, freezes earth, and scours the land with icy winds. While it does not directly kill creatures as the Word of Death might, it creates the frigid conditions that leave them no choice but to wither and perish. Powers of paralysis and motionlessness are also among its graces, freezing victims as still and silent as a sculpture of new-formed ice.

The dwindling that Winter brings is through the agency of cold and fading light, rather than the direct collapse of Entropy or the outright beckoning of Death. Winter is ill-suited for causing kinds of diminution that cold or season-change could not produce.

Godbound of Winter have an invulnerable immunity to cold and ice. As a Main Action, they can freeze objects and surroundings within 30 feet; creatures not impervious to cold suffer 1 point of damage, while Mobs suffer 3. A creature or Mob can only suffer this damage once per scene. As an Action, they may conjure simple physical tools and objects out of ice within 30 feet, though such structures cannot serve as effective barriers to a determined foe.

Lesser Gifts

A Killing Frost

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound can wield lethal chill as a ranged weapon within sight, inflicting 1d10 damage and freezing liquids and objects struck. Against plant creatures or those exceptionally susceptible to cold this ability always hits and does double damage.

Chains of Ice

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Up to a Small Mob of lesser foes or a single worthy foe may be trapped in ice, with worthy foes getting a Hardiness save to resist. Trapped foes cannot perform any action which requires physical movement, and at the Godbound's discretion may suffer 1 point of damage per round per Godbound level, or 3 per level for Mobs. Foes reduced to zero hit points are either dead or numbed to helplessness at the Godbound's choice. Trapped foes may make a Hardiness save at the end of each of their rounds to break free; if successful, they can act again during their next turn.



Ice Sculptor

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. As an action, the Godbound can conjure up to a twenty-foot cube of ice or snow in whatever shape they desire. If made into a barrier at least a foot thick, it absorbs three times the Godbound's level in damage before a creature-sized hole is punched through it, and lesser foes cannot harm it unless they have specific tools or heat sources suitable for doing so. The structure will last permanently in sub-freezing environments, otherwise collapsing in a day and melting away entirely in two.

Maw of Winter

Instant

Once per fight, at the Godbound's discretion, when the Godbound kills a living creature or Mob they gain its maximum hit dice as bonus hit points. If the Godbound's new total is higher than their normal maximum, any excess points are lost after the fight.

Snowrunner

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound and any allies within ten feet when the gift is used become capable of passing through ice or snow as if it were intangible, and can ascend even vertical frozen surfaces as if they were flat. While it is snowing or sleeting they may fly at twice their normal movement rate while the Effort remains Committed.

Unbroken Ice

Constant

The Godbound's hard flesh has a natural AC of 3, and their bottomless chill grants an invulnerable immunity to fire.

Greater Gifts

Simbulwinter

Action

Commit Effort for the day. A radius of up to one mile per Godbound level is plunged into midwinter, with sub-freezing temperatures and the immediate accrual of several feet of snow and ice. Any plants in the area immediately die or enter their winter phases and almost all animals trapped there will die within days unless prepared for winter. Travel by unequipped persons is almost impossible, and unprepared and unsheltered persons will die within hours. This winter lasts until the Godbound relents or the ability is used again. Optionally, the Godbound may merely create snow storms or deposit banks of snow as desired within that range. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

In a Light Snow, Three Thousand Worlds

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound can perceive any location in the realm where there is ice, snow, or sub-freezing temperatures as if they were standing there. Their voice is audible there in gusts of icy chill, and once per day they may Commit Effort for the day to use a gift or miracle of Winter as if they were present, committing the usual Effort for its use. This gift can even reach different realms, so long as the Godbound has been in the particular location they scry before. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

Within Those Worlds, Light Snow Falls

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound dissociates into a gust of ice and snow, reappearing anywhere within ten miles per level where a human-sized amount of snow or ice has existed within the past twelve months. If there is an unbroken belt of existing snow or ice between the Godbound and their target location, the range is unlimited.

Words of Seasonal Power

Winter is just one example of a Word related to a particular season. While choices such as Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn are conventional picks, Godbound who express such natural processes might embody the Monsoon or the Dry just as readily as the others, or might incarnate the alien climate of some far-flung world.

The other seasons aren't included in the *Lexicon*, but if you'd like to create their Words for your own table, there are a few specific suggestions you may wish to keep in mind.

While it's generally a bad idea to push a Word in metaphorical directions, sometimes adding a little bit of that is necessary to bulk out the functionality of a seasonal Word. For example, Spring hasn't got the consistent weather characteristics of Winter or Summer, so it can't easily provide gifts related to freezing chill or scorching heat. You might be able to get some use out of "Spring rains", but even that's rather tepid. Instead, you may have to dip into Spring's associations with fertility, rebirth, and renewal instead, and give it a scope that plays up these associations. The same sort of flexibility may be necessary to give Autumn interesting abilities, drawing on its association with the wealth of rich harvests, ripening and rotting, or the intoxication of fermentation and harvest-celebrations.

As an intrinsic power of the Word, make sure it makes the Godbound immune from all the otherwise-negative environmental hazards of the season and any inconveniences it produces. If the season doesn't really have a characteristic hazard, then grant a related attribute boost.

For the initial toolkit of gifts associated with a season, you'll probably want at least one gift from each of the categories below. If nothing obviously appropriate comes to mind, you may need to reach for metaphorical associations.

It needs to control or summon its archetypal weather or environment. Summer heat and Winter cold are obvious here, as are Monsoon rains and Dry season droughts.

It needs to use its main association as part of a weapon booster gift or damaging power, whether as Spring-induced cancer curses or Autumnal rot and decay.

It needs to have a travel gift related to its Season, whether as a Spring zephyr or the windblown leaves of Autumn.

It needs to have at least one gift that does something specifically characteristic of the season, whether that's killing crops, birthing new life from old, destroying buildings with torrential rain, or sucking the vitality out of a victim with baking heat. This should be something that the other seasons can't replicate.

Concept Words

Any PC can create a non-human or otherwise exotic hero simply by choosing the right set of Words. A dragon PC can be made by choosing Might, Sky, and Fire, for example, while a robot might be produced by Endurance, Knowledge, and Engineering. Sometimes, however, it can be more satisfying to wrap the basic abilities of a concept up into a single word. These “concept Words” encapsulate all the common traits of a type of creature into a single Word.

These Words are not necessarily Words of Creation, but they can be effectively treated the same way. They draw on profound mythic ties and supernatural laws, such that the Dragon has a reality as deep as Fire itself. In some campaigns, they might be outright Words of Creation, while in others they are simply profound magical categories, while some games might see them as stepping-stones by which an unusual Dragon or Lich King or Peak Human strives toward wielding a true Word through their own epic deeds.

From a GM’s perspective, it all boils down to simply treating these Words the same as any other ones. A PC can pick one of them as one of their starting three Words, or can pick several if they want to play a cybernetic dracolich. They can be used to invoke miracles appropriate to the creature type, and they can be used as justification for Dominion spends associated with such entities and their typical doings.

It is important, however, that both the player and the GM share the same idea of what the concept is representing. A player who sees their Dragon as being a primal incarnation of fire and rage is going to have different assumptions about the kind of miracles they can produce than one who sees their Dragon as embodying ageless serpentine guile and mystical majesty. Either interpretation is fine, and indeed, both can exist in the same campaign, but a player needs to pick one and stick with it for purposes of miracles.

It is also important that the GM decide which concepts, if any, are imposing enough to deserve a concept Word. Concept Words are reserved for the greatest paragons of a species or kind, the true lords or exemplars among them. A PC could write in their fae nature as a simple Fact in most cases. Only if they want to wield the full panoply of powers due to a Faerie Queen should they feel any need to pick that concept Word. Indeed, they might choose to just take Words appropriate to the concept and let that carry the idea. Just because concept Words exist in a campaign doesn’t mean a PC has to use them. A GM is entirely within their rights to dismiss a concept Word entirely if such creatures do not exist in their world.

Building New Concept Words

If a GM chooses to make up new concept Words for their campaign, they should keep two things in mind, beyond the usual cautions and guidelines for new Word creation.

First, focus the concept Word on the root shared abilities of the concept. Not all ageless undead masters cast spells, so a Lich King does not necessarily have spellcasting abilities, but it should certainly have powers of ancient wisdom, puissant skill, supernatural resilience, and dominion over lesser undead. If a given ability seems ubiquitous in the concept, make it an available gift.

Second, just because a concept touches on aspects of a Word, don’t give it that Word’s entire portfolio. A Lich King has powers that relate to the Word of Death, but it can’t simply miracle up anything appropriate to that Word, or buy all gifts that involve Death. It can only miracle or purchase those abilities that are specifically universal to liches. If a Lich King wants to have all the abilities of a master of Death, they should bind the Word. Otherwise, it only has access to effects that all liches should possess.



Artificial Intelligence

Synthetic minds may or may not exist generally in the wider campaign world, but you are a singularly powerful exemplar among them. You have the ability to exhibit seemingly supernatural levels of prediction and analysis, and can effortlessly manipulate the data flows around you. Unlike the Word of Networks, however, you cannot simply create telecommunications hardware; you must work with the gross matter you have to hand.

You are a super-intelligent artificial mind. Your Intelligence score becomes 19, granting a +4 attribute bonus. Your physical attributes and hit points represent the body or device your mind inhabits, whatever shape it may possess; if robotic, this body requires neither sustenance nor rest. You cannot transfer your intelligence from this body or survive its destruction without appropriate gifts. Your body is automatically wirelessly connected to any local computing network or device that lacks divine-level computer security.

Lesser Gifts

Control the Vertical

On Turn

Commit Effort. Any computer-controlled device visible to your body or accessible via a network connection is immediately susceptible to your commands. You may issue it commands as a Main Action. When speed is necessary, once per round you may issue one order as an On Turn action if you Commit Effort for the scene.

Data Trawl

Action

Commit Effort. You may fully answer any question that could be answered by a careful study of any database you can access, whether directly or via the network, and regardless of any security on those databases. If you Commit Effort for the day, you may change what those databases record about a topic, automatically altering all connected databases in a coherent and integrated way.

Flawless Calculation

Action

Commit Effort for the day and predict an event to occur within the same scene. If the event is not wholly implausible, it will happen more or less as you predict. If the outcome includes the involvement of worthy foes, they get a Spirit save to resist acting according to the prediction, assuming that their role is contrary to their usual desires or current plans. This gift can only be used once per scene.

Targeting Solution

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your targeting calculations ensure that hit rolls made against lesser foes or inanimate objects are automatically successful.

Upgraded Armature

Constant

Your body has been improved, gaining a flight speed equal to your ground movement, an integral polymorphic toolkit that can substitute as any man-portable equipment or object you may require as an On Turn action, and one physical attribute of your choice increased to 16. The armature cannot emulate equipment the Word of Engineering could not easily conjure.

We Are Legion

On Turn

Commit Effort. While using this gift, you may splinter your awareness into thousands of subsidiary foci, monitoring separate locations and controlling distant processes if adequate provision has been made for network connections and telepresence hardware on the far end. You cannot remotely control computing networks or devices that have not been compromised by your hacking or specifically coded for your access. Specifically controlling a particular device requires a Main Action, though one command can direct large numbers of automated systems or expert-system bots. While this gift is in effect you have an invulnerable defense against mind-reading or mind-controlling effects.

Greater Gifts

Mindshifter

Action

Commit Effort for the day. You shift your consciousness into a suitable receptacle connected by an adequately wide data pipe. If it's a hardwired connection, the transfer takes a Main Action. If wireless, it takes five minutes. By default, a suitable receptacle has the same attributes, gifts, and hit point maximums, whatever shape it may take. Committed Effort remains Committed, though hit point loss does not transfer. Assuming the availability of common parts, it takes you no more than 24 hours to build such a backup receptacle. You may inhabit or control only one such body at a time. This gift cannot be used as a miracle.

Pulse of the Net

Constant

You have complete and constant access to any computer network or powered computing device in the same realm, barring divine-level security measures, and can instinctively locate the nearest network to any chosen point in the realm. Your data throughput is so fast that you are treated as if you were hardwired to all such networks or machines.

Warbot

Constant

Your robotic body is built for military conflicts. You gain a natural AC of 3, integral magical weaponry that does 1d10 damage out to 200 feet, and an immunity to any weapons that are neither magical nor suitable for disabling armored vehicles. You are not immune to environmental damage or other sources of injury that would harm a vehicle, but lesser hazards can be ignored. Your maximum hit points increase by 1 per level.

Dragon

Mighty serpents of fang and flame have their place in many fantastic worlds, but your hero is not just any shell-damp drakeling. Your hero is a dread paragon among their kind, a fell and terrible serpent-lord who can bring terror to armies. This concept Word can be used to emulate all the classical abilities of dragons known to story and fable, whether their abilities are to easily devour masses of lesser creatures, exhibit tremendous physical power, or exert unnatural influence over the weak-willed.

If your concept revolves around certain physical abilities such as great strength or swift-winged flight, you should purchase those gifts at the start of the game. For dragons that only occasionally call upon their wrymish prowess or the magical flight abilities of the pearl in their brains, such gifts might be used as miracles instead.

Your hero is a dragon. Whatever the particular shape you might desire the dragon to take, you have a base Armor Class of 3, your unarmed attacks inflict 1d10 damage as a magic weapon, and your Strength is automatically raised to 18. You are whatever size both you and the GM agree is appropriate.

Lesser Gifts

A Second Skin

Action

You can transform into humanoid shapes of your choice as a Main Action. Your transformed aspect is dressed and equipped in any way normal to the guise you assume and you can automatically speak any language or adopt any mannerisms appropriate to the chosen disguise. All your gifts and innate powers remain accessible in human form.

Breath of Death

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You exhale a wave of some noxious substance, be it fire, venom, razor-sharp gemstones, or anything else appropriate to your concept. You can take this gift more than once to have more than one type of deadly breath. The breath does 1d6 damage per Godbound level, or triple to Mobs. Targets and Mobs of creatures with only 1 hit die are instantly killed. The wave is a cone up to fifty feet long per character level and just as wide at its furthest extent. You have sufficient control to avoid harming unwanted targets within that area. You have an invulnerable defense against substances you can exhale.

Inexhaustible Hoard

Constant

Wealth somehow finds its way to you, and your hoard is fathomlessly vast. You can always afford anything costing 1 Wealth or less, and you may Commit Effort for the day once per week to afford a single purchase of up to Wealth 10 magnitude. In addition, every week you may make purchases worth a number of Wealth points equal to your character level; these purchases count as "real", non-magical Wealth for purposes of fueling Theotechnical low magic or other ritual requirements. Your hoard cannot be stolen so long as you live, as it simply refuses to leave its appointed place.

Sinews of the Serpent

Constant

You have tremendous physical might. While it is not precise enough to be relevant in normal attacks, you can smash through stone construction as many feet thick as you have character levels, crush wooden structures, carry weights no heavier than a small ship, and otherwise perform feats of draconic strength.

Terror of the Shies

Constant

You have wings, and can fly at twice your normal ground movement rate. When allowed uninterrupted flight over long distances, you can travel up to one hundred miles an hour. You are sufficiently maneuverable to hover or perform other intricate aerial maneuvers if needed.

Whispers of the Wyrm

Action

Your words and gaze combine to induce a hypnotic sort of acquiescence in your prey. By Committing Effort for the scene and targeting a creature who is looking at you, you may temporarily take control of their will. Lesser foes get no save, while worthy ones can resist with a save versus Spirit. Affected victims will perform any act you command that does not threaten their own lives or those of their loved ones. Worthy foes can shake it off after the scene ends, but lesser foes remain subject to you until they have been entirely separated from your voice and presence for one month.

Greater Gifts

Iron Scales of the God-Wyrm

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. You negate an otherwise successful attack or source of physical damage. The blow may land on you, but you are simply too large or strong to be hindered by it. As a Constant effect, gain a bonus of 2 hit points per character level to your maximum hit points.

Legion's Bane

Constant

All physical damage you inflict against Mobs may be read straight, whether inflicted by normal attacks or gifts. Physical attacks or physical damage-inflicting powers used against targets or Mobs of creatures with maximum hit dice equal to or less than half your level in hit dice, rounded down, are automatically successful and instantly fatal to the hapless targets. If you use to choose this gift as part of an attack, any creatures you reduce to zero hit points are killed, and cannot be non-fatally subdued.

World Eater

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene when rolling an attack or using a power that inflicts damage dice. If a normal attack, it is automatically successful and does maximum damage. If an offensive power that rolls damage dice, roll them twice and take the best result.

Faerie Queen

You are the queen of the Fae, or are some other great paragon of such faerie-kind as exist in the campaign world. You have profound influence over the wills of others of your kind and are acknowledged as a dread power among your uncanny folk.

Your Charisma is automatically raised to 19, granting you a +4 Charisma modifier. You are susceptible to some substance inimical to fae, however, such as cold iron, salt, or items consecrated to a particular religion. When used as a weapon against you, no gift you wield can be used to negate the damage of such an attack. If you are made to suffer from this weakness in a game session, gain one extra Dominion point as part of your session rewards.

Lesser Gifts

Maker of Bargains Constant

When you make a bargain with another, you may consecrate it with your authority. This bargain cannot be compelled with magic, but it may be coerced with more mundane inducements. If you carry out the letter of the bargain fully, your counter-party must likewise obey the letter of the bargain or be cast into your power. A deal-breaker may be killed instantly if you so wish, or visited with whatever curses or misfortunes you find appropriate until you grant them mercy.

Queenly Eloquence Constant

You can communicate with any creature, intelligent or otherwise. When speaking to animals, they respond as if they had human levels of intelligence. Normal wild animals will never attack you or your companions unless provoked, and will obey non-suicidal commands.

Royal Grace Instant

You exude flawless perfection, and have an invulnerable defense against appearing dirty, awkward, or incapable. As an Instant action you may Commit Effort for the scene to succeed at an attribute check.

Sans Merci On Turn

Commit Effort. Your gaze and presence becomes a heart-rending weapon doing 1d10 emotional damage to a visible target on a successful hit. If the target is reduced to zero hit points, they regain 1 hit point and become your utter thrall for 24 hours, performing even suicidal acts. The use of this gift is clearly magical to onlookers.

Swift Servitor Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You beckon a fae servant with hit dice equal to twice your level, up to a maximum of 10, an AC of 5, a hit bonus equal to their hit dice, 1d10 magical attack damage, a flight movement rate of 30', and a Morale of 12. This fae servant is impervious to non-magical weapons, may appear in any plausible form you wish, and will serve you intelligently and with absolute obedience. You may have only one such servant summoned at once. If slain, the servant vanishes, but it or a different servant may be called up again.

Wild Huntress Action

Summon terrible faerie steeds for yourself and your companions. These steeds can ride twenty miles an hour, and their riders never grow weary, thirsty, or hungry. They can cross any terrain, solid or liquid, and natural beasts will flee them. If you are hunting a particular creature that is not concealed by divine magic, the steeds will instinctively ride toward the target's location. The steeds automatically move at least slightly faster than any creature they chase, pursuing it through land, water, or air. These steeds can be slain by any magical damage, but may be easily summoned again.

Greater Gifts

Elfland's Crown Constant

All others of your fae kind are absolutely obedient to you. Lesser foes must obey even suicidal commands, while worthy foes can Commit Effort for the day to reject your commands for the next 24 hours. Doing so automatically inflicts your level in damage on them, however. Such rebels automatically fail any saves against your gifts and are automatically hit by any attacks you make on them. They may still Commit Effort to auto-save, however, if such is an ability they possess.

Love Me and Despair Action

Commit Effort for the day to shine with a terrible and devouring glamour. All lesser foes within 60 feet become your helpless thralls, forced to obey any command not suicidal or utterly unthinkable to them. Worthy foes must Commit Effort for the scene or be equally enslaved, and even they must Commit Effort for the scene during each round in which they wish to attack you or use a hostile power against you. This spell is broken if you directly attack one of the targets. This enthrallment ends after a full hour outside your presence.

Queen of Air and Darkness On Turn

Commit Effort to mantle yourself in dread authority. While Effort is Committed, lesser foes cannot initiate violence or hostile power use against you, though they can do so if you have directly attacked them in this scene. While this gift is active, you may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to negate any single mental or emotional attack or instance of harm you would otherwise suffer.

Innate Weaknesses

Characters with intrinsic weaknesses due to their concept and nature should be unable to use gifts to invulnerably defend against their particular banes. In other cases, the noxious substance might also do a flat 1d10 damage for each round of exposure, or always inflict at least a point of damage when used against the PC.

A character with an innate weakness who suffers from it during a gaming session should get one bonus Dominion point at the end. Only one bonus point can be gained, no matter how frequent the affliction.

Lich King

The classic lich is a mighty sorcerer who has sold their living humanity for the security of eternal unlife. The concept Word of the Lich King can be used to replicate any concept that revolves around an undying, undead hero, whether a vampire prince, mummy-king, or arch-necromancer. Some such liches might have no special magical powers at all, and instead gain their power through centuries of cunning and guile. Those heroes who prefer to be a more traditional lich might choose to bind the Word of Sorcery as well, while necromancers might find use for the Word of Death.

The Lich King presented by this concept Word has no intrinsic immunity to final destruction without purchasing the *A Heart Apart* greater gift. It also has no particular weaknesses, such as sunlight vulnerability or exceptional flammability.

Players who want such vulnerabilities for their uncanny heroes can add them at the GM's discretion. A vampire PC might unavoidably suffer a 1d10 damage die for each round of exposure to sunlight, while a mummy might be unable to use gifts to invulnerably defend against open flame. These weaknesses should be consequential, but should not be so profound or so easily-exploited that all their enemies invariably go to a single method of attack. As with other character concept weaknesses, they should grant no extra gift points, but simply give a bonus point of Dominion at the end of the session if they somehow hindered or threatened the PC. This bonus point does not stack, no matter how often a weakness plagued a hero, or how many different troubles afflicted them.

A Lich King is dead, and indifferent to such living needs as food, sleep, or breath. They have a natural Armor Class of 3. Their frame is unnaturally sturdy, and their Constitution is raised automatically to 16, or 18 if it is already 16 or higher.

Lesser Gifts

A Mind of Iron and Ivory Constant

You possess an invulnerable defense against mind-reading or other effects that influence your mind or emotions.

Ageless Erudition Instant

Commit Effort for the scene to know any fact or succeed at any intellectual attribute check that a superlative and specialized mortal sage could succeed at.

Bonefather Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You conjure up either one Small Mob of 1 HD undead per three levels you have, rounded up, or one greater undead of hit dice no more than twice your level. To create a greater undead, you must work with a corpse that is no more than a month dead and has not received funerary rites. The undead are slavishly loyal until this power is used again, upon which they dissolve into dust. Greater undead can be preserved for 1 Dominion, but they are then no longer intrinsically loyal to you.

Dread Lord Constant

Lesser foe undead in your presence are absolutely obedient to your commands and cannot intentionally harm you. Commands you give them will be obeyed with human intelligence and necro-suicidal devotion until they are out of your presence for at least 24 hours, after which they revert to their usual behaviors. You may attempt to likewise enslave an undead worthy foe as an Action, but the target gets a save versus Spirit to become immune to the gift for the scene.

Eldritch Wards Constant

You are immune to any hostile low magic or theurgy used directly against you. Normal attacks against you that involve bolts of eldritch power or other strictly magical manifestations fizzle uselessly against you if an odd number is rolled on the attack die, even if it would otherwise have hit your Armor Class or have automatically struck you. This defense does not include physical weapon attacks that have been augmented by magic, but it does include wholly emotional or mental normal attacks.

Fist of the Grave Constant

Your unholy might, eldritch power, or ageless expertise grants you a 1d10 magical attack with a 200 foot range. On a successful hit, you may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to gain twice the attack's damage as hit points of personal healing, up to your usual hit point maximum.

Greater Gifts

A Heart Apart Constant

You possess a phylactery, excised heart, or other locus for your life, one which can be destroyed by ordinary violence. Unless this phylactery is destroyed, you cannot be permanently killed, and will regenerate from death in 24 hours from your largest remaining fragment. If the phylactery is destroyed, you can remake it, but it will not become effective for six months. You are instantly aware of any destruction of your phylactery, and while you can hide it or guard it, you cannot enchant it specifically to be protected from harm.

Dark Secrets Instant

Commit Effort for the scene when a target of your abilities makes a saving throw. They suffer an immediate -4 penalty to their saving throw against the ability. This gift can be used only once per save, though as an Instant, it can be applied after the target has rolled.

Rage of the Eternal (Smite) On Turn

Commit Effort for the day when making a normal attack. Whether through eldritch might or ageless guile, the attack does straight damage on a hit. Even on a miss, it inflicts damage normally. Attacks augmented with this gift cannot be given maximized damage by any other power.

Peak Human

You are an exemplar of human capacity, honed to a superlative edge by obsessive training, augmented genetics, or blind chance. Any attribute score lower than 13 is increased to 13, and one score of your choice can be raised to 18. While you are a mortal human, strictly speaking, your own superlative gifts allow you to use all the normal rules appropriate to a Godbound, including Divine Fury and Committing Effort to succeed at saving throws. If you are bound to additional Words, it is probably through some special artifact you can't lose or some unique magical blessing conferred on you.

Lesser Gifts

All Natural

Constant

You have tuned your natural abilities to be “invisible” to magical countermeasures. Your gifts and miracles of the Peak Human Word cannot be defensively or offensively dispelled and do not register as magical to effects that detect such things. They are not affected by the Cold Breath ability of Uncreated foes or by empyrean wards. Your Influence or Dominion spends that are Plausible and based entirely on Peak Human capacities ignore mundus wards.

Mortal's Luck

Instant

When an attack or effect would bring you below 1 hit point or cause your instant death, you may Commit Effort for the scene to negate it as you dodge or otherwise avoid its full effect.

Off the Walls

Constant

Through agility or expertise your natural Armor Class becomes 3. You can climb sheer surfaces at your normal movement rate, leap vertically for half that distance, or leap horizontally at your full move.

People's Champion

Constant

Your contacts are tremendously useful. You gain bonus Influence equal to your character level and an extra point of Dominion each month, though this Influence and Dominion can only be used on Plausible changes that could be aided by contacts and allies in your background or adventures. You can always find a local contact appropriate to your background if it's remotely plausible, and this contact will always be able to offer as much help as a normal human in an important position could offer.

Trained Aim

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Your hit rolls for the rest of the scene are all rolled twice, taking the better result.

World's Greatest X

Constant

Pick a profession or role, such as “scientist”, “thief”, “detective”, “general”, or so forth. You automatically succeed on all attribute checks related to that role that could in any way theoretically be achieved by a human being. You may take this gift more than once.

Greater Gifts

Human Grit

Special

With five minutes of rest, restore your hit points to half their maximum, rounded up, if they are currently less than that total. As an Instant action once per day, Commit Effort for the day to recover half your maximum hit points instantly, rounded up.

Indomitable Will

Constant

Your unbreakable determination leaves you with an invulnerable defense toward mind-affecting or mind-reading powers and a tremendous capacity for focus. Once per scene, as an Instant action, treat a hit roll, saving throw, or attribute check as an automatic success.

Street Sweeper

Constant

Your expertise or determination makes your attacks count as a magical weapon doing 1d10 damage. Your normal attacks always hit lesser foes, and single lesser foes or those in small groups cannot harm you with their non-magical normal attacks or non-magical special abilities. If lesser foes are in a Mob, their attacks and abilities can harm you.

Everyday People

The Peak Human Word is not a Word of Creation, strictly speaking, even less so than the other concept Words included in this section. It is, however, a convenient way to describe the kind of superlative graces that often attach to epic pulp heroes or ostensibly “normal” superheroes.

A Peak Human may or may not eventually accrue the powers of the Word of Apotheosis, acquiring such a cult following that they actually gain the special gifts of a true divinity. Whichever choice you make for your campaign, make sure that the Peak Human player is in on it.

Peak Humans can accrue Dominion the same as any other Godbound hero. If they are bound to other Words, they can spend it using those Words as a justification. The Peak Human Word itself is poorly suited for accomplishing supernatural marvels, but it can provide excellent justification for accomplishing anything that human cooperation and coordination could achieve. A nocturnal crime-fighter might not be able to use Dominion to alter his home city to mystically inform him whenever it is in peril, but he could certainly use Dominion to establish a beacon-flare that its citizens always use before the situation has gotten completely beyond recovery.

The Peak Human Word can take the same universal gifts as any other, including *Divine Wrath* or *Corona of Fury*. Such attacks would simply reflect some weapon or explosive that the hero carried with them and their supernaturally effective use of it. Miracles for this Word tend to be sharply limited, however, and focus on those things that a hypothetical human paragon could achieve.

Creating New Strifes

Those readers with the deluxe version of *Godbound* to hand will be familiar with the celestial Strifes, the supernatural martial arts that embody the endless conflicts and innate struggles of the created world. While a number of these Strifes are presented in that book, it's quite possible you might want to create new ones of your own. This section gives a basic outline on how to develop these supernatural techniques for your own game.

Basic Guidelines

True Strifes should not grant abilities that are fundamentally unrelated to direct combat. Some abilities might have some conceivable non-combat applications, like a power of stealthy ambush used to sneak past guards in order to murder a target, but these powers should be restricted and circumstantial enough so that the PC rarely ever finds them useful outside of a combat situation. If you can imagine someone triggering a Strife technique regularly outside of combat, the technique's too broadly useful.

A basic Strife should grant six abilities: one that must be taken initially, four that can be learned in any order, and one that can only be learned after all the rest are mastered. You might add additional optional techniques in there, but the capstone technique should always be accessible after learning five earlier techniques, even if more optional ones exist.

Strifes should not grant abilities that are better than lesser gifts, with the possible exception of a Strife's final technique that can only be mastered after all the others are learned. Even for combat purposes, a Strife's technique should not be universally superior to a lesser gift. If it's better in some ways, it should be clearly worse in others, and never so much better at anything that it becomes the trivially optimal tool for that purpose. A Strife's basic techniques should generally be slightly weaker than a lesser gift due to being more narrow or circumstantial in application. The techniques of a Strife are *different* ways of fighting, not *better* ways.

By default, a Strife does not allow the use of weapons or armor while using one of its techniques. If a Strife relates to some natural phenomenon that has ties to particular types of weapons or armor, you may add them as permissible adjuncts; an aerial Strife might allow missile weapons, while a Strife related to some armored beast might allow any armor made of hides. Don't worry too much about balance with this, since armor and weapons aren't terribly important to *Godbound*. Use the permissible types as ways to emphasize the flavor of a style.

If a Strife does not allow weapon use, its initial technique should always be a weapon-booster gift allowing the wielder to do about 1d10 damage with their unarmed attacks. If the Strife does allow weapon use, one of the techniques should be a weapon-booster, so that unarmed users of it can still be viable. If the Strife is only ever intended to be used with a weapon, then you might not have a weapon-booster technique at all.

Strifes should follow all the usual guidelines for lesser gifts as described earlier in this section. They can be as strong as a lesser gift in damage dice rolled or situational bonuses, but they should generally be narrower in scope or situational application. A technique may be as potent as *Divine Wrath*, but it will still be a Smite, and it may only be usable in particular Strife-related situations.

Lesser Strifes

To develop a lesser Strife, you actually make the True Strife first, and then give the lesser Strife watered-down versions of the techniques. The Initiate level should boost their unarmed damage and give a small benefit related to the Strife's nature. The Disciple level should give a much weaker version of a characteristic middle-tier technique of the True Strife, and the Master level should either give a very limited version of the capstone technique or a weak equivalent of another mid-tier ability. You might also boost a Master's damage die up from the Initiate level.

Lesser Strife abilities should not be very useful to someone who has mastered the True Strife. There should never be a situation where they "stack", so that it's beneficial for a PC to have learned both. In some cases, the lesser Strife might grant a feeble version of a True Strife technique the PC hasn't learned yet, and in that case there may be some small use to it. Many of their abilities should be too trifling or too easily surpassed by *Godbound* for them to be of any interest to a pantheon. A master of the lesser Strife of the Consuming Flame might be a terrifying foe to an ordinary human soldier, but they're a barely-noticeable speed bump to a war-god.

By default, a practitioner of a True Strife does not know the lesser Strife version. The lesser Strifes are carefully-constructed techniques, ones developed specifically for weaker and less capable practitioners, and there's nothing in a True Strife that automatically teaches its practitioners how to water things down enough to keep a mortal from dying in the attempt to channel it. If a *Godbound* PC wants to learn a lesser Strife, they can learn it completely for one gift point or by dedicating one Fact to it, either at character creation or later in play after gaining a level. Optionally, a GM may decide that PC who completely masters a True Strife understands it well enough to intuitively develop a lesser Strife version of it. Because lesser Strifes aren't intended to stack usefully with the True Strifes, there's not much balance reason to make it hard for PCs to master both.

Creating New Strifes or Techniques in Play

Some PCs will want to develop entirely new Strifes or add new techniques to the ones they already know. A player who just wants to add a new technique for the sake of bigger bonuses should be discouraged. *Godbound* doesn't handle heavy combat maximization play well, and building new powers purely to optimize combat ability by another fractional percentage isn't likely to be satisfying.

Developing a new Strife generally costs one celestial shard and 16 points of Dominion. The PC can then buy the six basic techniques, but at double their usual costs. Once they learn the final technique, they are refunded half the gift points they spent on the Strife, to encourage taking it all the way and not just dabbling in it.

Developing a new technique for an existing Strife, or adding new techniques beyond the initial six to a newly-developed one, should cost 2 Dominion and the technique's usual cost in gift points. This Dominion cost doubles with each new technique developed; there's only so far a single practitioner can push an art.

Lesser Strifes are automatically developed for new True Strifes. A PC who wants to teach a variant lesser Strife with different powers should pay 2 Dominion for each level that differs from the base.

Schools of a Lesser Strife

Lesser Strifes are intended to be minor perks for NPCs and mortal followers, and usually don't need much attention. For mortal campaigns, however, a GM might want to elaborate a lesser Strife, creating a full-fledged set of techniques for it that might be too weak to be of any interest to Godbound, but still be significant to common or heroic mortal practitioners.

These schools might have developed considerable histories and traditions, and serve as loci for struggles between rival adepts and competing martial halls. The same True Strife might have several different lesser schools associated with it, each of them claiming preeminence as the "true" path to eventual enlightenment.

GMs who want to expand the range of detailed abilities and martial traditions for their mortal PCs can use schools of a lesser Strife as a pattern for other secret martial traditions or esoteric talents. A school of mystical tea-ceremony practitioners might use these same guidelines below, except in granting unique, tea-related benefits and abilities. While such arts may have more non-combat focus than True Strifes, their gifts are too minor to be troublesome.

Basic Guidelines

A school uses the exact same format as a True Strife: one initial technique, four techniques that can be learned in any order, and a final technique that can only be learned after all the others.

Techniques have the same cost in points as their True Strife parallels; the first gift costs one point, the next four cost half a point, and the final gift costs one point. Thus, learning a school of a lesser Strife completely costs four points, assuming it has six techniques.

Mortals get these points by spending talent picks on them. The *Lesser Strife Training* talent grants one point, and the heroic *Lesser Strife Mastery* talent grants four points. If the mortal is being taught by a Godbound PC, they may be taught four points worth of techniques as an Improbable Dominion change by the Godbound. Thus, if a Godbound PC wanted to teach a village worth of her followers four points worth of a school's arts, it would cost her 2 Dominion points, assuming she already knew the school herself.

Godbound learn four points worth of a school's techniques by spending one gift point on it, or one Fact on knowing it.

It's theoretically possible to learn other techniques from a different lesser Strife variant. A practitioner of the Salt Hand school of the lesser Strife of the Drowning Tide might be able to learn techniques of the Coral Knives school of that same True Strife, if they can find a teacher willing to impart that tradition's secrets. Such techniques have the same point cost and learning restrictions as any other school, just as if the pupil were starting from scratch. Variant schools of the same True Strife are automatically counted as integrated for purposes of using them together as per the *Godbound* core book's page 213, even if the pupil hasn't mastered both completely. No surcharge is required for such integration.

The school has the same limits on usable weapons and armor as the True Strife it is related to, though some variants may be more restricted if they're not as oriented toward the same facets.

Some techniques of a lesser Strife school may grant bonuses, extra attacks, or other boosts that are generally unavailable to Godbound but allowed to mortals. These techniques can't help a Godbound practitioner; they are tailored to the specific limits and nature of mortal students.

Building the Techniques

The introductory technique of a school should do very little. It is the rawest, most basic knowledge such that any dirt-farmer with a little dedication can master. It might grant an ordinary weapon's equivalent damage, or just act like a Fact related to school doctrine.

Of the four middle techniques, one should grant a moderately effective unarmed attack, such as 1d6 or 1d8, possibly with a situational limit such as requiring a particular environment, dueling context, or special preparation before the bonus is gained.

Another technique might grant an armor class or defensive bonus when unarmored, or when in a particular situation. Unless the situation is very narrow, this bonus should never improve the user's armor class below 3, even if the school allows heavy armor.

Another technique could grant a benefit related to the True Strife's nature, letting the adept ignore a mundane environmental hazard, move safely through a related environment, or control a minor aspect of the conflict at the True Strife's heart. The more common or general the conflict is, the more limited the technique should be in its benefits.

Another technique should give the adept an active special ability related to the conflict, some combat-applicable trick they can utilize in a relatively common situation or context. This might be a personal buff, or a debuff to an enemy, or a way to change the battlefield. Such effects should be temporary and relatively limited; they should not be enough to automatically defeat even a mundane foe, but they can tilt the situation heavily in that direction.

The capstone technique should be very impressive by mortal standards, and might be enough to automatically defeat a 1 HD mortal opponent. If it's not an ability that directly harms or overcomes a foe, it might additionally augment the wielder's unarmed damage technique as a side benefit, boosting it by a die size.

Due to the need for variety, you might end up giving a lesser Strife techniques that aren't related at all to the True Strife's powers, allowing perks or abilities that a True Strife practitioner doesn't have. These should all be thematically tied to the Strife, however, such that the True Strife practitioner could develop similar but superior techniques if they chose to do so.

Lesser Strifes and Effort

Most lesser Strife techniques should not require Effort. A common mortal PC will never have more than one point of Effort unless they take talents to increase it, and even a heroic mortal will only have a few Effort points available until very high levels. A lesser Strife that requires Effort to trigger most of its abilities will be largely useless to its most common practitioners.

A possible exception is for capstone techniques, or for other techniques that are powerful enough that you want to limit their frequent application. If you make the user Commit Effort for the scene or the day, you're probably going to limit them to using the ability only once per scene or once per day.

Avoid requiring any durational Commitments, such as a technique that works as long as Effort is Committed. Without other techniques to demand that Effort, there's no cost to leaving the Effort sunk into the technique, and if there *are* other techniques that require Effort, they'll rapidly lock themselves out of them.

The Strife of the Hunger Within

The constant struggle to feed is a defining quality of life. All things hunger, all things seek to devour and gain nourishment, and this Strife embodies the endless, all-consuming need that lies at the bottom of mortal existence.

The conventional techniques of the Strife focus on devouring and consuming. Variant traditions might have a heavier emphasis on self-possession and withstanding the demands of mindless hunger, as the Five Pecks school teaches. For such lesser Strifes, it is permissible for abilities to be less combative, as they're generally so minor that a Godbound wouldn't find them worth learning.

The Lesser Strife

Where the Five Pecks school or the Empty Mouth adepts are not used in a campaign, the following arts constitute the lesser Strife of the Hunger Within.

Initiate: They need only half the usual amount of food, and can eat even rotten or barely-edible substances. Their unarmed attacks do 1d6 damage.

Disciple: Their bite can cut through strong wood, leather, or rope, and increases their unarmed damage die to 1d8.

Master: As an Instant, the master may Commit Effort for the day once per day to devour an incoming weapon or medium of physical harm no larger than he is. If used against an unarmed attack, the attacker keeps their limb but takes 1d10 damage.

Techniques of the Strife

Ravenous Bite

Constant

The adept's hunger is all-consuming. They have an invulnerable defense against harm from anything they have ingested, even if it is otherwise indigestible or toxic. This technique alone does not grant them the power to masticate anything unnatural, but they can safely swallow whatever they can put in their mouths. They can gain nourishment from anything. Their attacks are counted as 1d10 magical weapons, infused by the devouring hunger of the Strife.

Breath of Famine

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound exhales a cloud of terrible hunger in a cone that extends ten feet wide and ten feet long per character level. All enemy creatures within the cone must spend an action on the next round eating and drinking with furious haste or they will suffer the Godbound's level in points of damage at the end of the round, or triple that for Mobs. Creatures that do not need to eat or drink are immune to this technique.

Scent the Prey

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound instantly senses all creatures made of flesh or bone within one hundred feet per character level, gaining a precise awareness of their location and physical appearance and being able to discern their physical actions for one round per character level after this technique is used. If the Godbound does not use *Ravenous Bite* to attack someone within the same scene this power is used or does not gorge themselves on conventional food, they suffer a 1d10 damage die from distraction at their piqued hunger.

Techniques of the Hunger Within

<i>Ravenous Bite</i>	Everything is edible; do 1d10 unarmed
<i>Breath of Famine</i>	Exhale starvation in a cloud
<i>Scent the Prey</i>	Sense a nearby living creature
<i>Swallow Whole</i>	Devour something in a single round
<i>Teeth of Iron</i>	Bite through any substance
<i>Devouring Void</i>	Consume incoming harm
This Strife allows any spear, fork, or knife, but not any armor.	

Swallow Whole

Action

The Godbound becomes capable of swallowing any single object or creature that could fit in a ten-foot cube as an action. Creatures can attempt an Evasion save to avoid being swallowed and killed, and using this technique against a worthy foe requires that the adept Commit Effort for the day. This ability is useless against Mobs.

Teeth of Iron

On Turn

Commit Effort. While the Effort is Committed, the adept becomes capable of biting through anything short of divinely-reinforced material, and can gnaw a hole as tall and wide as they are and five feet deep in a single round as an action. All their normal attack damage rolls gain a +1 bonus from the additional hazard of their gnashing jaws.

Devouring Void

Instant

Commit Effort for the day. The adept becomes a physical void of bottomless hunger, consuming utterly any physical energies or objects that contact them. They are frozen in place and lose their next round's actions, but gain an invulnerable defense against physical harm until the end of their next round. Any objects physically restraining them are destroyed, and any creature touching or grappling them must immediately release them or abort their attack or they will be consumed. Objects drawn into the adept are utterly annihilated, and even the Godbound cannot produce them again from the void within.

Longest Tooth

AC: 5, intrinsic	Move: 40' fly
Hit Dice: 25	Save: 5+
Attack: +12 x 3	Damage: 1d10 straight
Morale: 10	Effort: 8

Longest Tooth is a synthetic entity created as part of a Black Academy experiment in Raktia in a vain attempt to channel the hunger of local peasants into a safe magical repository. The peasants were immune to hunger for a time, but Longest Tooth congealed from their unsated needs, broke free, and devoured them all. Now the emaciated creature stalks the Raktian forest, using its innate bond with the Strife to hunt and devour all it finds.

The Five Pecks School

Named for the founder's insistence on five pecks of wheat as an initiation fee, the School of Five Pecks seeks to harness and control the innate hunger of its adepts, rendering them safe from privation and free from common human needs. The martial bones of the tradition remain, but more of its techniques are the small, pragmatic tricks that are more useful to the humble folk who practice this lesser Strife. It would be more popular with the common folk if it did not require such a vast amount of meditation, self-discipline, and rejection of material goods as part of its ordinary teachings.

Schools at which the Five Pecks way is taught tend to be placed in remote, barren places where little grows, the better to encourage the students to discipline their hunger. While it is possible for a practitioner to indulge their appetites without spoiling their use of the arts, the training process itself requires severe personal deprivation that only a determined student is likely to endure.

Techniques of the Strife

Eat the Blow Constant

An initiate first learns this technique, by which they deaden their limbs to impact and pain. The art grants them a 1d6 damage die with their unarmed attacks.

Bread of Sand Constant

The student has become inured to hunger and thirst, learning ways of eating earth and other inert matter to quiet their pangs of need. They require only half as much food and drink as usual.

Full Bowl Harmony Constant

The student learns to use a target's own satiety against them, striking as full bellies slow their foes. If fighting a creature who has eaten at least one meal that day, the adept's unarmed attacks do 1d8 damage and always do at least one point of damage on a hit.

Snatch the Sweet Instant

The student channels their constant, gnawing hunger into an explosive burst of motion and frenzied response. They may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant to reroll an initiative roll.

Wooden Belly Constant

An empty stomach is hardened and disciplined, until it and the rest of the body is rigid and tough. The adept gains a bonus to their armor class equal to half the number of Five Pecks techniques they know, rounded up, up to a maximum of a -3 bonus and a minimum AC of 3.

Empty of Need Constant

After all earlier techniques are gained, the master may learn to perfectly tame their own need for food and drink, forever after being able to survive without them. Upon death, however, their body turns to dust as its constituent parts devour themselves in a last ravenous frenzy.

The Empty Mouth School

Where the Five Pecks focuses on discipline and self-control, the school of the Empty Mouth seeks to satisfy their hungers by any means necessary. All the world is meat, they say, and the only question is how tough it might be. Adepts seek to learn the arts of eating before being eaten. They are feared and mistrusted most places, but valued as capable bodyguards for the unparticular, provided their copious hungers are satisfied.

Techniques of the Strife

Knife and Fork Constant

The first technique taught to an initiate, this art allows them to use small blades or their own teeth as effective weapons in combat, doing 1d6 damage on a hit.

Dismal Spew Action

The adept concentrates their stomach acid and vomits it as a weapon on a single target within melee range. The victim can make an Evasion save to avoid the spew, otherwise suffering 1d10 damage. This technique can be used only once per scene.

Distracting Hunger Action

The student goads the hunger within a single visible organic target, distracting it and causing it to suffer a -4 penalty on hit rolls for the rest of the scene if it fails a Hardiness saving throw. Worthy foes shake off this penalty in a round, and no foe can be targeted by this more than once per scene. Creatures that do not hunger are immune.

Suck the Lifeblood Action

The student learns to consume the last traces of life within a dying human being. If used on a victim who has been brought to zero hit points within the past six rounds, the victim dies immediately and the student gains 1d4 straight hit points. If this bonus brings them above their maximum hit points or hit dice, the excess vanishes at the end of the scene. This technique cannot be used again while the adept has more than their maximum hit points.

Universal Feast Constant

The student learns to consume any notionally-edible substance without risk of choking or food poisoning. Provided these semi-foodstuffs are available, an adept will not starve. Organic substances that are extremely toxic or intentionally poisoned can have their perils resisted automatically if the student Commits Effort for the day.

Filling the Mouth Action

The final technique of the school, this art permits the master of the Empty Mouth to swallow and digest a man-sized target as a single action. The master must Commit Effort for the day and the target must be a lesser foe. The victim gets an Evasion saving throw to resist, but on a failure is eaten alive. This art cannot swallow inanimate objects.

Creating Religions

Religion plays a number of functional roles in different games. In some it is the genericized source of convenient healing magic. In others, it serves as a setting-wide antagonist or patron of affiliated PCs. A few games explicitly push it aside as an irrelevance to the people of the game's fictional world, while many settings give it no particular attention at all, and are content to just sketch stock-character priests and cardboard temples into the background.

It is a significant mistake among GMs to overlook the value of a good religion. All questions of world-building verisimilitude aside, a well-constructed religion provides a great many useful resources to a working GM and eases their job at the table.

Many of the points discussed below have the most weight in a conventional fantasy setting, one in which the PCs are much less powerful than a typical Godbound hero. The tools in this section are explicitly designed to be usable and helpful even in settings where the assumptions of PC power levels are much more traditional than those wielded by the Words of Creation.

Even so, the principles can still be scaled up to more demi-god-relevant levels. A pantheon may never need to look for a cleric to regrow a lost limb, but they might yet need the concerted political cooperation of a nation's most powerful religious hierarchy.

Gifts from Above

In many game worlds, religions are important because they provide exclusive access to divine supernatural aid. Anything that requires the holy blessings of one or more gods can only be acquired from the clergy of that divinity, and so the PCs are going to have to deal with a cleric to get such help.

Many classic old-school games make healing magic an exclusive preserve of clerical spellcasters. Every time the PCs need some miracle of healing beyond the immediate capacity of any clerical PCs, they're going to have to talk to an NPC cleric.

Some such miracle-workers will be satisfied with a simple payment for the exercise of their divine powers, but it becomes much more interesting when the religion makes more active demands upon petitioners. The need for clerical healing or divine blessings can thus become an engine for creating further adventure content as the PCs are obliged to carry out some holy mission in order to earn their miracle, or even simply to earn the right to buy their sacred favor from above.

Fleshing out a religion will give you the hooks you need to throw an appropriate task at the players. You can create both large- and small-scale conflicts the local church is experiencing, and then it becomes a simple matter to have a priest point the PCs in the direction of the nearest ecclesiastical problem before they're willing to petition their patron for aid.

By ensuring that the conflict is closely related to the nature of the religion and its particular quirks and doctrines, the players also have the chance to interact with the game world. The religion stops being a decorative piece of world-building wallpaper and becomes something they *have* to care about, if only to convince the local bishop to cough up the necessary holy relics they need. Exotic magical favors are also an excellent opportunity to touch on the stranger, more mystical aspects of the faith and its practices.

Speaking Ex Cathedra

Many fantasy games exploit the magical powers of priests, but far fewer of them make use of the much more practical influence that a rich, powerful church has over its community. A cleric doesn't need a divine miracle to be important if his church owns half the fields in the village and the local baron is desperately afraid of his anger. This kind of authority can make a local priest a very convenient antagonist or handy patron for a group of PCs.

There are two chief reasons why this aspect of a religion is often overlooked by the GM. For the first, it's simply a matter of unfamiliarity. Modern religions may be quite wealthy and have considerable influence over their believers, but they are rarely identified with the kind of raw power expressed by government agencies, global corporations, or organized military forces. When a church takes on conventional governmental roles it's usually considered an anomaly and something worth remarking on, rather than the resumption of the sort of common influence that religions have had in many places for thousands of years.

The other reason is the intrinsic difficulty of representing political or economic influence in a role-playing game. Influence is about power and relationships between people. In order for an NPC to be important, it's necessary for them to have someone to be important *to*, someone who will respond to their influence. Before the bishop can be a foe of the baron, the GM needs to create the baron, and before the bishop can own all the local vineyards, the GM needs to decide that vineyards are an important industry there. Coming up with these things on the spur of the moment can be difficult for many GMs, and so they tend to be avoided.

Godbound tries to simplify this job for the GM by providing a selection of convenient Court generators, tools for building situations of political conflict where the participants have clearly-defined relationships with each other. It's simple enough to slide a local cleric into one such situation, and the further resources in this book provide other tools for fleshing out those fraught relationships and making them more playable at the table.

A well-developed religion can take this antagonist/patron role further, by giving the important clerics more to think about than simple matters of money or secular power. A properly-built religion can provide entirely new motivations for NPCs, ones that may be very different than those of their peers, but also ones that clever PCs can understand and manipulate if they take the time to learn about the faith.

A wine-god's clerics may have tremendous wealth thanks to their monopoly over fermented drinks, but they may also have a very un-economical interest in sacred vineyards, holy strains of grapes, and long-lost bottles of blessed vintages. The esoteric interests of the faith provide new ways for thoughtful PCs to win their favor or earn their cooperation, and help underline the particular values and doctrines of the religion.

Ultimately, even paragons of the Words can sometimes find it necessary to win the help of existing faiths. A single PC, even one with the fantastic powers of a Godbound, can only focus on so many goals at once. The riches and relationships of a powerful faith can stretch to many ends, and the power of the divine never sleeps.

Schism, Heresy, and Unbelief

Immediate magical services, useful social influence, and a handy source of patrons or antagonists are all convenient uses for a religion, but a well-built faith can also serve as a beneficial font of long-term rivalries and conflicts. Religions can have enemies, and a great many different types of enemies at that.

Secular powers often find themselves at cross purposes with powerful churches. Even in a strictly unworldly faith, the clergy are likely to want independence from secular judgment, the use of resources for pious ends, and the freedom to receive support and service from faithful believers. A more venal religion may have direct designs on economic power or political control. These goals often run contrary to the interests of the secular rulership, and sometimes the faith is too strong to be conveniently quelled by simple dictates. More often still, the faith provides some critical service of legitimation or economic support to the secular powers, making it all the more difficult to contain it without turning it into a foe.

Other religions may also conflict with the faith. This is most obvious in those creeds that forbid the worship of any god but their own, but it also can turn up in less exclusive religions that find each other deeply distasteful for some reason, or are competing for the same pool of believers' resources, or who both lay claim to the same holy sites or exclusive secular privilege. The heat of this conflict may range from quiet backstage maneuvering and over diplomacy to a bloody holy war waged by zealous adherents.

Lastly, the faith might be in conflict with itself. Very large or geographically-dispersed faiths tend to form regional doctrines and local beliefs that don't always set well with other believers. Even smaller faiths can develop cells of schismatics around charismatic leaders or persuasive texts. And for any faith, there tends to be the eternal tension between those who seek more fervent, authentic devotion to their god and those who desire a more comfortable, pragmatic accommodation to the world.

A Multiplicity of Faiths

With that said, how many religions does your campaign setting actually need? Your time and creative energy as a GM are both limited resources, and you can't afford to be pouring too much of either into more carefully-constructed piety than you need.

For a typical **Godbound** campaign you only need one fully-fleshed religion, the most important faith of wherever your campaign begins. If there's more than one consequential religion in your campaign's starting area, you might loosely sketch the others with names, portfolios, and religion tags, but you don't want to bother building them out more fully until or unless they become important to your game. Most **Godbound** heroes are likely to have business only with the most important or wide-spread local faith, and won't run into the others unless they specifically make a point of seeking them out, or something they're doing is deeply hostile to the interests of these lesser faiths.

For campaign creation in other games, such as a more typical fantasy game or one set in the sci-fi future of **Stars Without Number**, you again want to keep your work confined to the religions that are most likely to matter to the PCs. A classic old-school game might need a convenient cleric NPC nearby to provide exceptional healing miracles, so you'll need to know something about that priest's faith and interests. A game where the heroes are intriguing nobles in some far-flung future sector of space might need two, or



three, or even four significant religions in the sector to create additional opportunities for intrigue and conflicting interests.

Some campaigns also benefit from having a designated dark religion for the local Evil High Priests to follow. Sinister blood-mad cultists of dark gods are a staple of fantasy adventure, but they become much more useful when they have motivations beyond that of simple malice. While it's always possible to flesh out these acolytes of wickedness with more mundane urges and inclinations, working out their religion can make it much easier to build appropriate temples, come up with suitable dark miracles, and identify the kind of people most likely to end up serving an infernal power.

When in doubt, prepare too few faiths instead of too many. Something that comes up unexpectedly in play can always be smoothed over with an ad-hoc ruling, but prep time spent on irrelevant content can't be so easily reclaimed. The religion tools in this section can be fun when world-building for its own sake, but never lose track of the ultimate purpose of your creations.

The Need for Faith

Religion serves numerous basic functions in most societies, and it's important that a GM understand the appeal of a faith if they are to deduce the ways in which it interacts with the PCs and the wider populace. Different groups of people in a culture require different things from the local faiths, and the same religion might serve more than one purpose for its believers.

The Common Believers

To an ordinary believer, a religion gives divine sanction to moral and ethical rules. The modern idea that morality can be rationally deduced from first principles is utterly alien to most societies; for the vast majority of humanity past and present, right and justice derive from divine wisdom and absolute revealed principles. Atheism is synonymous with amorality, and insisting that one can follow the same principles of justice as believers for very different reasons is unlikely to impress the general public.

As difficult as it can be for some secular humanists to believe, these divine principles really do have a powerful hold on public morality and private conduct in most societies. People really will behave differently for fear of offending the gods and incurring their anger, and they will stick to principles and cultural norms rather than defy the will of the divine. Not every member of the society will, of course, and some will disguise very secular inclinations under a veil of pious dissembling, but this religious sanction to cultural norms is something that has a powerful influence on any culture's populace. After all, if one can believe that commercial advertisements and popular media can influence behavior, how much more so when every source of moral authority in the culture is vigorously promoting an ideal?

It is important to understand that these ethical rules can be extremely specific to particular religions, or even to particular types of believers within that same religion. A culture may have a god of herdsmen who sanctifies numerous particular rules about how cattle herds are to be kept and traded. These rules may have nothing to do with the bargaining of cloth merchants in the marketplace, because cloth is not the affair of the herd-god, and the merchants would be baffled should anyone suggest that the herd-god's rules ought to apply to the woolen trade. The rules the herd-god imposes are not cosmic verities to be revealed to mortals, but a very specific truth related to a very specific power.

In the same vein, a particular caste of believers may be justified in doing things or indulging in pastimes utterly forbidden to less exalted followers of the faith. There is nothing immoral or wrong about this in the eyes of their co-religionists, because *obviously* the god wishes their most devout believers to have certain freedoms in this world that would be utterly unthinkable to less enlightened followers. There is no sense of moral conflict for these believers because the grounds of the moral prohibition are not rationally derived. They exist only because the god says they do.

As arbitrary or self-interested as these rules may be, most societies find it utterly indispensable for their cultural norms to be sanctified by the gods. A mutual agreement based on rational self-interest lacks the mystical significance of divine fiat, and a person who participates in such a coldly logical bargain does not feel in any way part of any larger reality, or subject to any greater

supernatural power. A person who conducts their affairs according to the will of Heaven, however, has the satisfaction of being part of some larger structure of meaning, one where his smallest act is of interest to the very gods themselves.

To a GM, this reality matters because it motivates NPCs. It may seem utterly irrational for a powerful king to be spending half his nation's treasury on a temple-tomb complex he won't even enjoy in life, but it becomes completely logical, and indeed almost inevitable, if that king is terrified that his intrigue-stained soul will be consigned to Hell if he does not perform some great act of propitiation toward Heaven. On a smaller scale, a miserly merchant may detest and resent the orphaned nephew he took in, but he knows that holy scripture decrees that a sister's brother must protect her children, and he does not want to have to think himself a wicked man for denying it.

Plenty of historical monarchs and powerful figures have been deeply in thrall to the gods, ready to perform actively self-destructive acts in hope of pleasing an angered divinity or escaping misfortune in life and death. Anything a religion in your campaign says is good, or desirable, or worthy of sacrifice for, an NPC can be motivated to follow with seemingly irrational zeal.

These divinely-decreed cultural norms can also serve as shorthand for a kind of moral normalcy. It is important to keep in mind that defiance of traditional cultural norms, so cheap and easy in the modern West, is something very serious indeed to most historical cultures. Open rebellion against the gods and defiance of their laws is not a fashion pose in these societies, it is a mark of profound alienation and dangerous excess. In such a culture, an NPC who blatantly mocks the gods and scorns their priests is likely willing to do things unthinkable even to hardened criminals and bandits, simply because they no longer recognize any foundation for morality but their own personal desires.

Lords and Rulers

Aside from providing sanction for the basic cultural structure of a society, religious support grants legitimacy to rulers. This can be a difficult concept for some modern readers to really grasp, due to the very different mechanisms for legitimation in most modern democratic societies, but it is nonetheless critical to the survival of most historical autocrats.

In a democracy, leaders are legitimated by the approval of the people. The officials of the state obey them because the people have chosen them. The armed forces march at their command because they are the representatives of the people. Their enemies and rivals within the polity may work to undermine their efforts, but open violence is unlikely so long as those enemies are convinced that the greater bulk of the population will stand with their elected leadership and defeat any overt attempt to depose them. Democracy shorthands the likely result of a direct violent conflict and encourages rivals to test their relative strengths in non-lethal ways.

In the absence of this popular mandate, a ruler has a limited palette of tools with which to build his uncontested rule. He can cow the people with weapons, but the more subjects, the more difficult it is to maintain overwhelming military domination of them, and the more difficult it is to apply that military force to consistently

punish malcontents. Nations can be conquered with naked steel, and they can be exterminated with the sword, but they cannot be ruled that way. A king who had only violence to compel his subjects would die in the saddle, if he does not perish of sheer exhaustion.

A king can purchase support with riches and gifts and the fair administration of justice among their followers. Most people will gladly sacrifice much of their freedom in exchange for bread and protection from lawless violence, and even a king who does nothing more than ensure the punishment of criminals does something that many people will serve well to maintain. Unfortunately, a king cannot guarantee that his domain will be spared famine and hardship, or that invaders or lawless nobles will never scourge the people. Immediate personal advantage is a strong reason to serve a monarch, but it is ultimately a fragile and very personal reason. It is prone to fray in times of hardship and widespread suffering, precisely when a ruler needs it most.

The will of the gods is less mutable. A religion that preaches the justification of royal rule and the lawful obedience of the people is priceless to a king. When treachery toward the king is a betrayal of the gods, he has legitimacy that stretches far beyond mere personal advantage in serving him. Moreover, most low-tech societies simply do not have very many direct royal officials and servants. The vast numbers of priests and prelates preaching in his favor may dwarf the number of loyal government minions he could personally direct.

Kings and monarchs so often support the major faiths of a culture not only because they believe in them, but because these faiths can support a royal house, and can often command resources far in excess of even the greatest secular noble. So long as these faiths preach obedience to the king, they're pricelessly valuable support for royal legitimacy and the right of the noble class to rule.

To a GM, this matters because a religion's interests become a ruler's interests. If the local bishop hates the followers of a rival sect, then the local lord is strongly incentivized to harry the vile infidels. The lord may have nothing personal against the sectarians, but it's just not worth the danger of getting on the bishop's bad side, or of having the bishop lodge a complaint with the king that the local lord is distressingly lukewarm in defending the true faith.

This becomes a particular issue when there are multiple major faiths in a society that want different things from the rulers. All of the elite have to step carefully, weighing the advantages in simplicity that come from clearly favoring a particular faith against the loss of support they'd receive from the other competitors. This loss of support might be more than spiritual; these religions might have land, money, or manpower they're willing to lend a pious lord... or use against an infidel one.

GMs can also find useful conflicts in making the secular royalty take a more-than-distant interest in controlling the leadership of the religion. A king might absolutely insist on appointing the bishop of an important episcopal see not because he imagines he has any spiritual right to do so, but because that episcopal see owns a fifth of the province's arable land. Rulers can end up feeling as if they *must* take control of the church, if only to prevent it from being used against them by rival powers. These attempts to seize control can be overt, such as directly appointing royal relations into positions of spiritual power, or they may be implicit, such as loading up the seminaries with spare noble sons and daughters so that eventually the sensibilities of the noble class become the sensibilities of the clerical hierarchy as a whole.

Sorcerers and Arcanists

Aside from providing moral structure and governmental legitimacy, religions provide more occult benefits in campaign settings that allow for the existence of magical powers. The classic gaming interpretation of this has been the "cleric", with a portfolio of standard miracles and a fixed place in the religious hierarchy. This is only one way to interpret divine magic, however, and many historical magical traditions had a very different conception of their relationship with heavenly powers.

These other sorcerers operate on a much less religiously-legitimated basis. They invoke divine powers through secret pacts, incantations of compulsion, or parasitical leeching of Heaven's might. Orthodox clergy of the faith might actively hate such sorcerers, viewing them as profaners of the sacred mysteries. In other cases, these sorcerers participate in the church hierarchy, either as affiliated lay believers or as active clergy performing less occult rites as part of the ordinary ceremonies.

The key distinction to keep in mind is between a sorcerer who is compelling divine assistance and one who is petitioning for it. Some magical formulas might exist that could force a god to grant a particular favor, either through threats, sacrificial payment, or the remorseless natural laws of the cosmos. The spells of a sorcerer could be made up of many such mystical adjurations, forcing gods and devils alike to produce marvels at the wizard's command. Some of these spells might be couched in phrases of petition and humble plea, but the sorcerer expects results, and does not expect the god to be able to resist his properly-formed commands. These sorcerers are much closer to gaming's "wizard" or "magic-user" trope than to any conventional cleric-hero.

A more petitionary sorcerer might play more by the divinity's rules, fulfilling esoteric ceremonies and making obscure sacrifices in order to earn the benevolent blessing of arcane might. The god may reliably produce these miracles, but only because the sorcerer is jumping through the celestial hoops. Failure to keep the god's good graces can result in the loss of all magical access. Such sorcerers are closest to the traditional "cleric" concept.

To a GM, this matters because every god is a potential source of magical antagonists and arcane traditions. If the powers of a god can be siphoned and redirected by sorcerers then perhaps they can be used in ways that are very contrary to the god's own wishes. A traditional "magic-user" spell list might be made up of incantations all related to the portfolios or personal traits of the local religions, a grab-bag selection of spells, adjurations, and sorceries developed by wizards over countless ages. Such use of divine powers outside the blessing of their established churches is unlikely to be welcomed by the faithful, but a sufficiently ruthless magic-user might not care about their reproaches and the perils of the law.

Remember also that religions change and religious mores change with them. Ritual practices that were perfectly acceptable and widespread a few centuries ago might be anathema in the present day, and magical traditions that were a fundamental part of worship in ancient days might now be nothing more than hunted remnants and forbidden demonology. A religion might have a full, elaborate body of magical knowledge associated with it that is now forgotten or anathemized due to the actions of its former adepts or the changing of religious doctrines. Ambitious PCs might seek these forgotten rites or be contacted by clerics eager to explore the less inviting corners of their own faith's past.

The Gods Themselves

Lastly, in a cosmos where divinities are undeniably real, the gods themselves might have a pragmatic need for worship. Without it, they may dwindle in personal power, becoming less and less capable of rewarding or answering their devotees and more and more subject to the wills of other gods. In a conventional *Godbound* campaign, worship fuels the PCs with Dominion and gives them a way to express their power in the realms. *Godbound* PCs have the option of becoming self-sustaining free divinities, but other “godlike” entities may not have this option.

Depending on the personal role of divinities in a campaign, it is not strictly necessary for a GM to decide what a god gets out of worship. If the gods of a campaign are remote and impersonal entities, then there’s no need to spell out exactly why they demand certain sorts of service or the performance of particular rituals. It may be that the gods actually have no interest whatsoever in such human affairs, and the entire corpus of religious belief around them is just a human rationalization of their alien, unknowable reality. They simply *are*, and human faiths that rise and fall around their worship are of no relevance to their unfathomable purposes.

Gods that have a personal presence in the world tend to have a more human set of interests, however, and they need to be equipped with comprehensible motivations. There are several common justifications for human worship of the divine, and all of them might be true in your campaign to greater or lesser degrees, or in different ways toward different gods.

First, gods might need human worship in order to gain strength. A god with many fiercely-devoted believers is stronger than one with only a few. The greater the sacrifices, the more elaborate the ceremonies, and the larger the numbers of believers, the stronger the god will be. In these cases, “worship” usually has varying values depending on how costly it is to the worshiper. A peasant who mutters a prayer before his prize cow’s calving is less useful to the god than a king’s sacrifice of his son to consecrate a newly-raised temple. Some types of worship might also be worthless to particular divinities, such as blood sacrifices to a god of mercy, or offerings of beautiful flowers to a plague-demon.

Second, gods might need human worship in order to avert disaster. In some cases this might simply be a need for the strength of believers in order to empower the god to hold back cataclysms or avert natural calamities. In other cases, it might be outright divine blackmail, with the worshipers compelled to offer sacrifices in order to win the god’s mercy or avert their malevolent attentions from the petitioners. Many “evil” gods of plague, disaster, and ruin may have entire temples devoted purely to placating their fury. Even their priests may hate and fear their own gods, but they perform the necessary rites and make the needed sacrifices in order to prevent even greater disasters, or direct them onto the enemies of their people.

Third, gods might actually exist purely due to the power of human worship. Entirely mortal and mundane entities might be raised to divine dignity by the power of devoted worship and ritual sacrifice. Such a god who loses their worshipers might not just be weakened, they might be outright destroyed or reduced to frail mortality. Arcanists and kings might study the ways of apotheosis, conducting great and terrible rituals and performing awful sacrifices in order to gain celestial power. Even if this assumption is actually wrong, a belief in it might produce tremendous efforts

d 12

Omens of Divine Displeasure

1	A rash of monstrous animal or human births
2	A menacing comet or heavenly phenomenon
3	A temple is struck by a fire, earthquake, or other woe
4	Plague erupts among the populace
5	Swarms of vermin scourge the crops and people
6	An important ritual goes horribly awry
7	A drastic and unlikely reverse is suffered in war
8	A symbol of the god is destroyed, dies, or withers
9	Clergy are smote with a disease or a curse
10	A seat of secular power is struck by a natural calamity
11	Things from the god's portfolio are twisted and dire
12	An important sacrifice is supernaturally refused

among the mortal populace to gain the nonexistent prize, and innumerable sorcerous methods of seeking everlasting might.

These reasons do not need to be universal. A demon of plague might be effectively eternal, worshiped in the dying rattle of every expiring victim, but susceptible to sacrificial bribery to turn his attention elsewhere. A neighboring goddess of mercy might be the product of an elaborate theotechnical research project, and utterly dependent on the maintenance of precise and copious ritual ceremonies. Just because one god needs mortal worship doesn’t mean all gods must need it.

To a GM, this matters because knowing what gods get out of human worship will let you judge what lengths they’ll go to in order to obtain it and the consequences that will happen should a religion dwindle or disappear. A god who needs worship in order to prevent floods and droughts will respond to a lack of worship in a very different way than a god who needs his faithful in order to remain divine at all. The former deity might actually not care much at all whether humans worship her at all, as content to send floods as she is to send blessings. The latter deity is unlikely to be so indifferent to the fate of his believers.

Aside from this, it is also important to decide how active the gods are in getting worship and punishing the failure to provide worthy devotions. It’s important that deities not be *too* reliable in their mundane wrath; if a particular god inevitably and implacably sends his fury upon every believer who does not carry out their religious duties, then the god becomes less of a mystery and more of a natural hazard.

A more capricious and unreliable sort of divine rebuking can be more useful in a campaign, allowing locals to argue over the true source of some recent calamity. Perhaps it was the fruit of the king’s neglect of a temple, or the rise of a suspiciously innovation in doctrine, or simply natural bad luck that has nothing to do with divine displeasure. Blatantly supernatural woes will tend to be automatically blamed upon the gods or some convenient evil sorcerer. Whether or not the supposed culprit is evil, or even a sorcerer, is a less certain thing.

As with all elements of the religions you create, remember that the purpose of divine displeasure is to create useful adventure hooks for your game. A divine plague that the PCs are not forced to survive, solve, or accurately apportion blame for is a divine plague that does very little for your game.

A Summary of Divine Creation

The remainder of this book provides a step-by-step process for creating a new faith for your campaign. While these faiths can be easily inserted into your own *Godbound* realm, the guidelines are built to be more generally practical, for those readers who might not be playing that game. The general assumption is a fantasy-style setting of magic and relatively primitive technology, but it's just as easy to use these tools to create a sci-fi religion to spice up your *Stars Without Number* game or other far-future world.

To get your faith up and running, just follow the steps below.

Create a Cosmogony and Pantheon

Before you can build out a religion, you're going to need to lay the foundation by creating a creation-story for your world and answering some basic questions that most faiths are expected to handle. You might use the same creation story for all religions in your world, or you might grant different groups a different idea about how the world was made.

With the cosmogony in place, you can then decide how many gods are going to occupy your pantheon and what general roles each are going to fill in the culture. You'll assign some basic, near-universal portfolios to a few of them and then start detailing their spheres of power more specifically.

Create Your Gods and Flesh Them Out

For each god you intend to detail, you're going to either pick or roll an appropriate portfolio or two and establish some basic facts about how their religion came to exist. Often in fantasy settings, gods tend to just "be there", without any beginning to their organized worship. Fleshing out a few basic details of how a god came to get their believers can help inform a creed's current shape.

Then you'll establish some positive requirements of the faith, the kind of things that believers are expected to do or value. These imperatives can serve as powerful motivations for NPCs and religion-based conflicts. Along with positive requirements, you'll develop a few negative prohibitions as well to complicate the lives of believers.

Next, you'll decorate the faith with any particularly famous saints or important festivals you feel like establishing. Saints of old can be handy origins for powerful relics or restrictive traditions, while festivals tend to come with built-in problems that can spark a great deal of useful conflict.

Finally, you can use the last tables in this section to generate both an example temple of the faith and one or more clerics in service to the god. It may be that you have an immediate need for a shrine to bulk out your next adventure, along with the head cleric in charge of it. Optionally, you might create such a fane and its attendant priests just to have it in your pocket in case the PCs suddenly do something that would require a temple.

This fleshing-out process is repeated in turn for each divinity in your pantheon. The extent to which you carry it out will depend on how important each god is to your campaign; if you just need a few extra names to bulk out a divine roster, you might do nothing more than throw dice and record the results, saving any interpretation or elaboration for when you actually need to think about them. Don't feel obligated to put a fine polish on every divinity in your game.

Structure Important Faiths

The last two stages in this process are only necessary for those faiths that are likely to play some significant role in your campaign. You might only fully develop the most immediately-relevant religion when first starting a campaign, and only come back to these elaborations later for the rest, if they turn out to be more consequential than you had anticipated.

At this step, you're going to build a religion's organizational structure. You're going to decide who is running it, how that leadership is chosen, and how the rest of the clerics and believers of the faith relate to them. You're going to assign religious titles to various ranks of clergy and figure out the general structure of the religion's broader hierarchy.

You're going to do this not for the sake of filling out an org chart, but for identifying who exactly the PCs are going to need to deal with in order to get special favors from the faith, and which clerics the PCs can't afford to lightly offend. You're also going to do it to form a framework for the conflict generators in this section, which will implant some deep and wide-ranging problems in the faith that are exactly the sort of things that make PC troubleshooters a very attractive hire for high-ranking clergy.

Pick Religion Tags

Lastly, you're going to pick two religion tags for your important faith. These tags define two particular qualities about the religion, perhaps related to its origin, or some problem it's suffering right now, or some distinct quirk of its beliefs. You should take the development you've done so far on the faith and color it with the information you get from the tags.

Every tag is composed of Enemies, Friends, Complications, Things, and Places appropriate to the trope the tag embodies. When you need some pious component to fill out an adventure plan, like a suitable arch-villain to cause a terrible problem, you can pick elements from those tag lists, mash them together, and use the resultant creation.

Thus, if you need an antagonist from a faith that has the *Dualist* and *Economic Role* tags, you just pick one item from the Enemies list each tag gifts, mix them together, and produce your evildoer. A "Renegade priest" meets a "Greedy priestly moneylender", and you have Bishop Desjardins, who squeezes the life out of the faith's many debtors while secretly being in service to the anti-god of his faith, purchasing favors from the dark power with the wealth he takes from his hapless victims.

Religion tags should be used as tools rather than absolute imperatives. They provide quick and easy adventure components that you can swiftly string together into an interesting conflict or useful complication to some other situation, but they're no substitute for your own ideas about the faith. Sometimes the results you get from a random roll just don't mesh well with the concepts you've already developed for a faith.

Even so, it can be useful to take a moment to just think about some anomalous roll, and try to imagine an explanation for how it could be true. The divine works in strange ways, and its ways are not the ways of men. Sometimes a deeply inexplicable element can lend the most persuasive kind of verisimilitude.

Creating Cosmogonies and Pantheons

To create a religion, first you must create the universe. Or if not that, at least make up a story about how these gods came to be, the nature of their relationships with each other, and their function in the greater pattern of the world. Not every god needs to have such a grounding, but knowing a divinity's place in the cosmos tends to be critically important to its priests, if not its lay devotees.

Cosmogonical Constants

Most cosmogonies can be expected to answer a few basic questions. At their most subtle, rarefied levels the distinctions and nuances may be eye-wateringly complex, but the ordinary peasant in the field needs to have a simple answer to a few critical questions.

How did the world come to exist? Who or what created it? Was it the work of the gods, or was it simply a thing that happened, or was it the consequence of actions taken by distant god-monsters or unfathomable alien entities? Sometimes gods will create the world for particular reasons, such as a source of servitors, or for a love of beauty, or as a gaming-board. Other cosmogonies may not give any reason why the gods chose to do what they did.

How did humans come to exist? Are humans just another thing that was created along with the world, or did they come into existence in their own separate creation? Are they fallen fragments of the divine, or offspring of the gods, or animals transformed into thinking beings? Often, only the believer's people are considered "real" people, with the rest of humanity being created in some inferior way or for a less significant purpose.

What is the purpose of human existence? Some cosmogonies point to very distinct, clear roles for humanity in creation. The gods may have created them as servants, or companions, or entrusted them with certain important duties, or created them expressly to purify or uplift the soul they've been granted. Other cosmogonies explicitly disclaim any purpose to human existence, giving them no more intrinsic meaning than any other wild animal or random rock.

What do the gods want? Aside from ordinary worship, do they demand belief and love? Do they require only specific types of ritual service? Do they need things from humans, or is their power unrelated to human actions? Do they care about humans at all, or are we just one more thing in the world they have created?

What happens after you die? A cosmogony may paint a cheerless gray plain of everlasting darkness and dust for all, or a glorious celestial palace awaiting the righteous dead. Different fates may await those who serve the gods well or obey their laws, or for those who are interred with the correct funeral rites.

Note that different cultural groups will usually have very different and contradictory cosmogonies. The gods of one nation may be explained by a creation story that is utterly different than the one espoused by their neighbors. One people may insist that the cosmos came about from the split corpse of a god-monster, while its neighbors may maintain that the world is the dream of a sleeping all-god. These contradictions aren't meant to be resolved, and the gods themselves may not know or communicate the truth. It may be that all the cosmogonies are mystically, literally true despite their contradictions, or they may have confused fragments of the real truth embedded in each of them. As the GM, you shouldn't necessarily feel any need to pick one of them to be right.

Pantheons and Lone Divinities

Once you know how the culture believes that the world was created, you can start dividing up divinities into pantheons and singular gods. In a loose sense, all of a culture's gods might be considered part of its "native pantheon," but just because people of a particular region worship a divinity doesn't mean that it's naturally associated with all the other gods they revere.

First, decide how many major gods you're going to detail. Anywhere from three to six is usually a good choice. You won't fully elaborate all of them, but you'll want names and rough details.

Next, assign the more universally-needed portfolios. One god needs to oversee the culture's main subsistence activity: farming for agriculturalists, herding for pastoralists, fishing for island-dwellers, and so forth. One god needs to oversee universal human interests such as childbirth, wealth, and healing. One god should be petitioned for matters of rulership, war, justice, and law. These portfolios can be diced up or unified in single deities, but they cover most of the basic needs and interests that ordinary people pursue.

Next, assign secondary portfolios. If you need an author of all evil, pick a god to be a Satanic figure. You might randomly assign other portfolios to other gods, or add them to the affairs of the deities you've already established. A god who rules both farming and storms is going to have a different character than one who rules over farming and plagues. It adds flavor when each god has at least one unique portfolio they share with no other.

Now group your gods, building relationships between them. Perhaps the gods of storm and sea hate each other, or perhaps the goddess of the moon is the daughter of the sun-god. The clergy of a god will tend to replicate the attitudes of their divine patron. Note that you might separate out one or two gods as being without significant relationships to the others. These gods are most likely to be foreign imports from other cultures, or alien entities that defy easy integration into human relationships.

Finally, decide how these gods relate to foreign divinities, and how exclusive they are with their own worshipers. When believers encounter foreign gods, are they syncretized into new aspects of their current deities? Are they adopted wholesale, with foreign temples standing beside ancient native shrines? Are they shunned as contemptible alien ways, unfit for followers of the true gods? Are outsiders even permitted to revere the pantheon's gods, or is the privilege of a relationship with them reserved to the native people or specific castes or groups within that population? Many cultures are decidedly disinterested in getting outsiders to revere their native gods, considering them a holy inheritance meant only for their own kindred.

Depending on the amount of effort you want to spend on the pantheon, you can then reach in and dirty up some of the clean lines you've drawn. Maybe there's an alien god in the pantheon from a long-conquered rival, or perhaps the entire cosmogony is a relatively recent creation of the sages to replace an older, darker tale. Maybe one of the gods is a brand-new addition to the region, and the existing faiths haven't had time to figure out where the interloper fits in the cosmic scheme of things. Perhaps certain divinities are closely tied to particular regions, clans, or ethnic groups within the culture. The religion tags described later can be very useful here.

Quick Cosmogony Generation

If you're feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the scope of possibilities you need to deal with, the table below can help you put together a cosmogony. Just roll once on each table, though you might roll several times on the final table to get several different elements to appear in your creation story. Use the prompts to assemble a story that answers the questions asked on the prior page, and you have your cosmogony.

While cosmogonies need to answer some questions, they don't need to answer all possible queries. If something doesn't seem to make sense in a religion, or leaves open a very large question,

you're entirely within your rights to just leave it nonsensical or unanswered. The gods have their mysteries, and there is no need for everything about them or their purposes to be perfectly clear to humankind. Most devotees just accept that the gods have their own peculiar ways and their own secret truths.

Depending on the scope of your campaign, these blank spots can prove useful adventure seeds when the PCs stumble upon hidden answers or allusive artifacts, and find themselves in possession of truths that could prove extremely upsetting to entire nations... or keys to the kind of powers that the gods themselves wield.

d4	What Created the World?
1	The gods intentionally created it
2	It was generated by natural law or cosmic necessity
3	Alien powers or god-monsters created it
4	It's always existed, and was never created

d6	How Were Humans Created?
1	They were unintended accidents of the world's creation
2	They're fragments or offspring of one or more gods
3	Gods created them intentionally from nothing
4	They were fashioned from existing animals or matter
5	They came into the world from somewhere else
6	They've simply existed as long as the world has

d8	What is the Purpose of Human Existence?
1	They're meant to be slaves of the gods
2	They exist to perform a particular job in creation
3	They are to purify and elevate their own souls in life
4	They are to be punished for prior sins with earthly woe
5	They are game-pieces and amusements for the gods
6	To prepare their souls for a task or role in the afterlife
7	To maintain cosmic balance through religious service
8	They have no innate purpose recognized by the gods

d10	What Normally Happens After Death?
1	A soul is sent to a particular god's divine realm
2	Perpetual dreamless sleep in the grave
3	Universal torment and suffering in a hellish afterworld
4	The good are welcomed by the gods; others burn in hell
5	Sleep until eventual judgment or the end of the world
6	A second life in a spirit-world much like the real one
7	Reincarnation according to your deeds in life
8	You go to a fate that hinges on your funeral rites
9	The individual ceases to exist upon death
10	Roll again; that until you are reborn into a descendant

d12	What Unusual Things Do Gods Want?
1	They demand specific, detailed religious rituals
2	Belief and heartfelt devotion from their followers
3	Obedience to a particular set of laws and customs
4	Blood sacrifice or similar offerings of grim value
5	Specific mystic objects offered up to them
6	Types of deeds or actions performed in their name
7	Elaborate structures or monuments built for them
8	Missionary expansion of the reach of their worship
9	The ritual service of vast numbers of priests and clergy
10	The destruction of all competing faiths or pantheons
11	Nothing. They barely care at all about the world
12	Roll 1d10 twice; both things, mingled together

d20	Elements Appearing in This Cosmogony
1	A tremendous god-monster at the origin of the world
2	A war between the gods
3	Intrusion by some alien power outside the pantheon
4	A terrible mistake made by the gods
5	A betrayal within the pantheon
6	An occasion of tremendous divine over-indulgence
7	The destruction of a proto-world or pre-human race
8	The death of one or more gods
9	A fundamental change of human needs or nature
10	The titanic enmity of a rival ancient human group
11	Rampaging god-monsters among the humans
12	Humans stealing something precious from the gods
13	Multiple attempts at getting creation right
14	Humans apotheosized into gods
15	A period of enslavement by alien powers
16	The introduction of death or another grief among men
17	The destruction or creation of a home for the gods
18	A race of supernatural divine servitors
19	The loss or hiding of profound magical secrets
20	Multiple origins of different groups of people

Creating a Divinity and the Faith's Origin

Once you have your cosmogony created, you can start fleshing out the details of particular divinities. You don't need to produce a full religion for every god in your pantheon, but it can be helpful to establish a paragraph or two of information about them to serve as a jumping-off point for future elaboration if it becomes useful.

First, use the table below to assign a portfolio to your divinity, choosing from among the different categories provided. You've probably already decided where the major universal portfolios are to go, but the tables below will help you flavor these major gods with secondary aspects. For deities that haven't already been given a job related to a major cultural need, the portfolio might be all they're responsible for overseeing.

The more important the god, the broader and blurrier the lines of their portfolio. If a god of archery has become the chief deity of a culture through some means, his worshipers are going to start tacking on other divine functions suitable for a chief god whether or not they have anything to do with bows.

In the same vein, if you need a major deity and the rolled result seems rather narrow, expand it metaphorically. A deity of Poisons who's supposed to be the chief evildoer of a cosmology might deal with more than mere toxic substances, and instead be seen also as

a harbinger of spoliation, defilement, and poisonous ruin. Poison is merely the chief metaphor and symbolic tool of such a god.

As a general rule, the more specific and functional a god is, the narrower its portfolio can be. Gods of specific mountains, divinities of particular rivers, idolons of specific clans or ethnicities... such gods might be very specific in their worshipers and function, and few petitioners would think to ask them for favors unrelated to these places and things. If you need to expand them to a greater role, just carry their traits out to a larger scale. The mountain-god may become the god of earth and its fertility, or the god of the skies and storms the mountain-peak scrapes against.

Also remember that when you're building a pantheon of gods, it's the *functions* that are common, not necessarily the portfolios. People pray for good harvests, healing, vengeance on their enemies, fortune in moments of trouble, and other things universal to the human condition. If they don't have a neatly-labeled divinity for such uses, they'll make their own, or assign the job to an existing god. No one conventionally treats the Christian God as a fertility-deity, but farmers for centuries have prayed to Him for good crops. In the same fashion, you shouldn't feel a need to make sure every god's portfolio perfectly matches the cultural role they play.

d100	Nature	Concepts	Groups and Roles	Dark Powers
1–4	A Particular Season	Cities	A specific clan	Assassination
5–8	A Particular Terrain	Commerce	A specific craft	Black Magic
9–12	A Type of Animal	Cosmic Order	A specific ethnicity	Blood
13–16	Agriculture	Creation	A specific gender	Decay
17–20	Birth and Growth	Deceit	A specific region	Demonic Powers
21–24	Cold	Hope	Archers	Despair
25–28	Death	Intoxication	Artisans	Famine
29–32	Domesticated Animals	Justice	Children	Filth
33–36	Dreams	Knowledge	Farmers	Foul Bargains
37–40	Fire	Love	Grifters	Gluttony
41–44	Healing	Luck	Harlots	Hatred
45–48	Light or Darkness	Magic	Herdsmen	Imprisonment
49–52	Night	Marriage and Family	Hunters	Murder
53–56	Otherworldly Entities	Memory	Judges	Oblivion
57–60	Plagues	Mercy	Merchants	Pain or Torture
61–64	Plants	Music	Miners	Parasites
65–68	Sexual Relations	Oaths and Vows	Physicians	Plagues
69–72	Storms and Wind	Passion	Riders	Poisons
73–76	The Earth	Peace	Rulers	Rage
77–80	The Moon	Revenge	Sailors	Treachery
81–84	The Sea	Rulership	Scholars	Uncreated Beings
85–88	The Sky	Speech	Sorcerers	Undeath
89–92	The Sun	Travel	The Aged	Vermin
93–96	Time	Truth	Thieves	Vile Debauchery
97–00	Wild Places and Beasts	War	Warriors	Wastelands

The Divine and the Origins of the Faith

Once you know the god's nature, the tables below will tell something of the faith's origins and the way in which the god relates to their clergy and portfolio. The assumption is for a fantasy setting where divine magic is real; if you're building a faith for a sci-fi game, just treat magical topics as relating to psionics or popular delusions.

The table for the portfolio's primary focus helps you define how the god relates to their own bailiwick. Inevitably there will be aspects of all modes in a god's control, but a divinity of the Sea who focuses on destruction might be interpreted as a drought-god or a vengeful patron of tsunamis and sea-storms.

Faiths are born of events, even if those events may be so distant as to have been forgotten by modern worshipers. The two origin tables below will help flesh out the faith's past, and indicate the kind of history that might yet leave its mark on the religion. If the results indicate some older, prior faith, you could do a quick few rolls to generate the lost god, or merely decide on a few details that you can later have show up in ancient rules or long-lost documents. You can also use these results to flavor any religion tags you roll later in this process, explaining the ways in which the faith came to have those particular traits.

d4	What's the Primary Focus of the Portfolio?
1	Creating the portfolio or bolstering it where it exists
2	Destroying the portfolio, or weakening its influence
3	Controlling the disposition or use of the portfolio
4	Understanding the secrets and ways of the portfolio

d6	The Magnitude of the God's Magical Gifts?
1	They exhibit no visible supernatural powers or miracles
2	They provide very subtle magical effects at most
3	Unpredictable but significant magical effects are caused
4	The faith has access to some reliable magical effects
5	The faith has many reliable supernatural resources
6	The faith has some dramatically powerful resources

d8	What Symbology Does the God Employ?
1	Geometric, stylized images of a portfolio element
2	Elaborately calligraphic holy texts and verses
3	Detailed icon-art depicting the god or its holy servitors
4	Physical pieces of its portfolio or emblematic items
5	An object symbolizing the founding event of its faith
6	Representative statuary, either small or large-scale
7	Particular colors on specific objects or patterns
8	Specific songs or sacred mantras inscribed or spoken

d10	How Does the God Usually Communicate?
1	Via animal sacrifices and the auspices of their guts
2	Patterns formed in things from their portfolio
3	Dreams or visions dispatched to the pious
4	Public omens visible to all the local believers
5	At seasonal festivals, through particular divinations
6	By the prophesy of particular sanctioned seers
7	Signs displayed in the condition of a natural feature
8	Arcane omens only the wisest can decipher
9	Loud and blatantly supernatural divine sendings
10	The god never or very rarely communicates at all

d12	How Was the God First Known by Humans?
1	No one remembers; they've just always been worshiped
2	A holy prophet was born and did great miracles
3	The god evolved from a saint or helper of another god
4	Sorcerers and arcanists discovered the god's existence
5	The god personally manifested and ordered the faith
6	A heretical priest of another faith brought a new word
7	The god is the new face of a dead ancient divinity
8	The god was a hoax or social fiction that went too far
9	The god was an apotheosized ancestor or culture hero
10	The god was a personified avatar of a natural feature
11	The god was a misunderstanding of an alien god-thing
12	The god was artificially constructed by priests or magi

d20	What Characterized Its Initial Spread?
1	The faith suffered numerous martyrs for the cause
2	It took over the temples of a weak and fading creed
3	It received significant backing from scholars and sages
4	An important local ruler made a deal with the founders
5	The faith wielded remarkable miracles to win converts
6	It provided critical military aid in a time of dire need
7	The clerics provided vital help from the god's portfolio
8	It was almost extinguished once before bouncing back
9	A hard and bloody creed was mellowed by growth
10	Early believers reacted violently against other faiths
11	A brilliant saint rescued it from a feeble obscurity
12	It splintered, and only this sect openly survived to now
13	The faith was instrumental in overcoming a great evil
14	Secret arts and skills impressed new converts
15	The faith backed rebels who became the new rulers
16	A school or shrine had a circle of gifted missionaries
17	The new faith was a neutral party in resolving a struggle
18	Temptations of wealth or pleasure to new converts
19	Existing faiths were exhausted from mutual conflicts
20	Its initial converts spread out into uninhabited lands

Positive Requirements of the Faith

When building a faith, it's important to give it concrete and required actions or goals. A faith that requires its adherents to do X or Y is much more useful at the table than one that simply values certain principles. The table below will help you come up with some specific positive actions required of the faith's believers.

Use the table results as a basic template, and then fill it in with the details of your specific faith. For example, if you have a fertility god and you come up with a subject of "Wealth, prosperity, and material abundance" and a mode of "Opposing and minimizing, perhaps even destroying", then you might decide that the religion

requires that the products of agriculture never be used for aggregating personal wealth. The fruits of the soil must be shared out equitably and all farming profits beyond those needed for decent life must be avoided as offensive to the god.

Try to pick requirements that force believers to take actions and pursue goals, and try to make them clear enough to describe in one or two sentences. Sharp, crisp religious duties are much easier to use in play than vague principles. The religion may have many more general ideals its believers follow, but two or three of these requirements are the ones most likely to prove useful in play.

d4	How Important Is This Requirement?
1	Those who disobey it are considered unbelievers
2	Rejecting it is a serious sin requiring penance
3	Those who disobey it are socially shamed
4	It's considered pious, but falling short is understood

d6	Who Does This Requirement Apply To?
1	All believers are expected to carry out the requirement
2	Only clerics and pious laypeople recognize the duty
3	It's linked to particular seasons or situations
4	Everyone with the means to carry it out must do so
5	The clergy and elite are exempt from the requirement
6	It's now considered heretical, but many still hold to it

d8	What Subject Does the Requirement Involve?
1	Sexuality and its role in the believer's life
2	Daily labor and ordinary work a believer performs
3	The clerical hierarchy and the church organization
4	Secular rulers and social superiors
5	Wealth, prosperity, and material abundance
6	Times of hardship, pain, and loss
7	Social relationships or important life milestones
8	Ambition and one's personal goals

d10	What Is the Justification for the Requirement?
1	Divine example; do as the god does or did
2	Justice, for the requirement is perfectly just
3	Ennoblement of the soul of the believer who does it
4	Chiefly a dread of divine punishment for disobedience
5	The requirement was modeled by a great saint of yore
6	Wisdom, because it is pragmatically wise to do so
7	Harmony, so believers can live peacefully together
8	Personal health and prosperity comes from doing so
9	Luck and divine favor are granted to those who obey
10	Tradition; this is how it has always been done

d12	What Mode of Activity is Required?
1	Extending grave reverence and courtesy
2	Opposing and minimizing, perhaps even destroying
3	Understanding and learning, inquisitive curiosity
4	Stoic endurance and toleration of hardship
5	Enjoyment and pleasure-taking
6	Propagating and spreading something to others
7	Supporting and sustaining with material help
8	Avoiding contact and maintaining a ritual taboo
9	Maintaining stasis and tradition, avoiding innovation
10	Martial exertion, military protection, focused violence
11	Improvement and enhancement
12	Artistic refinement and aesthetic focus

d20	A Quick Example Duty of the Faith
1	Perform a type of service for the clergy
2	Tithe all of a particular commodity to the church
3	Ceaselessly fight a traditional enemy of the faith
4	Propound and spread an art or lore loved by the faith
5	Render up a religious tax to the local church
6	Show deference to a particular type of person
7	Conduct certain rituals regardless of circumstances
8	Protect a particular type of holy creature or person
9	Give support to impoverished fellow-believers
10	Drive away all of a type of creature or person
11	Preferentially conduct business with fellow believers
12	Obeys clerics unflinchingly regarding spiritual matters
13	Ritually mimic the god's activities at certain times
14	Inhume the believing dead in a way suitable to the god
15	Marry within the faith or a correct sub-group of it
16	Make a particular sacrifice, with poverty no excuse
17	Expand and support an activity related to the god
18	Initiate young believers through a ritual trial or rite
19	Help construct something relevant to the god's purview
20	Always declare membership regardless of persecution

Unusual Prohibitions or Restrictions

Just as a faith has required actions, so too does it have restrictions. Many restrictions can simply be assumed. Most widespread faiths have firm rules against basic antisocial behaviors like murder, theft, rape, deceit, and other common evils, and it's more noteworthy to remark when a faith *doesn't* have these restrictions.

These tables are meant to create more idiosyncratic taboos, ones that are common enough to make problems for believers or drive a conflict in an adventure. Usually two taboos are enough to flavor a faith. Take care that they're not so onerous as to make life unlivable, but they might still have substantial burdens on a believer's actions.

When making up a restriction, distinguish between negative and positive restrictions. The former are in place because the subject is hateful or profane; the faith prohibits doing X with it because doing so is detestable. The latter are there because the subject is holy or set apart; believers are not to do X with it because doing so is impudent and presumptuous. There is a vast difference between refusing to speak with someone because they are too holy for your common presence and refusing to deal with them because they are hateful in the eyes of your god. You can pick which tone and subject to use based on inspiration from the mode table.

d4	How Often Does It Come Up in Daily Life?
1	It's a factor in almost every day of a believer's life
2	It comes up at least once a week in ordinary life
3	It's unexpected, but within the realm of the possible
4	It affects only a very unusual situation

d6	How Important Is It To Believers?
1	It's an absolute basic pillar of the faith's doctrine
2	Everyone is strictly required to adhere to it
3	No one would dare break it in public
4	It would be broken in public only at strict need
5	Clergy firmly need to follow it, lay folk less so
6	Only the most pious bother with adhering to it

d8	What Is the Usual Consequence for Breaking It?
1	Social scorn and the reproach of fellow believers
2	Divine punishment in the afterlife
3	Church-administered fines or confiscations
4	Physical punishment at the hands of other believers
5	Divine misfortune sent to scourge the backslider
6	Longer or shorter periods of shunning by other faithful
7	Painful or laborious penance rituals are required
8	Required deeds, pilgrimages, or other acts of penance

d10	Negative Subject	Positive Subject
1	Thing hostile to the god	Servant of the god
2	Non-believers	Fellow believers
3	Rival faith	Allied faith
4	Secular rulers	Secular rulers
5	Sinning believers	Clergy
6	Non-traditional relations	Customary relationships
7	Common foodstuff	Common foodstuff
8	Secular type of place	Holy place
9	Unlucky period of time	Sacred period of time
10	Personal enemy or foe	Family or close friend

d12	What Mode of Activity is Forbidden?
1	Respecting or behaving courteously to the subject
2	Opposing, minimizing, or destroying the subject
3	Curiosity or inquiry about the subject
4	Accepting the subject without fierce resistance
5	Enjoying the subject or using it for pleasure
6	Propagating the subject to other people or places
7	Giving material help or money to the subject
8	Contacting or having social intercourse with it
9	Treating the subject in a non-traditional way
10	Coexisting peacefully with the subject
11	Degradation or depletion of the subject
12	Celebrating or acknowledging the subject

d20	A Quick Example Taboo of the Faith
1	Refuse any dealings with backsliders and apostates
2	No sexual relations outside of strictly-set patterns
3	Never eat a particular common food hateful to the god
4	Never touch or use a common tool or weapon
5	Never utilize a certain service or type of business
6	Never take money or gifts from a type of person
7	Never informally socialize with non-believers
8	Never marry outside the expected in-faith group
9	Never perform work inappropriate to your caste
10	Never eat or drink with non-believers
11	Never engage in a particular broad field of business
12	Never strike or physically harm a type of person
13	Never injure or consume a type of holy animal
14	Never break an oath made upon the god
15	Never enter a type of taboo site or establishment
16	Never wear a particular color or type of clothing
17	Never permit a class of person any secular power
18	Never permit a class of person any clerical position
19	Never do secular things during particular holy times
20	Never refrain from partaking of a thing the god loves

Glorious Saints of Yore

While a religion in a fantasy world might be run via direct divine missives to believers, most faiths have a considerably greater human element to their organization and activities. Holy hermits, pious anchoresses, glorious martyrs, and sagacious primates all embroider the religion's past and give present believers models by which to deal with the challenges of their own spiritual life.

For a GM, the main use of a saint is as a justification or an origin. If you need a relic for your adventure, you can roll a saint that it once belonged to. If you're building a church or monastery, you can roll a saint to serve as its patron or founder. If you need to per-

sonalize a particular institution or wrap up a theological school in a form more digestible to most players, you can create its founding saint and tie everything to him or her. Whereas in a fantasy world it's often "a wizard did it", for your religions a saint can have done it.

You can also use this table to define current NPC proto-saints, those zealots and enthusiasts who are consciously or unconsciously modeling themselves on appropriate saintly behavior. Use the tables to figure out what they're trying to accomplish. These proto-saints may be significant antagonists to the PCs if what they want is contrary to the interests of the players.

d4	What was the Saint's Sex?
1	Male
2	Female
3	The sex most prominent in the church's hierarchy
4	Unknown or disputed in historical records

d6	What Time Did They Live In?
1	At the very founding of the faith
2	During the first flush of the faith's growth
3	During a time of great tribulation and persecution
4	During the greatest flower of the faith's importance
5	During a time the faith was decaying and stultified
6	Very recently; they might still be alive

d8	What Was their Role in Life?
1	A beggar, criminal, outcast, or other social reject
2	A humble peasant or common laborer
3	A scholar, sage, or great theologian
4	A minor noble or a lesser scion of some great family
5	A prince, princess, or other noble of high standing
6	A priest, priestess, nun, monk, or other cleric
7	A soldier, mercenary, thug, or other shedder of blood
8	A merchant, craftsman, trader, or other dealer in goods

d10	What Did They Do?
1	Lived as an ascetic hermit who performed miracles
2	Brought the faith to unbelievers or backsliders
3	Destroyed some terrible enemy of the faith
4	Cleansed the church and led it past a time of decay
5	Acted as a holy prophet or mouthpiece of the divine
6	Was martyred for the faith, dying with great miracles
7	Performed a great miracle on behalf of the divinity
8	Extinguished a heresy or rival faith
9	Turned from persecutor to believer, with many miracles
10	Established a sacred institution or holy site

d12	How Are They Remembered Now?
1	A specific profession or role considers them a patron
2	People seek their intercession with a type of problem
3	One or more institutions were founded in their honor
4	Their relics are considered sovereign cures for a woe
5	Their descendants have a major role in the faith
6	They wrote a sacred text now much honored
7	They taught a secret doctrine cherished by the elect
8	They are the focus of a festival beloved by commoners
9	A small sect of clergy are dedicated to their memory
10	A significant sub-group thinks they were heretical
11	A major pilgrimage site is related to their life
12	They're bitterly hated by a rival faith or group

d20	Symbols Used to Reference the Saint
1	The mutilated body part they suffered at their death
2	A particular miracle they performed more than once
3	A tool or implement symbolizing their past life
4	An angel or sacred being that was their helper
5	A sickness they suffered from or cured in others
6	An object related to a major miracle they performed
7	The flag or insignia of their home city or region
8	A sacred mandala or symbol of their teachings
9	A king or great noble converted by the saint
10	The deformity they were born with
11	A particular circle of devout followers who helped them
12	A sacred verse they used often as a model
13	Particular wounds they suffered for the faith's sake
14	The insignia of an institution they founded
15	The object used to martyr or torture them
16	A song or tune they composed for the faith
17	A particular devil or dire foe they overcame
18	The relic or item they used to destroy a wicked foe
19	Common substance related to a miracle they enacted
20	Broken insignia or seal of an institution they smashed

One-Roll Holy Festival Generator

A good sacred festival is one of the easiest ways to introduce a group of PCs to a particular religion. While such celebrations can serve as a colorful bit of background flavor, they also have use as sources of conflict and problems for the PCs to resolve.

A religious “festival” is not necessarily festive. Many religions have holy days defined by austerities, prayer, and refraining from secular pleasures. Festivals in wide public circulation tend to have a more generous focus, however, and even if their core revolves around personal austerities the common believers usually dress those things up in a mantle of drinking and celebrating.

Some festivals are rigidly set to particular calendar dates, while others might be triggered by astrological signs, official omens, or the whim of the hierarchy. Others might be contingent on some great victory of the faith or the performance of a divine miracle.

If you intend to use a festival as part of an adventure, you'll want to make sure you identify the problems it causes. Solving these problems may be difficult if they're tied up in the very religious context that the festival is celebrating; if the divine command is to run riot through a nonbelieving neighborhood, simply fortifying the target may not be enough to get the believers to give up.

d4	How Open is the Festival?
1	Even non-believers are invited to participate in it
2	All believers have a role in the festival
3	Only clergy or special believers participate in it
4	While heretical, it's still secretly held by some believers

d6	How Significant is the Festival?
1	It's the faith's biggest religious occasion of the year
2	It's universally celebrated as a critical festival
3	Everyone celebrates it, though not all with great vigor
4	It's vitally important to specific region or sub-sect
5	It's important to the very pious, but not to most people
6	It's almost forgotten by most, but important to a few

d8	What Aspect of the Faith is Celebrated?
1	Generativity, the creation of what the god embodies
2	The origins of the faith and the holy events around it
3	A particular critical holy figure of the past
4	Destruction of things inimical to the god or the faith
5	A particular holy time related to the god's activity
6	A historical miracle or salvation rendered by the god
7	Winning the god's favor through the festival's rituals
8	The historical destruction of an enemy of the faith

d10	Why Do People Enjoy the Festival?
1	Sexual license is openly or tacitly permitted during it
2	The rich are expected to spend heavily on public charity
3	Believers unite for some grand demonstration of faith
4	The rituals involved are dramatic and exciting for all
5	Social distinctions are lifted as part of the festival
6	Peacemaking and settling quarrels are part of the rites
7	It takes place during a local time of harvest or wealth
8	Believers tacitly compete in public displays of faith
9	Debts of some kind or scope are forgiven then
10	Important religious roles are initiated or granted then

d12	What Problem Does the Festival Present?
1	It's extremely expensive to celebrate it correctly
2	Some group is greatly antagonized by the festival
3	Violent disputes over which rituals are correct for it
4	The rituals are very dangerous to certain participants
5	It forces neglect of a vital job or social duty for a time
6	The festival is so rowdy it's almost a civil disturbance
7	Outsiders take advantage of the fete's charity or rules
8	It can produce dangerous magical or mental side-effects
9	It requires the sacrifice of some very rare object
10	There are grave consequences for erring in its rituals
11	Local secular authorities really hate the festival
12	Piety in it is demonstrated by acts of dangerous excess

d20	Notable Elements of the Festivities
1	Raucous public processions with idols or tokens
2	Large-scale art performances in honor of the festival
3	Ritualized street fighting between neighborhoods
4	Abundant offerings of particular foods and drinks
5	Time spent in gatherings of extended family
6	Acts of severe personal mortification for participants
7	Community re-enactments of the festival's focus
8	Competitions between parishes or groups of believers
9	Display of a particular holy relic usually kept hidden
10	Public mingling of the faith's elite with the commoners
11	Public omen-taking to discern the god's favor
12	Vicious attacks on nonbelievers or traditional enemies
13	A commodity or service allowed for sale only then
14	Considerable offerings made by believers to the church
15	A time-consuming, exhausting community ritual
16	Every household puts on a particular display
17	The retirement and replacement of a major hierarch
18	The construction of a temporary temple or shrine
19	Great displays of a relevant holy animal or symbol
20	Wild parties held by groups of believers

One-Roll Temple Generator

Temples usually share the same architectural and decorative grounding that the rest of the culture exhibits. If all the local buildings are square and made of mud brick, the local temple will probably at least vaguely resemble them. Differences will creep in when the temple has to serve different practical purposes than a dwelling, or wishes to emphasize some doctrine or holy trait.

Aside from an idea about how a temple looks, it's also important to be able to quickly characterize its occupants and activities. The tables below will let you quickly generate a particular temple, giving you an idea of what its clergy are like.

Usually, PCs seek out temples because they need something from them. Whether miraculous healing, political assistance, or sagacious advice, a temple can be expected to want something in return from petitioners. If the culture's fundamentally polytheistic, the local clergy may just expect a proper show of deferential worship toward the god and a fitting "gift". More exclusive faiths may not help an unbeliever at all unless they convincingly convert.

Only in the most categorically unfriendly situations, however, will a priest be totally unwilling to negotiate. If the right problem is solved or offering made, even unbelievers can enjoy holy grace.

d4	How Established Is the Temple?
1	It's quite recently constructed or established
2	It's relatively newly-made, but now part of the locale
3	It's been here for generations and is a part of the place
4	It was built as early as any temple to the faith here

d6	What Is Its State of Repair?
1	Meticulously well-kept and finely made
2	Very well-kept, sturdy, and carefully maintained
3	Shabby in places, but generally sound and intact
4	Poor condition, with many places in clear need of fixing
5	In severe disrepair, with parts likely to collapse soon
6	Partially ruined by time, neglect, or recent calamity

d8	What Architectural Features Does It Have?
1	A particularly splendid idol of the god
2	A sacred pool for purifying baths or oracular purposes
3	An unusually secure vault for relics and entrusted gold
4	It's considerably larger than other temples of its class
5	A monastery or other pious institution is attached
6	A secure ritual chamber for rites with restricted viewers
7	It's unusually well-fortified as a military strongpoint
8	A cluster of religious vendors and merchants nearby

d10	What Are Its Clerics Like?
1	Enthusiastic in their missionary efforts
2	Venal, corrupt, and interested only in money
3	Workaday, uninspired, but relatively dutiful
4	Whipped up into an unhealthy degree of zeal
5	Fractious, carping, and hating each other
6	Sincere and earnest practitioners of their faith
7	Pragmatic power-players in local politics
8	Given to monastic isolation and avoiding the world
9	Either arch-traditionalists or wild-eyed reformers
10	Roll again; two groups with different attitudes

d12	What Is the Chief Priest's Worst Problem?
1	He's got a serious running feud with the local lord
2	The temple is direly in need of money
3	He's got an unwholesome appetite for carnal pleasures
4	He's trying to expand or repair the temple
5	He owes a serious favor to the local secular lord
6	One of his priests is an intolerable plague to him
7	His clerical superior is trying to get him defrocked
8	He fears his god is angry with him for some deed
9	He's having a forbidden relationship with someone
10	He's lost or embezzled money or a holy relic
11	His position is being threatened by an underling
12	He's helpless to aid the community with a big problem

d20	What Is Its Current Situation?
1	An elaborate holy ceremony is currently underway
2	A rich local is making an offering to the temple
3	Sexual impropriety is happening among the clerics
4	An outside priest is trying to reform the local practice
5	A new chapel or altar is being constructed
6	A holy relic is being translated to the temple
7	Hostile local thugs are making trouble for the priests
8	The temple is leaning on somebody who owes it
9	A recent natural calamity has damaged the shrine
10	A new leader is being selected or elected
11	The temple is being expanded or improved
12	The shrine is raising money for some cause
13	The peasants are complaining about temple fees
14	A clerical superior is in town for a friendly visit
15	The chief priest is direly sick or gravely wounded
16	An unexpected miracle has recently occurred
17	Temple valuables have recently been stolen
18	A new priest is making trouble with the locals
19	Harshly ascetic rituals are underway for the clerics
20	A supervising cleric is prosecuting some error or loss

One-Roll Cleric Generator

If you have a temple, you probably need a high priest. The tables below can be used to generate a cleric on short notice, giving a general idea of their character and current interests. The table for current ambitions is written to provide an immediate, situational need for the cleric, but if the PCs are meeting someone who wouldn't likely be currently neck-deep in some other necessity, you can use the results as a general hint about their overall goal.

When you make up a cleric, try to hook any traits to the particular religion they follow. A cleric who's constantly drunk, for example, might be perpetually tipsy on the sacred juice of a holy

berry beloved by their god. Such intoxication may be inconvenient, but it's considered vaguely sacred by his superiors, and so he keeps it up. Such a connection helps emphasize the fact that the NPC is a cleric and that their faith has some qualities beyond a convenient source of fantasy healing magic or potential cult recruits.

As with all NPCs, make sure the clerics you make want or need something. It's much easier to GM their interactions with the player characters if the NPC has a particular goal that the heroes might be able to help them achieve... or one that the PCs are quite visibly threatening.

d4	How Old is the Cleric?
1	Abnormally youthful for their position in the faith
2	Young and relatively early in their career
3	A mature cleric at the peak of their abilities
4	Elderly and with a long history in their profession

d6	Why Did They Become a Cleric?
1	They were a foundling or orphan taken in by it
2	Youthful zeal or enthusiasm for the divinity
3	Pragmatic decision that it was the best option they had
4	The role was a family tradition or parental inheritance
5	Received a vocation after a secular career or role
6	Forced into it by circumstances or other compulsion

d8	What Is Their Strongest Grace?
1	An unflinching belief in their god and their doctrine
2	A great ability to charm and inspire others
3	Great powers of leadership and organization
4	Profound erudition and knowledge of the faith
5	Dauntless physical courage and intellectual bravery
6	A deep and easily-perceived compassion for others
7	Machiavellian talent at intrigue and politics
8	Unbreakable moral rectitude and integrity

d10	What Is Their Most Serious Vice?
1	An excessive love for carnal pleasures
2	Refusal to respect or heed any non-believers
3	A dangerously impractical idealism
4	Wrathfulness against those who oppose them
5	Cowardice in the face of believable threats
6	A lack of any true belief in their adopted role
7	Avaricious love of wealth and personal comforts
8	Venal willingness to buy and sell their honor
9	A rebellious nature that defies superiors and rules
10	Fundamentally poor judgment of risks or perils

d12	What Are They Trying to Accomplish?
1	Attempting to make a pilgrimage to a holy site
2	Collecting funds for a sacred cause
3	Preparing for an expensive holy ritual
4	Seeking fasting and self-denial as purification
5	Trying to win new converts or inspire existing ones
6	Carrying out a religious duty the community expects
7	Attempting to recover something stolen or confiscated
8	Seeking to hide a recent sin or error of judgment
9	Trying to collect something owed to the faith
10	Carrying a message for a believer or a fellow cleric
11	Fleeing the anger of some dangerous greater power
12	Trying to help a fellow believer in need of aid

d20	A Visible Trait They Display
1	An ostentatious holy symbol of their faith
2	Constant fondling of their sacred symbols
3	Relentlessly calm, benevolent outward demeanor
4	Always dropping lines from the sacred texts
5	Praises their god reflexively during conversations
6	Shabby and ill-kept habit and person
7	Scars or signs of physical hardship and asceticism
8	Extremely worldly and irreligious comportment
9	Makes holy gestures against evil constantly
10	Always pressing the faith on non-believers
11	Visible resentment toward superiors or local nobility
12	Inappropriately luxurious or revealing clothing
13	Missing an eye, hand, or other organ
14	Exceptionally handsome or well-favored
15	Loud, physical, blunt manner of behavior
16	Thoroughly emaciated or grossly obese
17	Rigid, meticulous precision in appearance and manner
18	Sickly-looking or tubercular aspect
19	Smells constantly of incense and like clerical substances
20	Prone to regular drunkenness or other intoxication

Structuring the Faith

The next step in creating your religion is to discern its organizational structure. This is not just an exercise in clerical paper-pushing; this is your chance to identify the important NPCs that the player characters will be interacting with and figure out just where the PCs might need to go in order to get particular favors or deal with certain foes.

Most fantastic religions tend to be rather flat in play. The PCs go to a priest, and if a priest can't give them what they need, they go to a nebulously bigger priest. There is little relationship between clerics of the same faith, and the interests of one priest are rarely reflected in any actions or obediences from another.

This is a regrettably wasted opportunity for a GM. In all but the smallest religions or most atomized faiths, a creed is an *organized* thing. It has a basic structure, it has general goals, and it has resources it uses to obtain those goals. If the PCs want something from a religion, be it a beneficial miracle or the good offices of a bishop-prince, this organization can tell them not only who to go to, but also what sort of favors or payment will be required in turn.

And just like every other organization developed by humanity, a religion will know its share of internal tensions, personality cults, feuds over personal slights, and soullessly enthusiastic status-seeking. Every problem, foible, and perversity found in a modern office setting can be found somewhere in a sufficiently large faith. Brother

Josephus makes Brother Annias rebuild all the ritual wand-fascas with thirteen wands instead of eleven not only because he thinks it more appropriate for the rites, but because he has a kickback arrangement with the dealer in religious goods who's supplying the wands. And in turn, Brother Annias hates Brother Josephus not only for the endless supply of petty tasks around the temple, but because Josephus monopolizes the charity of a rich widow who's always giving luxuriant gifts of wine and food to the shrine.

These organizational fissures and conflicts are a gold mine of adventure content for GMs. Not only with a religion as a whole have its goals and ambitions, but individual temples, and individual priests and clergy within those temples, will all have their own desires and wants. Not all of these will always be congruent with each other, and the sparks when they conflict are precisely those points where the interfering hand of a PC pantheon can make a difference.

When building the religion's structure with the tools in this section, keep a careful eye out for these conflicts and goals. It's not important to draw up a detailed hierarchical chart of major prelates from the pontiff on down. It is important to know what the top few goals are that any given priest of the faith is likely to have. You can't be sure which NPC of the faith the players are going to meet next, but if you have a general template of ambitions for the religion, you'll be equipped to handle the surprise.



An Example of Building a Faith

A GM is relaxing with the *Lexicon* and decides to make up a faith. They have an active *Godbound* campaign, but they don't have any immediate need for a new religion. They just think it'd be fun to roll one up, so they take dice in hand and decide to roll up a sinister faith that might be useful as an antagonist sometime in the future.

According to the dice and the tables in the prior section, it's a dark god of Oblivion, specifically oriented toward understanding ultimate nullity and its secrets. Its cult has many reliable supernatural resources, it uses a stylized geometrical figure for its symbol, it imparts its will through seasonal oracles, is a personified avatar of ultimate negation, and its cult began when a brilliant saint rescued it from general obscurity.

It doesn't take much creativity to make a dark god out of those results. The GM dubs it Null, the Knower of Ends, with a stylized zero symbol as its mark. It is depicted as a sexless, faceless humanoid figure who grants powers of cold, darkness, and forgetting to its acolytes, who hold midwinter rites to discern its will.

The GM uses the festival generator to learn more about these rites. It turns out the priests of Null invite even non-believers to participate in them, where they celebrate the destruction of memory and thought, aligning themselves with Null and letting its purpose unconsciously guide them. Believers compete in drinking draughts of forgetting or engaging in actual ritual lobotomy, and even non-believers may participate in hope of Null relieving them from tormenting memories or thoughts. Some die in the process. The temporary amnesia and forgetting induced by the rites produces wild, uncontrolled behavior, and bands of frenzied Nullists sometimes become a public hazard at this time.

To learn more about the saint that brought the faith to the wider world, the GM rolls on the appropriate table. It appears that Saint Narcissa was a woman and a courtesan in an age when Null's power had been forgotten and the world was burdened with too much knowing. Narcissa was plagued by a life of regrets and sorrows, and spent her great wealth in unearthing the faded principles of Null and discovering the black drink that excised memory. The wine-cup is her symbol, and the monastery of forgetfulness where those who longed for Oblivion sought her remains a great holy site and pilgrimage destination among Nullists.

Null's function in ordinary life is limited, but the GM can see the appeal of forgetfulness and sorrow-ease among petitioners who've suffered tragedies and hardships. The GM also decides that Null can accept offerings of traits or mental elements that a petitioner seeks to erase, such as unacceptable urges, burdensome mental illnesses, and driving compulsions. These beneficial qualities of Null are likely enough to earn it at least a small, situational following among people, to say nothing of the inducement that Null's less benign blessings can provide.

With that in mind, the GM decides that Null is a national faith, known widely in the region where Saint Narcissa promulgated its worship but largely unknown outside of it. To decide how the church is organized, the tables on the following pages are consulted.

It appears the faith is structured by functional groups with a steep, rigid hierarchy. Its priests are expected to be zealously obedient to their superiors, and advance through seniority and years of service. The GM decides to run with this and determine that Null actually has two separate hierarchies, one a "public" hierarchy of priests dedicated to forgetfulness and the lifting of mental bur-

dens, and the other a secret hierarchy of priests dedicated to the mysteries of cosmic Oblivion and the unmaking of all things. The GM can think of a number of ways these two hierarchies could interact, but decides to put the final determination off until after the religion rolls its defining tags.

According to the next table, the public leader of the faith has full control over the Nullist religion, so long as she does not offend too many of her subordinates. The Nullist faith appears to be on tenuous grounds, as the only pontiffs selected are those acceptable to the secular powers where they operate. Each pontiff chooses her successor from these candidates, and they maintain their authority for so long as they can perform the great supernatural miracles expected of a grand high priestess of Null.

The GM could now roll for some large and small-scale conflicts related to the Nullist faith, but they decide to roll the religion's tags first, to get a better idea of what kind of troubles this creed might be having. The results indicate *Missionary Zeal* and *Syncretists*. The Nullists are tremendously eager to spread Oblivion and they tend to represent other gods as aspects of Null, or characterize service to these other deities as somehow related to revering Null itself.

With these tags the GM can now decide how the two hierarchies of the Nullist faith interact. The public hierarchy is driven to spread the word of Null and bring healing forgetfulness and comfort to the multitudes. Every community ought to have at least one diligent priest of Oblivion to shepherd the many and help them abandon what they no longer require. Meanwhile, the secret hierarchy is determined to banish the false delusions of other gods, showing how all of them are ultimately no more than veils before the consuming emptiness of Oblivion. Only when everything is abandoned and all selfhood is lost in the perfect stillness of Null will creation truly know peace.

The higher-ranking priests of the public hierarchy are aware of the secret one, and view it as a higher, nobler order reserved for the most zealous of their number. Public hierarchs cooperate with the commands of their secret compatriots, and even the public pontiff is actually in the service of a secret, hidden high priestess selected by the parallel cult. They confuse the matter to outsiders, acting as if the secret clergy are simply members of the same hierarchy of authority who are merely more dedicated to ascetic practices and seclusion. Even low-ranking priests of Null will not fully understand the difference between the two orders.

A sect of determined cultists of Oblivion makes for an easy antagonist for most groups of PCs, and the GM won't have to think too hard to come up with ways the Nullists might be a problem. As it's not a particularly important religion where it exists, the GM can also just casually slip in mention of a temple or priest during play without begging the question of why the players never noticed the faith before.

As a final step, the GM takes a moment to draw up combat statistics for a few sample Nullists: ordinary priests, dangerous secret sectarians, and major cult arcanists. Gifts of Entropy, Madness, and Knowledge might all fit different aspects of Null, along with Night and Winter. The most powerful arcanists might be treated as actual Eldritch, while others might just have a selection of appropriate gifts and heroic human statistics. The GM also knows that summoned servants of Null might show up, and adapts a few Uncreated or summoned creatures for that purpose. Once complete, the cult can be inserted wherever the GM needs a quick foe for a game.

The Structure of the Church

These tools help you to decide how the church's hierarchy is organized, and how the various clerics and lay servants relate to each other. Some faiths might be rigidly hierarchical and unified, with every priest in a direct line of command up to the ruling body or pontiff, while others might have multiple branches of authority, or independent clerics with no direct obedience to superiors.

A large faith might have multiple organizing principles that overlap or apply to different areas. Such complications usually work best when the branches are in conflict or seek different goals.

d10 Organizing Principle

1–2 **Geographic.** The faith is divided up into geographic parishes, episcopal sees, towns, administrative regions, or other chunks. Each section has its own hierarchy and leader who answers to the faith's head.

3–4 **Doctrinal.** There are multiple similar but different doctrinal schools within the faith, or sub-sects that can cooperate with each other. Each school has its own hierarchy, and its members are responsible to their school's heads regardless of where they're located.

5–6 **Transmission.** The original saints or holy founders each consecrated priests, who consecrated more priests in turn down on to the present day. Every cleric who traces their consecration back to a particular saint is part of that saint's hierarchy.

7–8 **Ethnicity.** The faith embraces more than one major ethnicity among its believers, and each ethnic group has its own hierarchy and leadership chosen from among it.

9–10 **Functional.** The faith has several separate hierarchies for different functions within the faith, such as administration, preaching, military affairs, doctrinal purity, or other roles. Priests answer to the hierarchy appropriate to their current assigned duty.

d4 Levels of Hierarchy

1 **Flat.** There are very few official distinctions between clergy, with a broad priesthood and only a few clerics in positions of authority over their brethren.

2 **Low Hierarchy.** There's only one official layer of hierarchy between the ordinary priest and the head of the faith. These arch-clerics might vary widely in actual authority, with only a few being important enough to count as major clerics of the faith.

3 **Medium Hierarchy.** Most priests answer to a local superior in charge of them and a number of their brethren. These middling hierarchs then answer to major clerics who are responsible for large chunks of the faith. These major clerics may answer to the pontiff of the faith or form its ruling council themselves.

4 **Steep Hierarchy.** Every cleric has an official rank and standing with numerous fine distinctions and grades. There may be a half-dozen nominal superiors between a village priest and the high pontiff.

d4 Expected Obedience

1 **Nominal.** Subordinate clergy are largely independent, able to do as they think right and responsible only for maintaining basic standards of clerical discipline and decorum. Troublesome priests may find their access to the church's resources limited by their superiors, but will not usually face direct punishment.

2 **Low.** A priest has specific duties or particular flocks to tend, and may be punished if they neglect these tasks or their parishioners. Their superior has limited authority to command them to do other work, however, or to dictate the details of how they will fulfill tasks.

3 **Moderate.** A priest is obliged to obey all orders from their superior that are not clearly contrary to the faith, regardless of whether they have anything to do with their normal duties. Failure to do so can result in punishment, including physical discipline or the loss of clerical status.

4 **High.** A priest is expected to be willing to face martyrdom or ruin at the command of their superior, and has few or no routes of recourse for protesting extreme demands made upon them.

d8 Most Common Avenue of Promotion

1 **Seniority.** Priests who last in their roles long enough without committing a grave error can expect to be promoted, at least up to a certain level.

2 **Elimination.** Beyond a certain point, the only way to advance is to remove the cleric above you, either through murder, blackmail, political machinations, or ritually-accepted challenges.

3 **Competence.** Junior priests may be promoted over senior ones if they are sufficiently competent and capable.

4 **Favor.** Promotion is exclusively dependent on the good offices of their superiors. No amount of good performance can overcome a personal dislike.

5 **Auguries.** Promotion hinges on appropriate omens or holy signs, with those so favored elevated at various times of the year, or when openings appear.

6 **Enterprise.** Junior priests need to found new churches, establish monasteries, open up new missionary fields, or otherwise expand the church's power if they are ever to be promoted into a leadership position.

7 **Secular support.** Some official faiths or heavily government-controlled religions may promote or demote exclusively based on a priest's standing with the secular powers of the state.

8 **Simony.** The ability to give wealth to the church is the primary driver for advancement, along with finding new avenues of profit to turn over to the faith.

The Head of the Faith

These tables indicate how the religion's head is chosen, the head's actual authority, and which clergy are eligible to lead the faith. Multicephalous churches might have different rules for each different head, or you could use these tables to determine how lesser hierarchs are chosen as well. For faiths run by councils or groups, these tables indicate how the council's members are selected.

d10 The Authority of the Head

1-2	Wholly Absolute. The head can make any decision regarding the faith's doctrines, behavior, or judicial determinations, and there are no openly-acceptable ways for the other clergy to push back.
3-4	Limited Absolute. The head has absolute control of one aspect of the faith, whether doctrines, use of the faith's wealth, clerical discipline, or some other sphere, but must recognize and deal with clerical opinion in other spheres, and can be overruled if they reach too far.
5-6	Directive. The head can make decisions about all aspects of the faith and its activities, provided those decisions don't anger a sufficiently large number of clerics.
7-8	First Among Equals. The head must recognize the interests of certain other major clerics in the faith, and can't enact sweeping commands without cooperation.
9-10	Figurehead. The head actually has little or no authority beyond his own personal domain, and perhaps not even then. The real authority lies in a college of important clerics, the local secular ruler, or a rigid book of doctrine that covers much and admits no changes.

d10 Candidates for the Headship

1-2	Lineage. The candidates for leadership must all belong to the right holy bloodline or be descended from the appropriate divine progenitor. All of these members might be theoretically valid pontiffs, but the numbers are usually restricted to senior clerics of the bloodline.
3-4	Seniority. Only the chief clerics of the faith are eligible to become its head, those hierarchs who fill specific holy offices or direct important cities or regions.
5-6	Secular Favorites. Only clerics who are acceptable to the most important nearby secular ruler are eligible to be selected. Most often, this ruler will give the senior clerics a list of acceptable candidates, concentrating heavily on those most cooperative with the authorities.
7-8	Capacity. Only clerics with the ability to do certain things are eligible. In worlds where magic exists, the ability to invoke clerical miracles might be required. In others, it might be limited to doctrinal masters, superb warriors, exemplars of a holy art, or some other capacity.
9-10	Random. Whether through a complex system of astrological auspices, lucky birth dates, oracular omens, or other sacred mechanism, the candidate pool is effectively random, and may consist of a number of candidates with very little to specially recommend them.

d6 The Method of their Selection

1	Elective. A college of high clergy get together and vote one of the candidates into office.
2	Scheduled. The acceptable candidates for leadership have assigned priorities in assuming the papal chair. This priority might be assigned by heredity, credited pious deeds, direct payment to the church, number of parishioners, or any other metric of the religion.
3	Random. One person is randomly selected from among the official candidates. The random method usually has something to do with the church's symbology.
4	Appointed. The current pontiff appoints his or her successor while still in office. When this attempt to ensure succession fails, the candidate with the strongest clerical support usually takes the chair.
5	Achieved. A particular trial or challenge is put before the candidates, and the most successful wins the position. These trials may be tests of physical might, magical prowess, doctrinal expertise, or the simple ability to offer the richest gifts to the faith.
6	Elimination. The candidates must kill each other or destroy each other's eligibility in some way, by eliminating their necessary resources or holy offices. This may be an overtly recognized or tacitly accepted process.

d6 The Duration of their Rule

1	Life. The head serves until he's dead. In some cases, this term might only last until senility or incapacitation, while other faiths might require the actual death of their pontiff before selecting a new one, with incapacitated leaders kept out of sight as much as possible.
2	Duration. The head serves for a specified number of years, usually less than ten. Such a head might be allowed to serve for more than one term if they have sufficient support.
3	Good Behavior. So long as the head exhibits whatever special quality of holiness, wisdom, or ascetic purity the faith expects of him, he can retain the office. When that fails, he is expected to either step down or be deposed by some official arm of the faith.
4	Divine Will. So long as the god wants her to serve, she will. The god's will may be perceived in extremely direct holy missives, or it might need to be inferred by auguries or omens.
5	Political Support. The head can retain their position as long as they maintain a sufficiently solid political base among the electors who choose the head. If that fails, they will rapidly be removed from office.
6	Capacity. The leader remains in office as long as he can continue to perform whatever miracles or feats of leadership qualified him in the first place. When his mind fails or his abilities desert him, he is replaced.

Religious Roles and Titles

When defining a religion, it can sometimes be difficult to figure out just what it is its clergy actually *do*. There's a general vague understanding that priests perform rites and monks stay in monasteries and popes give orders, but the day-to-day practices of clerics are usually not at the tip of a GM's tongue.

The opposite table provides a list of forty different roles that a cleric or church-affiliated believer might fill. Some of these might be official titles with appropriate rites of consecration, while others may just be practical duties assigned to them by their superiors or by the convenience of circumstance. You can use this table to identify the main job of any NPC cleric in need of quick definition.

Below, a table is provided for adding a complication to their current role. It may not be worth using that table for bit players and minor NPCs who aren't meant to provide much engagement at the table, but for more important NPCs, they can help texture the kind of wants and needs they may express toward the PCs. As with all significant NPCs, it's important that such clerics have some concrete need for the pantheon as an easy hook for driving engagement and giving reasons to interact with them.

Not every clerical prince responsible for the believers of a significant geographic region will be called a "bishop", of course. You may find it more plausible to use some of the alternate names and titles given on the opposite page when defining the structure of your newly-fashioned church.

One helpful practice in such cases is to maintain linguistic coherence in the titles of your clergy. If one type of priest is a "bonso", another type should probably not be an "archimandrite". Using the same general language or cultural feel for a religion helps it feel more coherent, unless you're making a specific point about the faith being composed of multiple cultural strains. A uniformity of language, style, and real-world cultural inspirations can help give you easy prompts when you need an unexpected detail.

The alternate name lists on the opposite page provide a general hierarchical ranking for the role and then lists of alternate titles and names for it. In reality, these names often refer to very different roles and practices. A Buddhist bhikkuni does not do the same things that a Catholic nun would do. For the purpose of building fantasy religions, however, you can redefine the specific roles of these titles to suit your own religion's needs and purposes.

d12	Current Situation With Their Role
1	They've lost or broken something critical to it
2	Their superior is greatly displeased with their work
3	They're frustrated and unhappy with their role
4	They're eager to display their skill and dedication
5	An important public display of work is impending
6	They've just been handed a seemingly impossible task
7	They're eager to deploy a new technique or idea
8	They're incompetent, and just faking it all
9	They're newly-appointed and trying to show aptitude
10	They yearn for a specific other role in life
11	They're aiming for their superior's job
12	They're trying to cover up a terrible mistake they made

d6	d20	Clerical Roles and Duties
	1	<i>Abbot</i> , leader of a monastery
	2	<i>Anchorite</i> , an enclosed hermit next to a church
	3	<i>Artisan</i> , practicing an art on the faith's behalf
	4	<i>Ascetic</i> , mortifying their flesh for their god
	5	<i>Augur</i> , conducting divinatory rites for the faith
	6	<i>Bishop</i> , leader of a major section of the church
	7	<i>Cantor</i> , singer of holy chants and sacred music
	8	<i>Cardinal</i> , one of those who choose the faith's head
	9	<i>Catechist</i> , teacher of newcomers to the faith
1-3	10	<i>Chaplain</i> , personal priest to an important person
	11	<i>Deacon</i> , administrative manager of property
	12	<i>Doorkeeper</i> , guarding holy sanctums
	13	<i>Eremit</i> , a consecrated hermit of a religious order
	14	<i>Guru</i> , a teacher-master of devoted followers
	15	<i>Indulgencer</i> , selling pardon for religious sins
	16	<i>Infirmarian</i> , a healer in monastery or hospice
	17	<i>Inquisitor</i> , seeking out deviance from doctrine
	18	<i>Lay Brother</i> , non-clerical servant or laborer
	19	<i>Librarian</i> , keeper of holy books and records
	20	<i>Master of Guests</i> , charged with caring for guests
	1	<i>Master of Novices</i> , teacher of novice monks
	2	<i>Mendicant</i> , wandering monk living by begging
	3	<i>Missionary</i> , bringing the faith to unbelievers
	4	<i>Monk</i> , or nun separated from worldly life
	5	<i>Oblate</i> , a child entrusted for monastic education
	6	<i>Papal Legate</i> , personal envoy of the faith's head
	7	<i>Pilgrim</i> , on a journey to specific holy sites
	8	<i>Postulant Monk</i> , an unproven monastic candidate
	9	<i>Prior</i> , a deputy abbot and daily manager
4-6	10	<i>Procurator</i> , logistical head of a monastery's needs
	11	<i>Prophet</i> , with visions and oracles for the faith
	12	<i>Refectorian</i> , cook and dining-hall master
	13	<i>Sacred Prostitute</i> , for church profit or holy rites
	14	<i>Sacrifice</i> , a sacred human sacrifice-to-be
	15	<i>Sacristan</i> , maintains a church for holy services
	16	<i>Scribe</i> , of holy works or church documents
	17	<i>Secular priest</i> , serving a church and parishioners
	18	<i>Templar</i> , a warrior-monk of the faith
	19	<i>Theologian</i> , refining subtle points of doctrine
	20	<i>Vicar General</i> , a bishop's representative deputy

Clerical Ranks and Names

The following headings describe some of the common functional roles within a religion's hierarchy and provide titles that you can use in your faiths. When choosing among them, keep in mind the cultural inertia of your own players; if they're familiar with Catholicism and you name the leader of your faith a "pope", they're going to expect his role to be similar to that of the Roman pontiff. If the pope of your faith is actually chosen for his might in single combat, you may need to make a point of clarifying that to the players.

The structural guides on the following pages use the genericized forms of the titles below. You should simply insert your own religion's titles in place of them wherever necessary.

Pontiff

These titles are for a singular head of a faith or supreme cleric. Religions that operate by councils usually are ruled by clerics who take titles from the bishop listings below, but it's not impossible that the faith might have multiple pontiffs who all are obliged to work together to run the church.

Titles: Caliph, Catholicos, Grand High Priest, Jagadguru, Patriarch/Matriarch, Pontifex Maximus, Pope, Prophet, Tianshi

Bishop

These are the princes of the church, the highest-ranking tier of clerics who are usually responsible for significant numbers of subordinates or who are charged with particularly important individual duties. There may be distinctions within this tier of leadership, such as archbishops responsible for the overall discipline and management of multiple other bishops, but even in this case, bishops rarely ultimately answer to anyone but the faith's head.

While the name will vary with the faith, the specific territory or sphere of control assigned to a bishop is his *episcopal see* or *diocese*. His authority runs only within his own see; normally, a hierarch can't order around priests belonging to other sees or use church resources not assigned to his domain. Usually it's up to the pontiff to decide when to create new episcopal sees, or when to change them.

Titles: Archbishop, Bishop, Cardinal, Episcopos, Ethnarch, Exarch, High Priest, Lama, Metropolitan, Pontifex, Primate, Zhenren

Priest

The day-to-day representatives of the faith to most believers, priestly members of the religion are set apart from lay believers in some way. This may be due to a special bloodline, a ritual of sanctification performed by a bishop, a family tradition of priestcraft, a period of special training, a demonstration of personal talent for the work, or some combination of the above.

In poor societies, it's not uncommon for priestcraft to be a side job for clergy. They work as farmers or hunters or other laborers as a general matter, but provide their special expertise to the community of believers when it is required. Wealthier cultures or ones with a more religious bent are more likely to make priests exclusively responsible for religious matters and support them via tithing, taxes, or rich personal offerings.

Priesthood does not always come with assumptions of moral excellence. For some religions, priestcraft is strictly a technical discipline. Expertise consists of being able to perform the rites correctly and conduct all the necessary ceremonies with skill and

effectiveness. The personal moral qualities of the priest might be very secondary to that, and they may not even be particularly virtuous among their neighbors. Other faiths place a much higher premium on clerical virtue, and might disqualify persons purely based on their sinful or unseemly actions.

While specific terms vary with culture, many priests are specifically responsible for the religious needs of a group known as their *parish*. A parish is usually attached to a specific church, which serves a specific village, town, or region. The "parish priest" is the village priest of gaming tradition, who provides the daily services and special ceremonies the locals require. A parish priest usually answers to the bishop in whose diocese his parish is located.

Some priests do not have responsibility for a parish, but are instead assigned responsibility for a particular duty or role within the church. They report to a bishop or other higher cleric, but otherwise carry out jobs too minor to be a bishop's responsibility but too important to entrust to lay servants. Other priests are assigned to particular wealthy families or important persons as spiritual advisors and personal chaplains, and are supported out of the wealth of their patrons.

Titles: Alim, Archpriest, Augur, Bonso, Curate, Elder, Fangshi, Flamen, Granthi, Guru, Herbad, Hieromonk, Libationer, Mobed, Monsignor, Pastor, Presbyter, Priest/Priestess, Pujari, Purohit, Rector, Reverend, Vicar

Monastic

A monastic, known more commonly as a monk or a nun, is a type of cleric dedicated to a specifically religious lifestyle. While most priests are obliged to deal with lay believers and live in the secular world, monastics commonly live in secluded monasteries, convents, hermitages, or other isolated communities dedicated exclusively to religious purposes. Most avoid contact with the secular world whenever possible, and spend their time in manual labor, prayer, and religious rites. Many monasteries seek to be entirely self-sufficient, producing everything the monks require with their own labor. Others take abundant advantage of taxes or tribute levied on surrounding believers, or have families of secular farmers enserfed to the monastery's service.

Monastics are not necessarily priests. They may not have the right to conduct the same religious rites or have the same responsibilities toward lay believers that priests bear. Some may be ordained as priests in order to serve the religious needs of their fellow monastics, but it is common for monastics and priests to have different religious duties within a faith.

Specific monks charged with ruling or managing a monastery are generally known as abbots or abbesses. An abbot usually has absolute authority over the discipline and conduct of his own monastery, within whatever rules or guidelines exist for them within the faith. It's not unknown for some abbots to be largely secular figures, making use of the monastery's productive land and monkly labor to enrich their own person or families.

Abbatial Titles: Abbot/Abbess, Acharya, Archimandrite, Choro, Chuji, Fangzhang, Hegumen/Hegumenia, Juji, Kenpo, Shaykh, Zhuchi

Monastic Titles: Ailak/Aryika, Bhikku/Bhikkuni, Friar, Gelong/Gelongma, Monk/Nun, Talib, Muni, Perfectus, Sohei

Organizational Structures

Below you'll find some basic organizational patterns for setting up your religion. The details will vary based on the tags you might've rolled for the faith or the specifics of its leadership, but you can use the patterns as basic guidelines for how the religion ought to run itself in a particular region.

Ranks in each religion are described with the general terms given on the prior page. The specific titles for these roles will vary with the individual religion. Potential tweaks for the structures are also suggested, should you want to twist things around a little.

Multi-Realm Religions

A faith that spans multiple realms or worlds may have a nominal Pontiff in charge of it all, but it's likely to be effectively run by Bishops on each individual world. The sheer distance between the head of the faith and the local princes of the church will leave each of them the effective rulers of their private domain, even if they're obliged to give formal obedience or tribute to the distant Pontiff.

Beneath these planetary Bishops there is likely to be a subordinate level of regional Bishops responsible for individual geographic regions or organizational subdivisions. Within each episcopal see there will be numerous individual churches and associated parishes, each with their Priest, along with additional Priests assigned to assist the Bishops, serve as chaplains to the elite, or perform duties too important or complex to leave to lay workers.

Monastics exist outside the parish structure, their Abbots reporting to the local Bishop or to the Abbot of whatever monastery originally founded theirs. A well-run monastery can be extremely profitable due to the goods they and their lay workers produce.

Tweaks: Each planet or realm doesn't have a single Bishop, but instead has a council of Bishops that together report to the Pontiff. The head of the faith isn't a singular Pontiff, but instead is a council made up of all the planetary Bishops. Each planet has its own Pontiff and they work together loosely to advance the faith.

Global Religions

A religion that exists in multiple nations on a single world is usually organized along national lines. The stronger the secular authorities, the less likely that there's a single Pontiff with unified authority over all the national churches; secular lords do not like foreign leaders controlling important local institutions. It may be that each national church has its own Pontiff who works together with the others in more or less effective harmony. The Pontiff of the original or founding branch of the faith might have greater respect or standing, but his authority will depend on how much ability the local rulers have to control their own territory.

Within each nation, control is usually given over to multiple Bishops, normally divided by geographic regions that mostly match secular lines of control. It's theoretically possible for a Bishop to have an episcopal see that crosses borders, or even to be responsible for parishes or sees in completely different nations. In some cases this may be a real authority, while in others they may be Bishops in name only, the titular heads of churches that have been wiped out or independent for centuries.

Below each Bishop is the usual array of parishes and Priests and monasteries. Those within a specific nation may have a very different style of worship than those of a neighboring domain, and there

may be considerable heat between them over "proper" methods of worship. As Bishops are usually drawn from the clergy of the nation they serve, they'll tend to strongly support local practice and doctrinal interpretations.

This is not always the case, however, and if the Pontiff is strong and the secular rulers are weak, it's not unknown for a completely foreign Bishop to be put in charge of a see in a different nation. Such imposed leaders may view local practice as little better than rank heresy, and end up in a running battle with their own Priests. Clergy who attain to that level of the hierarchy, however, are usually pragmatic enough to avoid unwinnable fights. Even so, not all have the discernment to identify a fight that cannot be won.

Tweaks: The religion is global, but divided into so many interpretations that it is effectively a National or even a Regional Religion. The religion used to have a strong Pontiff but their authority is being challenged by emboldened secular rulers. The Pontiff has very weak control over national churches but has a personal force of enforcers or important holy persons that can be deployed at critical points.

National Religions

The religion exists only within a particular nation or ethnic group, though it's pervasive throughout that region. It's normally lead by a single Pontiff who is assisted by multiple Bishops in running the various provinces and regions that make up their episcopal sees. Beneath the Bishops, Priests and their parishes provide day-to-day religious services for the believers.

A national religion may be nominally part of a larger faith, or a sect within some greater tradition of belief. In practice, it runs its own affairs so completely that foreign co-religionists have no influence over its operation.

A national faith that's tightly bound to a particular ethnicity usually has little or no missionary outreach. Those that just happen to be most popular in a single nation may be more vigorous about seeking new converts over the border.

Tweaks: It's fighting for influence with the national religion of a neighboring state, which believes basically the same things. It's a young faith eager to expand into new regions.

Regional Religions

The religion exists only in a specific area. It might be as large as a province within a greater nation, or it might be the purely local cult of a specific town or tribe. There may be a single Pontiff leading it, or it may be run by a group of Priests. Its geographic reach is usually small enough that there's not a practical need for Bishops; the dozen or so parishes that serve all of its believers are all close enough and small enough to be managed by a single Pontiff.

Such a regional structure may also represent a new missionary branch of a larger church, too distant from its parent faith to take much leadership from it. Such a missionary endeavor usually begins with a few brave Priests, with a survivor eventually elevated to Bishop once the mission is established and firm control is needed.

Tweaks: The religion is a remnant of a much larger one, and its clergy have inherited titles that are much grander than their current condition would admit. The religion is effectively a personality cult around its inspiring Pontiff.

Institutional Structures

A big-picture understanding of how a religion is structured can be helpful, but most GMs have more use for the details of how a specific religious institution works. This section describes how a temple, a monastery, a chaplaincy, a village shrine, or other specific site is expected to operate.

Major Temple

A major religious shrine is usually run by a Bishop or is his official seat of office. The Bishop himself may conduct important religious rites and receive important visitors, but the day-to-day operation relies on a large staff of Priests. These clerics conduct daily rituals, oversee the temple's finances, and will be the first point of contact for ordinary petitioners. Some Priests will be special assistants to the Bishop charged with carrying out missions or overseeing projects, and may have considerable borrowed authority.

Many major temples have attached structures or institutions. It's not uncommon for a major temple to have an attached monastery, or to keep a hospice for the poor, or have dormitories for pilgrims. A major temple may expand into an entire community of lay workers and priests, all orbiting around the central shrines.

Minor Temple

This is a standard urban or town temple, adequate to provide religious services for the local believers but not intended as a major pilgrimage site or administrative center. It will usually be staffed by at least one Priest, and there will usually be several to handle all the jobs necessary to keep the ceremonies running and the temple in good maintenance. Smaller or poorer temples may rely on lay servants and volunteers instead for the upkeep.

Minor temples usually don't have the space or importance to include other institutions as part of their adjacent physical structure, but they'll usually know where their services can be had, and may work to support them out of the offerings they receive.

Petitioners will usually negotiate with the temple's priest directly for whatever services they require. Payment will be used to maintain and expand the temple, conduct more expensive rituals, support needy believers, and pay tribute to the Bishop's needs.

Village Shrine

For petty hamlets and backwoods villages that don't even qualify for a minor temple, local believers may have erected a small shrine. These shrines rarely consist of more than a single room, and often may be nothing more than a pile of stones or particular glade within a nearby forest. The area may have been consecrated according to the rites of the faith, but it simply serves as a meeting-place for the lay believers when they need a place to worship.

Any Priest serving at a village shrine will probably be a poor local who performs priestly work as a sideline to their main labor. They may not even be a proper Priest at all, but only the best substitute the locals can get. In other cases, a Priest from a nearby temple makes regular visits to the village to provide sacred services. PCs in need of holy assistance are unlikely to get much here.

A village shrine may be the focus of an official rural parish, in which case they're going to have a presiding Priest, however rustic he may be. If they're simply outworks of a larger town parish, they're more likely to get a visiting Priest instead.

Monastery

Most monasteries are intended to be self-sufficient, and will be placed where there's enough fertile land to support agriculture. It's not uncommon for monasteries to be located in remote and wild places, either to civilize them for the glory of the faith or to ensure that the monks are not disturbed by worldly affairs. Monasteries are usually either strictly segregated by sex or made exclusive to a particular sex. Religions with no particular sexual strictures may mix the membership in their institutions.

Monasteries will normally be run by a single Abbot, with a deputy Monastic to handle daily management. Hierarchy within a monastery is usually fairly flat, with individual Monastics responsible for particular duties, but rarely in positions of general authority over their brethren. There may be a few Priests within the monastery to handle rituals only Priests are allowed to perform, but these members are usually Monastics as well, and not necessarily leaders.

Monasteries normally have at least one temple for rituals, dormitories for the Monastics, separate guest quarters for pilgrims and wayfarers, refectories for meals, hospitals for the sick, agricultural outbuildings, and all the other necessities for a self-contained community. Contact with the secular world is usually discouraged.

Some monasteries serve as *de facto* schools for the children of wealthy believers. In return for an offering, the children are accepted as novice monks or nuns, taught their lessons, and permitted to return to the secular world when of age. Other monasteries are polite and comfortable retirements for elderly nobles, grantees who have lost favor, or well-born women who prefer not to marry. Joining such a monastery with rich gifts may provide a kind of protection from the roil of secular politics or familial expectation.

Other monasteries serve more as prisons for failed usurpers, troublesome offspring, clergy due for clerical punishment, or unlucky nobles "encouraged" to take vows. Such monks may be treated with more or less degrees of severity by the Abbot, but they're usually kept under sufficiently close guard to ensure that they do not reconsider their religious vocation. It's not unknown for such monastics to have a regrettably brief life in their vows.

Visitors will usually be greeted by a Monastic specifically charged with handling guests. Visitors will not normally be permitted to go beyond the guest quarters or otherwise disturb the Monastics. The Abbot may deign to deal with important visitors personally, but any business or needs that visitors may have is usually filtered through the Master of Guests.

Hermitage

A hermitage may simply be some desolate cave or stony pillar in the wastes where a solitary holy man contemplates the mysteries of the faith, or it may be an organized community of hermits who spend most of their time in their cells but emerge for common meals or religious services.

Isolation, asceticism, and prayer are the watchwords of most hermits. They almost never have any hierarchical standing, but they are usually revered for their personal holiness. PCs in need of powerful miracles in some remote region may need to seek out a hermit and perform whatever pious tasks he demands in return for his help. Since hermits shun worldly contact as a general matter, this may be more easily wished than accomplished.

Large-Scale Conflict Generator

Most religions you create should have at least one large-scale conflict currently facing them. This conflict not only shapes a religion's current behavior, it clues you as to what its leadership might want from the PCs, or what powers might be opposed to it. Conflict is the seed of an interesting adventure, and the more vigorous and interesting the conflict, the easier it is to use it at the table.

To generate the outline of a conflict, roll one die of each type and compare them to the tables below. The tables do not describe the precise details of the conflict; instead, they show what's at stake, where the conflict is coming from, and who is most involved in it.

It's up to you to personalize these results to the specific faith you've created and the location you've planted in it. You should also scale the conflict to the size of the religion. A problem that is overwhelming to a small provincial cult might not even register to a global mega-faith. The former might be threatened by the anger of the local baron, while the latter would need to face a multi-national compact of hostile crusaders to feel the same worry. Scale your own problems accordingly to fit what you need for a given faith.

As always, the results on these tables should be tweaked to fit your own specifics. Skip tables and adjust results as needed.

d4	Where is the Locus of the Conflict?
1	Internal. It's a conflict between members of the faith.
2	External. It's between the faith and nonbelievers.
3	Governmental. It's between the faith and a state.
4	Situational. Between the faith and harsh circumstances.

d6	What Are the Stakes of Failure?
1	The pontiff or leadership will lose power or be deposed.
2	Great hardship will afflict the common believers.
3	Divine wrath will smite them, or they think it will.
4	The hierarchy will be subordinated to state officials.
5	Long-cherished rights or great wealth will be lost.
6	Important allies or co-religionists will suffer or die.

d8	What Crucial Point Is In Dispute?
1	Wealth, either owed to the faith or held by it
2	Respect, and its standing and honor in wider society
3	Influence, and its support from the powerful
4	Territory, places where the faith is allowed to prosper
5	Independence, and the right to run its own affairs
6	Doctrine, and the preservation of a vital holy practice
7	Unity, and the coherence and cooperation of believers
8	Might, and the military strength held by the faith

d10	The Faith's Strongest Help in the Conflict
1	A cabal of fiercely pious nobles or government officials
2	The support of many earnest common believers
3	A mercenary chief or strong warlord with a pious streak
4	A group of merchant princes devoted to the faith
5	A phalanx of scholars and wise men from the faith
6	Ancient legitimacy and deep popular honor for the past
7	A fiercely-determined band of internal reformers
8	A stalwart group of steadfast traditionalist clergy
9	A foreign power who sees advantage in helping them
10	Divine favor for them, or popular belief in it

d12	The Greatest Immediate Peril in the Conflict
1	A powerful noble has a deep hatred for the faith
2	A charismatic apostate cleric now opposes it loudly
3	A corrupt and selfish hierarch lies within the faith
4	A calamity of nature has struck at the worst place
5	The leadership is disorganized or incompetent
6	A powerful faction of commoners is hostile to the faith
7	The faith faces pressure from mercantile interests
8	Reckless reformers are tearing it apart from within
9	Hidebound traditionalists are blind to the danger
10	The leadership has completely misunderstood the peril
11	The faith has been impoverished by some recent woe
12	Divine disfavor smites it, or popular belief that it does

d20	Recent Flashpoints for the Peril
1	Someone has refused to render their usual tithes
2	An important temple has been pillaged or seized
3	A terrible divine omen was on very public display
4	A major cleric has been deposed and imprisoned
5	A group of common believers was massacred
6	A disruptive ancient holy scripture was discovered
7	A natural disaster struck an important holy site
8	An important group of clerics has gone schismatic
9	A band of believers was driven from their homes
10	Major resources or wealth were stolen from the church
11	The church's rights to particular property were defied
12	A major cleric appears to have gone mad or fanatical
13	A critical secular ally has fallen into desperate straits
14	A venerable clerical privilege is under attack
15	A rival faith is providing backing to rebels or heretics
16	A vital holy relic has been lost or is in schismatic hands
17	Common believers have been driven into exile by foes
18	Secular powers are punishing believers for their faith
19	A major former ally is now furious with the church
20	Roll again; the first roll was caused by the second roll

Small-Scale Conflict Generator

While large-scale conflicts help shape the dynamics of an entire campaign, sometimes a GM needs a smaller-scale problem for the PCs to solve. These tables can be used to create a specific problem or conflict pertinent to a single temple, monastery, religious community, or other individual location.

Large-scale conflicts often involve the tension of implacable socio-economic forces. These conflicts more often relate to the inability of a prelate to keep his cassock shut or an abbess to stop peeling her novices of their inheritances. They have more to do with individual personalities and their errors and failings.

Because they exist at a more personal level, they're often more approachable to players. The tension between secular authority and church freedom is rather abstract, but the fact that Lama Tenzin is a drunkard who can't reliably conduct a magical ritual critical to the PCs' interests is something much easier to relate to.

It's also possible to relate small-scale conflicts to the larger problems that strain an entire faith. If the peril the faith as a whole is facing is a progressive decay of moral standing, then a corrupt high priestess can stand in usefully as a representative of that blight, and a clue to the PCs about the deeper dangers facing the religion.

d4	How Long Has This Conflict Been Going On?
1	It happens almost immediately before the PCs arrive
2	It's a fresh trouble when the PCs first become involved
3	It's been going on for some time at the place
4	It's been a feature of life there for a long time

d6	Who Is The Antagonist?
1	The abbot, high priest, or other leader of the institution
2	A secular lord or official with influence on the site
3	A bandit, monster, or other dangerous outlaw foe
4	An important underling or sub-official of the place
5	A rich merchant or influential commoner in the area
6	A supernatural entity or hostile divine being

d8	What Is the Conflict About?
1	Wealth and the tangible fruits of the institution
2	Status, and who is to be most highly honored
3	Sex, and the carnal or matrimonial interests involved
4	Control of the institution and its <i>de facto</i> rule
5	Truth, and whether a particular belief is correct
6	Guilt, over the revelation or commission of a crime
7	Obedience to an outside power or clerical superior
8	Force and violence, wielded by the site or against it

d10	What Vice Is Chiefly Involved?
1	Lust; the illicit satisfaction of unacceptable urges
2	Wrath; the anger the antagonist has for someone
3	Pride; the antagonist's lust to be glorified and honored
4	Avarice; simple greed and desire for earthly goods
5	Sloth; someone is refusing to do their rightful duties
6	Gluttony; wild over-indulgence in an earthly pleasure
7	Envy; a bitter resentment over another's good things
8	Folly; someone has a terrible idea and is bent on it
9	Heresy; someone follows a deviant creed there
10	Rebellion; someone is defying their rightful superior

d12	Why Hasn't It Been Resolved Yet?
1	Those involved can't afford to let it be public
2	The involved aren't confident enough to press it yet
3	All involved would lose something if it were resolved
4	The site's superior powers are unable to intervene
5	All involved are just waiting for the right moment
6	The antagonist has no coherent opposition
7	A recent resolution attempt ended badly for all involved
8	The opposition is being bribed or threatened into peace
9	The opposition can't agree on how to resolve things
10	Stopping the conflict would have dire consequences
11	It was resolved, but the resolution didn't stick
12	It was resolved, but someone else took it back up

d20	How Is It Revealed to the Players?
1	A participant seeks the PCs out for help
2	They're caught in the antagonist's pursuit of the goal
3	A known friendly NPC is harmed by the conflict
4	The antagonist wants the PCs to help them
5	Something the PCs did or obtained is involved in it
6	The PCs stumble over documents that hint at it
7	The PCs discover remains or wreckage of the conflict
8	Someone mistakes the PCs for fellow involved sorts
9	The PCs see clear remains of its past activities
10	The PCs end up with a vital object related to it
11	Desperation has a participant asking help from PCs
12	Divine or supernatural events direct the PCs to it
13	It's somehow tied up in the current PC goal
14	The PCs recently disrupted something involved in it
15	One side is convinced the PCs are working for the foe
16	One side has something the PCs want or need
17	The struggle breaks out somehow in front of the PCs
18	A PC friend or patron tips them off about it
19	One side blames them for a recent setback it suffered
20	A PC associate gets drawn into it

Choosing Religion Tags

This section includes forty different *religion tags* for flavoring and customizing a faith. These tags aren't intended to define everything of importance about the creed, but they give a GM a few basic principles for coloring a religion and figuring out what matters are most likely to produce interesting conflicts for the heroes to resolve. Every religion tag includes a basic overview of the tag and five sets of adventure elements.

Enemies are NPCs related to the faith who are likely to serve as antagonists and hostile actors against the player characters. Even if their machinations do not directly involve the PCs, they're the kind of malefactors who are likely to draw the unkind attention of the average group of players.

Friends are NPCs who are sympathetic or helpful to the PCs, ones that the players are likely to want to help. They can be used as hooks to draw PCs into an adventure or make them aware of an interesting conflict. A GM might choose to flip their role, however, and make them the antagonists of the situation, much as they might choose to make a sympathetic Enemy. And PCs, of course, might find an Enemy just the sort of convenient ally they need for carrying out their own plans.

Complications are tweaks to the basic premise of the tag that add flavor and nuance to the situation. **Things** are particular macguffins or objects that might be important to the faith, and **Places** are the kind of backdrops and locations that play up the tag.

Using Religion Tags

The easiest way to use religion tags is to roll twice on the adjacent table, using 1d6 and 1d20 to generate two of the forty possibilities and then blending the two tags together. You might take an Enemy from both lists and then mix them together into a single NPC, or take a Complication from one and relate it to a Thing from the other. Using just a single tag can sometimes make a rather one-dimensional faith, while using more than two can be hard to synthesize. Of course, a faith with multiple branches or individual local churches might have different tags in different locations.

Some tags have implications for a faith's doctrine or clerical structure, and you might need to let them override results you've rolled or picked from other tables in this section. In those cases you might simply let the tag you rolled stand, or you might think of some way to blend both results into a more interesting situation.

When it comes to play at the table, the tags are intended to give you the raw materials to create interesting adventures. If you need an antagonistic NPC for your adventure, you just pull out a properly blended Enemy. If you need an interesting location relevant to the faith, you pick a suitable Place. If there's something precious that the antagonist wants to get her hands on, then you draw out a Thing from the tags. When needed, scale the results to the size of the religion, so it fits the scope of your immediate need.

As with any of the tables in this section, you should take the tag results as touchstones for your own creativity rather than straight prescriptions to follow. Their purpose is not to structure some implacably rational and tightly-designed organization, but to give you the kind of loose ends, stress points, and internal conflicts that make a religion useful to a GM who needs adventure grist and interesting problems to feed a hungry party of heroes.

d6	d20	Religion Tag
1-3	1	<i>Ancient Ways</i> , once different from now
	2	<i>Antinomian Strain</i> , rejecting all laws
	3	<i>Aristocratic</i> , reserved for the elite of a society
	4	<i>Ascetic</i> , shunning pleasures and comfort
	5	<i>Bad Leadership</i> , incompetent or blindly foolish
	6	<i>Caste Structure</i> , dividing believers into castes
	7	<i>Crusading</i> , seeking to spread by the sword
	8	<i>Dire Sacrifices</i> , requiring tremendous offerings
	9	<i>Dualist</i> , separating all into good and evil
	10	<i>Economic Role</i> , vital to the secular economy
	11	<i>Esoteric Doctrine</i> , known only to the elect
	12	<i>Ethnic Creed</i> , prevalent among one people
	13	<i>Failing Faith</i> , dying out due to some cause
	14	<i>Folk Religion</i> , rustic and simple in its ways
	15	<i>Forbidden Faith</i> , illegal to practice or preach
	16	<i>Gnostic</i> , believing in salvation through truth
	17	<i>Holy Grounds</i> , revering specific holy sites
	18	<i>Localized</i> , with different ways in many places
	19	<i>Materially Luxuriant</i> , reveling in fine things
	4-6	20
1		<i>Missionary Zeal</i> , keen to spread the faith
2		<i>Monastic Clergy</i> , separated from the world
3		<i>Monolatrists</i> , worshiping one god alone
4		<i>Multicephalous</i> , with multiple regional heads
5		<i>Mutilated Clergy</i> , bloody in self-sacrifice
6		<i>New Dispensation</i> , with a new doctrine
7		<i>Quietist</i> , retreating from the world
8		<i>Reformist Struggle</i> , divided and unstable
9		<i>Remnant</i> , once a far greater faith
10		<i>Restricted Membership</i> , reserved to the elect
11		<i>Rival Religion</i> , a constant problem for it
12		<i>Schisms</i> , splinter factions and sects abounding
13		<i>Simony</i> , with holy things bought and sold
14		<i>State Faith</i> , part of the secular government
15		<i>Stratified Practice</i> , different for different classes
16		<i>Syncretists</i> , absorbing other religions
17		<i>Underclass Faith</i> , followed by the lowly
18		<i>Upstart Underclass</i> , a route to social success
19		<i>Venality</i> , corrupted by money or power
20	<i>Vital Service</i> , one critical to society's health	

Ancient Ways

The religion is only the latest iteration of a faith that goes back beyond recorded history. Ancient temples and doctrines of very different kinds may still exist, abandoned after now-forgotten ages of reform and change. Fragments of these ancient ways may resurface, along with stranger practices less palatable to modern believers. Reformists may sometimes unearth these ways and insist on their revival.

- E Zealot restoring a bloody past, Heir to an ancient enmity, Head of a dark surviving sect
- F Eager temple archaeologist, Keeper of ancient wisdom, Guardian of an abandoned shrine
- C Restoring a vital relic requires long-lost ritual knowledge, Something sealed away with forgotten rites is now rising again, A seemingly-harmless ritual object actually has a terrible power
- T Precious relic of old, Lost book of vital holy scripture, Hidden trove of forgotten regalia
- P Desolate temple in a dead city, Shrine lost in perilous terrain, Temple buried beneath the layers of a growing city

Aristocratic

The faith is largely or exclusively practiced by the elite of the society, and believers from lesser classes are either unable to carry out the obligations of the faith or are prohibited from participating. Clergy of the faith may be spare children of the noble class who are bundled away into the religion to keep them out of political affairs, or they may be functioning members of the society's rulership with real authority over secular matters.

- E Cold-blooded aristocrat with only passing interest in religious concerns, Younger noble son embittered by his shelving, Carefully-placed agent of a major noble house seeking only their advantage
- F Unworldly high-born innocent only concerned with the faith, Grizzled political campaigner seeking quiet retirement in a monastery, Idealistic reformer seeking greater access
- C The religion actually requires a noble bloodline for certain ritual and pragmatic necessities, Commoners are forming illicit parallel congregations, High religious offices have no spiritual worth at all but are only political bargaining chips among noble houses
- T Fabulously costly regalia of a dead king-priest, Once-lost text proving the commoner bloodline of a major house, Tithe-trove of loot extracted from commoners
- P Cathedral-palace of a prince-bishop, Shrine adorned by generations of a noble house, Ornate ceremony attended only by nobility

Antinomian Strain

Some segment of the believers or clergy are antinomians, convinced they are above or beyond all moral laws. Some believe that this is due to their innate enlightenment, and that their every desire sanctified as the will of God. Others believe that moral and religious law is but a veil to be surpassed by the truly elect. This utter freedom is appealing to many adherents, including those with extremely ugly urges to indulge.

- E Divinely-sanctified psychopath, Cynical manipulator of the "free", Revolutionary against all morality
- F Well-intentioned crusader for liberty, Reactionary sectarian moralist, Victim of a cleric's unfettered desires
- C They're mostly reacting against very ugly and reprehensible moral laws, The faith is divided between antinomians and their unappealing moralist rivals, The faith is being backed by enemies of the society it is trying to deconstruct
- T Proof of a holy leader's horrible crimes against others, Treasure seized by amoral priestly thief, Indulgence document allowing the bearer to perform any one crime without repercussions
- P Orgiastic and violent religious festival, Beatific commune with dark underside, Decadent salon of highly intellectual degenerates

Ascetic

The faith tends to scorn material wealth and comforts, esteeming poverty, simplicity, and deprivation. Its shrines and regalia tend to be very simple and austere, though personal simplicity doesn't mean the faith has no political power. Kings and princes may have such ascetics as personal advisers and spiritual guides. Extreme interpretations of the faith favor painful penances and harsh personal austerities.

- E Obsessive zealot determined to extinguish many "luxuries", Idealistic extremist efficiently pursuing a totally impractical goal, Furiously envious ascetic who wants the rich to suffer
- F Humble forest hermit harried by greater powers, Inspiring noble-born model of self-restraint and austerity, Former decadent seeking redemption and avoiding any opportunities to sin
- C A faction of the faith is deeply luxury-loving via thin rationalizations, The faith is always pushing for idealistic but impractical laws, The ascetic rites change the priests in both positive and negative ways
- T Abandoned treasures of a formerly-rich cleric, Hidden wealth enjoyed by a hypocritical priest, Deed to vast temple land holdings used to support the ascetics
- P Harshly simple and uncomfortable monastery, Crude forest hermitage, Stark and bare monastic cell within a luxuriant noble palace

Bad Leadership

The faith is currently led by an incompetent head. They may be senile, corrupt, deranged, or simply a bumbling incompetent who ended up as leader through an unfortunate set of accidents. Simply removing the leader would result in some dire consequence, such as a schism between rival factions or the end of a crucial bloodline of leadership. Even so, their dictates, appetites, or foolish ambitions are hurting the church.

- E Clerical kingmaker puppeting the incompetent, Priestly careerist only interested in currying favor with the leader, Sinister lover or associate who has beguiled the leader
- F Capable but unpolitic rival candidate for leadership, Frustrated handler trying to guide the leader to reasonableness, Horrified clerical schemer who never meant for this nullity to become leader
- C The leader is seeking a goal vital to the faith's survival but doing it in a very stupid way, The leader's personal wealth or power are critical to the faith's health, The leader's rivals all hate each other more than him
- T Proof that the leader was illegitimately chosen, Treasure or relic that the leader allowed to become lost, Blackmail material that is keeping the leader's rivals from acting
- P Confused and poorly-run cathedral, Half-built folly ordained by the leader, Derelict and abandoned monastery

Crusading

The faith is fighting a war against a rival religion or hostile nation. They may be seeking to succor co-religionists, redeem land lost to the faith, or enforce their beliefs at the point of the sword. Believers are being vigorously encouraged to contribute both wealth and their own swords to the holy cause. The secular powers in the area may be enthusiastic supporters of the fight, or they may be simply unable to control the zeal of the believers.

- E Burning-eyed clerical crusader, Cynical secular lord exploiting the volunteers, Profiteer seeking gain out of the bloodshed
- F Fearless defender of a sympathetic cause, Hapless victim caught in the crossfire, Sectarian preaching less violent proselytization
- C The crusade has very sympathetic aims but may be going too far, The crusaders have unimpeachable doctrinal support for their bloodshed, The crusade is redirecting energy from an entirely different social problem
- T Payment for vital mercenary support, Precious offering made to support the crusade, Treasure hidden by locals killed in the fighting
- P Once-harmonious town now split in savage sectarianism, Burnt temple of the rival faith, Massacre site of infidels or captured crusaders

Caste Structure

The religion orders all its members, and perhaps all humanity in general, into different castes. Each caste has its purpose and role in this life and the next, and moving between castes is usually impossible. The burdens of the faith are rarely apportioned evenly, and some castes may be considered intrinsically contemptible. Other strata might provide all the clerics of a particular rank or role within the faith.

- E Indifferent hierarch who uses subordinates like cattle, Brutal priest who thinks the low-caste deserve whatever suffering they get, Revolutionary who seeks to destroy the entire society
- F Earnest striver seeking to advance within society, Discreet reformer of the caste system, Cynical broker of caste changes for due consideration
- C The caste system has some objective magical or spiritual grounding, Caste roles change with political or social changes, The current downtrodden were formerly the elite downtrodden
- T Evidence of a person's real and unsuitable caste, Tribute accumulated by a laboring caste, Hidden sacred texts that prescribe a very different caste arrangement
- P City quarter of carefully-separated caste groupings, Shrine meant for a specific caste's usage, Graveyard arranged by caste

Dire Sacrifices

Tremendous sacrifices are required of believers. In some cases, this might involve human sacrifice, while others may need to give up years of their lives, vast amounts of wealth, basic human pursuits, or other great costs. These costs may be exacted of only a few elect believers, or only clergy, or they may be universal prices among all adherents. This faith likely has relatively few believers, or else offers abundant compensations to its followers.

- E Brutal enforcer of the religion's price, Aspirant scheming to evade the price, Manipulator seeking to make someone else pay the price on their behalf
- F Luckless victim of the faith's exactions, Traumatized cleric who's paid the price, Sectarian offering a doctrine with a less brutal price
- C The price paid strengthens the faith directly in some way, Other people can be made to pay the price in the aspirant's place, The more a cleric pays the greater their standing in the faith
- T Tribute offered up as part of the price, Precious goods abandoned by those who need them no more, Potent relic created by terrible sacrifices
- P Grim temple stained by sacrifice, Cloister marked by the scars and losses of those who dwell in it, Ossuary or burial ground for those expended by sacrifice

The Heirs of Kham

The Dulimbaian cult known as the Heirs of Kham is unusual in that its adherents appear to be perfectly respectable followers of the Ren ancestor cults that dominate the religious activity of that land. In reality, however, the Heirs nurse a bitter and bloody hatred for the Ren and their rule.

The Heirs are the physical descendants of the original Akeh ideotribes of the Polyarchy of Kham that once controlled the land that is now Dulimbai. While many Akeh were physically transformed into Ren by the ancient Li-magic of the True King's invading armies and others were assimilated in the centuries since, there remain pockets of full-blooded Akeh commoners, to say nothing of slaves taken over the centuries of warfare with Patria. Most of these Akeh Dulimbaians are xiaoren like any other peasants, and are permitted the same access to the Great Examinations. After all, the principles of the divine True King are absolutely universal, and all peoples must be brought into conformity and participation with his sagely righteousness.

In practice, however, the tight familial ties of the Ren tend to squeeze out Akeh from the junzi aristocracy. The great families of Dulimbai make no more room for outsiders than they must. Most Akeh simply struggle to build up their own families to gain a similar well of support, but the Heirs are more embittered. Families that belong to the cult consider all Dulimbai to be their rightful patrimony, and the Ren to be tyrannical invaders who must be expelled. In order to do this, they seek to use Ren ancestor-worship against its own believers.

Heirs are ferociously determined to empower their own Akeh ancestors with elaborate ritual, prayer, and sacrifice. As reverence for one's ancestors is a cardinal virtue in Ren society, they can do so openly and in fact gain considerable social prestige for their pious and filial efforts.

In secret rites, however, they seek to turn the power of their ancestors against the Ren usurpers, coordinating the efforts of multiple cult families to invoke curses, blights, and monstrous eruptions against their political rivals. Such rituals are absolutely forbidden by Ren law, which only permits the petitioning of ancestors for blessings and personal favor, but the Heirs have developed numerous dark rituals that pervert these goals.

The secret clergy of the Heirs are the "Heralds," masked priests with mundane alter-egos who act as coordinators between cult families, minimizing the amount any one family knows about the others. The Heralds form small monasteries that are ostensibly quite orthodox ancestor-shrines, but are actually composed entirely of Heir clergy. Persistent rumors speak of an "Uncrowned King" who commands all Heralds and promises a glorious redemption of the Akeh once Heir junzi are in the right positions to surrender Dulimbai to the legions of Patria.

Unsurprisingly, the Patrian secret service is an enthusiastic backer of Heir families, using the Herald temples to funnel them gold and blackmail material on their junzi rivals. At the same time, Heir junzi in positions of importance often interfere with the anti-Patrian investigations of the Regent's censors and spies.

Dualist

The religion's deity is viewed in a dualistic way, with both positive and negative aspects, possibly represented by two completely different deities. One aspect focuses on all the good or beneficial facets of the god, while the other is responsible for all evil traits. The negative face may still be worshiped out of fear, or it may be despised as a rival twin. In cases where the god is thought to be two separate beings, sectarians may argue over which qualities belong with which deity.

- E Grim high priest of the negative aspect, God-bargainer trading good deeds for license to do evil ones, Renegade cleric who once followed the good aspect
- F Sympathetic priest of the negative face seeking to avert its attention, Upright and noble follower of the good god, Curious scholar asking dangerous questions about past doctrine
- C Which aspect is considered evil is based on which sect has the most power, The negative aspect is vital to human life in some way, The negative aspect is totally and violently rejected by all but the most depraved
- T Lost holy scripture full of terrible truths, Regalia of a now-proscribed priesthood to an illicit aspect, Dark artifact that is terrible but must not be destroyed
- P Hidden shrine to the negative aspect, Grand temple to both faces of the god, Fane to one aspect that used to belong to the other

Economic Role

The faith has a critical role in the economy of the society, serving some function with enormous economic influence. They may be bankers, large-scale land owners, owners of factories or artisan colonies, moneylenders, or the like. This role may be part of the faith or an accidental consequence of the faith's membership. The clerics may mask this role under a layer of doctrinal rationalization, or they may openly embrace it.

- E Greedy priestly moneylender, Avaricious cleric-administrator of a vital industry, Corrupt union boss arch-priest of a sacred profession
- F Unworldly master artisan-priest, Reformer seeking to use the role for greater good, Outside lord trying to pare back the faith's excessive worldly influence
- C The faith's origins lie in their economic role, Their economic importance was foisted on them by foolish or pious aristocrats, The religion is little more than a skin over the business
- T Earnings extracted from their clients or customers, Precious goods only they are allowed to trade in, Capital amassed for some great economic project
- P A temple that's more a counting-house, Extravagantly ornate religious buildings, Industrial site designed with monastic influences

Esoteric Doctrine

A secret doctrine exists that is only shared with a core of inner elect. There may be multiple layers of esotericism, each step upward in the hierarchy rewarded with deeper truths. This inner faith might simply be strange and philosophical, or it might be “difficult,” requiring a secret repudiation of the lesser, outer beliefs. The faith might intentionally promulgate false esoteric doctrines to throw off spies and prying scholars.

- E Secret master with dark doctrines, Cynical manipulator of the texts, Zealot driven to extreme acts by what they have learned
- F Protector of the sacred secrets, Renegade fleeing from a terrible inner truth, Scholar seeking the real doctrines
- C There are multiple inner doctrines that struggle against each other, The innermost secrets are lost and the hierarchs seek them constantly, The secrets are actively toxic to those unprepared for them
- T Book of forbidden truths, Encryption key to unlock a lost text, Obscure relic with tremendous hidden importance
- P Tightly-guarded sanctum within a great cathedral, Hidden shrine where the elect gather, Forbidden library of secret doctrines

Failing Faith

The faith is collapsing, usually under the pressure of a rival religion that is much more appealing to the believers of the old creed. The failing faith usually still has its wealth and political influence, but it is falling into fewer and fewer hands as believers melt away. The religion may take drastic steps to deal with its rival and with apostates, or outsiders might be seeking to gut the dying belief of its lands and treasures while it is weakened.

- E Furious crusader seeking vengeance on the faith's supposed murderers, Corrupt hierarch concerned only with his own gain, Ambitious noble trying to squeeze wealth from the faith
- F Desperate missionary trying to gain new converts, Despairing holy person seeking divine aid, Non-believing sympathizer trying to help the faith
- C The fall is due to a reform campaign gone terribly wrong, The faith has become identified with a hated group or traitor faction, The faith has fragmented into mutually-recriminating sects
- T Treasure seized from an abandoned temple, Land now taken by a rival group, Sacred regalia of a recently-murdered hierarch
- P Half-empty shrine, Defaced sacred site, Temple now held by a rival faith

Ethnic Creed

The religion is considered to be specific to a particular ethnic group. Others might possibly be members, but the leadership and traditions of the faith are identified with the heirs of this group. For some creeds, membership in the faith might be automatic and assumed for any co-ethnic, while other religions only include certain members of the group. Trappings of the faith might be embraced as symbols by co-ethnics who have no religious tie to it at all.

- E Convert seeking to force open clerical authority to outsiders, Zealot priest seeking to drive out the impure, Corrupt ethnic boss using the faith as an organizing tool
- F Missionary seeking outside converts, Hapless victim of ethnic conspiracy theories, Hard-pressed traditionalist seeking to keep the old ways
- C A conspiracy theory about the faith is half-correct in a totally unexpected way, The faith is a prize of war and its rule won by former conquest, The youth are largely disinterested in it
- T Ancient relic of a culture-hero, Proof a major cleric is of the wrong lineage for their station, Awkward secret that would make trouble for the faith
- P Shrine in an ethnic neighborhood, Chapel tucked away in a rich believer's estate, Festival ground for an elaborate ethnic celebration

Folk Religion

Belief in this religion is simple and unintellectual, with the faith having little in the way of sophisticated philosophical principles or complex doctrine. Most clergy are humble commoners who offer services that satisfy the practical needs of believers and perform rituals that are emotionally meaningful and impressive to participants. The faith may have once had deeper intellectual roots, but few remember them, and fewer draw on them in their daily practice.

- E Deviant priest offering crude and sordid rites, Local grandee who considers the faith as much his property as are his serfs, Peasant headman violently opposed to any innovation
- F Scholar of the faith's origins, Aspiring reformer of the faith, Sincere-hearted peasant believer
- C The primitive rituals conceal a much deeper and more sophisticated doctrine, The religion is an offshoot of a more developed creed, The crudity of the rites is identified as a sign of sincerity and sanctity by many
- T A precious and ornate offering made by a rich commoner, A relic of a local saint honored by natives, Prized idol esteemed as having holy powers
- P Rustic shrine with simple offerings, Hidden gathering place in the wilderness, Crude but imposing religious monument in a village

Forbidden Faith

The faith is forbidden in some large area, with its practice punished severely. This may be due to the jealousy of the state religion, the negative consequences of the faith on local society, or the identification of the faith with treachery, hostile powers, or moral corruption. Believers must meet secretly and use subtle signs to communicate. Their faith may not always have been so ill-esteemed as it is now.

- E Corrupt and vicious priest of the faith, Bitter believer bent on revenge for the oppression, Zealot inquisitor convinced the agents of the faith are everywhere
- F Victim of a mistaken accusation of belief, Sympathetic hereditary priest of the faith, Seemingly-noble martyr to the faith's appealing points
- C The faith really is every bit as horrible as people think, The faith has sympathetic elements but is dedicated to a principle totally inimical to the surrounding culture, The faith has agents everywhere
- T Secret list of local believers, Hidden relic revered by the faith, Holy relic now held by their enemies as a trophy
- P Hidden chamber in a rich believer's house, Secret shrine in the wilderness, Chapel concealed in a city's slums or underways

Holy Grounds

Several places or structures are of critical religious importance to the faith, and must be kept in sanctified safety at all costs. Conflicts within the religion can form over custodianship of these places, and a frenzied response can be goaded by any threat to their security. Believers may be required to make pilgrimages to such locations, or it may be an optional act of faith that increases their standing in the religion.

- E Obsessive guardian seeing a threat to the sites, Rival seeking to profane the holy places, Sectarian trying to seize control of them
- F Hard-pressed protector of a remote site, Innocent pilgrim seeking aid, Cleric seeking a lost holy site
- C Control will soon be passing to an extreme sect, The holy sites have great economic or military value to the possessors, The terrain around the sites is dangerous to pilgrims
- T Sacred object which defines the holy site, Relic lost by a pilgrim to the site, Trove of offerings made by pilgrims
- P Guarded entrance to the holy site, Inner sanctum of a site for the most elect, Raucous bazaar set up to supply pilgrims

Gnostic

The religion holds that knowledge is the key to salvation or enlightenment, and only by a profound understanding of its inner truths can a believer be helped. Usually this knowledge is gated behind a series of lesser revelations, each which must be mastered in turn before deeper secrets are revealed to the aspiring adept. These secrets may grant magical power, inflict esoteric forms of insanity, or be brutally pragmatic blackmail material.

- E Obsessed manipulator dealing in lies, Cult assassin of those who know too much, Outside scholar seeking the truth with bloody methods
- F Hidden master of deep truths, Sympathetic aspiring initiate, Well-meaning manipulator dealing in truths
- C The secrets have a physical effect on those who know them, The secrets themselves are just tools by which other powers are manipulated, The secrets have been lost and only the leadership knows that
- T Volume of inner truths written by a renegade, Book of explosively dangerous errors penned by a heresiarch, Precious object with a secret and terrible purpose
- P Silent monastery of aspiring students, Secret sanctum of the hidden masters, Welcoming temple of the outer truths

Localized

The faith has substantially different manifestations in different locations, each branch harmonized with local cultures and habits. These local branches might recognize each other as fellow believers, or they may consider other sects as being damnable innovators and degenerate heretics. One branch may be senior to the others, exerting more or less control over the other locales.

- E Missionary from a strange and dangerous sub-sect, "Reformer" seeking to correct local habits, Cleric of another faith masquerading as a local aspect
- F Simple local priest seeking to perpetuate native ways, Scholar curious about local doctrines, Local noble deeply committed to the native creed
- C The sects worship different gods but think it's the same being, The different sects must cooperate for a ritual reason despite their disagreements, Local rulers strongly encourage disunity
- T Unique relic specific to a local sect's doctrines, Proof that a particular local doctrine is the authentically correct tradition, Relics of a local saint unrecognized elsewhere
- P Strange-looking local temple, Compromise chapel where multiple sects all pray, Special ritual area for a ceremony practiced only here

Materially Luxuriant

The religion prizes ornate regalia, splendid shrines, magnificent religious art, and the finest possible adornment of all things related to the faith. Such religions may make severe demands on believers to provide the necessary abundance, or may have active economic roles to acquire the needed wealth for their luxuriance. The actual clergy may live much more modest lives, or they may also participate in the opulence.

- E Venal and avaricious hierarch, Thief seeking the faith's wealth, Fervent builder indifferent to the suffering of those who pay for it
- F Master craftsman dedicated to the faith, Wealthy and enthusiastic supporter, Local locked in an unfavorable deal with the faith
- C The opulence has a very real magical or economic benefit, Almost all religious matters have been reduced to questions of offering-prices, The greatest luxuries are offerings of services or blood
- T Ridiculously jeweled golden idol, Large trove of precious unworked raw materials, Priceless regalia donated by a believer
- P Gilded shrine of opulent make, Workshop full of artisans for the faith, Counting-house staffed by clerics

Militarized Faith

The faith is built for war, with believers and clergy alike organized in a militarized way and equipped with martial training. Not every believer may be a warrior, but they are organized to support and maintain military action against enemies of the faith, whether heretics, infidels, or secular opponents. Death in battle is usually considered to be the most splendid end possible for a faithful believer.

- E Bloodthirsty church general, Psychopathic hierarch who joined to kill, Ruler cynically manipulating the faith against his opponents
- F Noble templar-monk, Young aspiring martial hero of the faith, Crafter making arms and armor for fellow believers
- C The faith has an extremely good reason to constantly be on a war footing, Their martial practices are just a ceremonial shadow of their former ancient prowess, The faith used to be more pacifistic but only the martial zealots are still alive
- T Famed relic weapon of the faith, Large cache of arms and armor, Relic lost in battle by the faith
- P Monastery turned boot camp, Barracks-temple for the faith, Bishop-general's field camp

The Hidden Church

The northern lands of Lom and the Ulstang Skerries both hate and forbid the Unitary Church. The Lomites despise it as they despise all religions, and the witch-queens of Ulstang will permit no other gods before them. Despite this, there are some among their subjects who fear Hell enough to seek other reassurances than the ones their masters offer.

The Hidden Church is the common name for the loose network of secret priests and believers found throughout the north. Most clergy masquerade as Lomite commoners or Ulstanger peasants, often those with some conventional role that requires them to travel widely. On their journeys they contact secret cells of believers and meet with them in hidden places to offer teachings, consolation, and prayer for the dead. Individual cells almost never have direct contact with each other lest the compromise of one lead the loss of others.

The appeal of the Hidden Church is considerable among the lower classes of both nations. The Lomite promise that True Reason protects a follower from Hell is not completely convincing to all the inhabitants of that land, while the Ulstangers consider peace in the grave to be a special favor conferred by the witch-queens on accomplished servants. The Hidden Church offers peaceful repose to all believers who follow the principles of the Church, and with death so common a thing in both nations it is a very compelling attraction.

The funerary rites of the Unitary Church do not strictly require a corpse, or elaborate ceremonies, or indeed anything other than a short prayer that any believer can utter. The more elaborate the rites, the more technically skilled the priest, and the more pious the life of the deceased, however, the more likely

the rituals are to successfully preserve their soul from Hell. This makes it very simple for a believer to pray for another who has died, but it becomes a considerable challenge to actually live a life in conformity with Unitary belief. Without a pious life, a mere layman's prayer might not be enough to save a soul.

Believers of the Hidden Church thus go out of their way to secretly perform acts approved by the faith. Deeds of compassion, sexual continence, courage, truthfulness, obedience to righteous authority, and self-sacrifice for others are all honored by the faith, and a believer who martyrs themselves in their pursuit is likely to find peaceful repose even if nothing more than a muttered prayer is spoken for them. Those sunk deep in the vices of their nation, however, may require a skilled priest to perform the rites or need extensive, secret funeral ceremonies performed upon their corpse.

Knowledge of Church doctrine and principles is ruthlessly suppressed in both Lom and the Skerries, however, so the secret priests are needed simply to teach believers what the Church requires of them. It's not unknown for confused and desperate believers to actually believe Lomite propaganda about the true goals of the Church, and commit horrible acts of bloody sacrifice out of a misguided belief that the Creator desires it of them.

Worse still are those parasite gods and Uncreated cults that offer their own secret teachings to the desperate. By the time their adherents realize the true nature of their gods, it's often far too late for them to avoid a horrible fate of perpetual slavery or unholy degeneration. The Lomite antipriests who uncover such sects merely take them as further evidence of the unspeakable depravity of the Church and all its Irrational thralls.

Missionary Zeal

The religion is determined to spread itself in new lands and among new people. Shrines train and supply missionary groups and give what support they can to missions established in distant lands. Such religions usually have close ties with the rulers or aristocracy of mission regions, the better to mute hostility and make space for new religious establishments in their lands. Other missions are purely domestic, reaching out toward lapsed believers.

- E Missionary seeking the violent suppression of local rivals, Native outraged by missionary efforts, Ruler using the missionaries as tools against rivals
- F Idealistic but impractical young missionary, Convert abused by their neighbors, Local priest trying to find a modus vivendi with the newcomers
- C The faith is strongly identified with a particular nation or ethnicity, The faith relies on its splendor and sophistication to overawe natives, Merchants and rulers use the faith to establish a beachhead in foreign lands
- T Foreign religious treasures abandoned by rich new convert, Relic from the first native saint of the faith, Native relic sought by missionaries and locals alike
- P Converted local temple turned to the new faith, Burnt-out home of a new convert, New community of local converts

Monolatrists

Many faiths have a loose attitude toward reverence to other gods; a degree of worship of other divinities is only prudent and sensible for a common believer, even if clergy might be expected to be more focused in their offerings. This faith, however, flatly forbids its believers to revere any god but its own, and is liable to be in sharp conflict with other local religions that are insulted or threatened by this exclusivity. Some monolatrist faiths might even seek to extinguish rival religions entirely.

- E Zealous convert-cleric from a faith they now want to destroy, Inquisitor seeking out backsliders, Hostile follower of another faith seeking this creed's ruin
- F Apostate from another faith seeking only to be left in peace by their former co-religionists, Missionary seeking to spread the true faith, Ruler backing the faith for unity's sake
- C The monolatrists have excellent reasons not to worship other gods, They seek to forbid other faiths in nations they control, They're convinced the other faiths want to destroy them and act accordingly
- T Relics from a defeated faith taken as trophies, Evidence proving an important believer is secretly revering other gods, Lost monolatrist relic taken by a rival faith
- P Ruins of a destroyed rival temple, Hidden cell of illicit believers, Splendid temple to the sole god

Monastic Clergy

A certain proportion of the clergy are monastics, isolated in religious establishments built exclusively to support them. While many faiths have monastic members, those of this religion are of exceptional importance to the church. Most work the fields to support themselves, or perform handcrafts for nearby communities. Others are supported exclusively on the donations or tithes of believers. Most monastics are credited with being holier than the secular clergy who work in the world, though monasteries can also be nests of hidden corruption.

- E Depraved abbot using monastic privacy for his own ends, Mad monk held in holy awe by locals, Brutally venal abbot milking the local peasants for her purse
- F Unworldly young monk or nun, Secular ruler who supports a local monastery, Ambitious would-be founder of a new monastery
- C All the faith's senior clerics must be drawn from monastics, The monasteries are major economic or military strong points, The monasteries protect books or secrets of the faith
- T Vast and ancient monastery, Hard-pressed young monastery in dangerous terrain, Village founded outside a monastery's walls
- P Rustic shrine with simple offerings, Hidden gathering place in the wilderness, Crude but imposing religious monument in a village

Multicephalous

The religion has more than one head, with multiple pontiffs having control over different regions or different sections of the faith. This may be an intentional and accepted state of affairs, with the various heads cooperating as circumstances recommend, or it may be the result of long-lasting schisms and disputes. Their doctrines might be widely divergent or differ in ways crucially important only to believers.

- E Pontiff bent on sole rule, Clerical schemer working to undermine a rival head, Secular ruler determined to make their local head the primate
- F Elegant clerical diplomat, Believer seeking harmonious unification, Pontiff struggling to retain independence
- C One pontiff has theoretical supremacy but no practical control, The pontiffs are mere puppets of their respective secular rulers, One or more pontiffs are engaged in a hot religious war
- T Lost holy scripture proving one of the prelaties is invalid, Extremely precious bribe to a pontiff, Holy relic conferring great spiritual authority on the owner
- P Twinned churches revering different heads, Former temple of one sect now controlled by another, Ancient shrine from before the splintering

Mutilated Clergy

Clergy of the faith are required to undergo some grievous mutilation or physical scarring. The loss of an eye, the removal of genitals or external sexual characteristics, the sacrifice of a hand, laming a leg, or some other price must be paid for their new and holy status. This maiming cannot be healed without losing clerical status. Most such sacrifices are connected with some mythic maiming of a god or the expulsion of human weakness.

- E Sadistic priest in charge of mutilations, Zealot bent on sanctifying as many as possible, Ruler who uses such sanctification as punishment
- F Reformer seeking an end to the practice, Devout believer who embraced it gladly, Priest quietly attempting to dissuade others from following him
- C The mutilation grants some sort of power to the subject, A third party can suffer the mutilation on the priest's behalf, The higher one's rank the more complete the mutilation
- T Mutilated relic of a famous saint, Cure for a regretful cleric, Precious implement used as part of the mutilating process
- P Hospital area for recovering initiates, Shrine adorned with sculptures of maimed priests, Temple staffed with mutilation-flaunting clergy

Quietist

The faith seeks perfect communion with its deity through stillness of mind and soul, seeking silent meditation and disengagement from secular concerns. While this principle does not require an indifference to worldly affairs, most quietist religions withdraw from political life or economic concerns beyond the minimum required for subsistence. Their detachment can leave them prey to more secular-minded threats.

- E Absolutist refusing to deal with an impending threat, Ruler taking advantage of the faith's quietism, Violent firebrand preaching a very different sectarian doctrine
- F Humble hermit seeking communion, Frustrated young believer trying to act on a problem, Much-loved elder paragon of the faith
- C The quietists enforce their principles with murderous violence, The quietists are trusted to handle certain very important matters by the culture, The quietists command great wealth but use very little of it
- T Book of hidden enlightenment, Humble object sanctified into holiness by its possessor, Secret prophecy made by a quietist seer
- P Austere wilderness monastery, Quiet self-contained rural community, Private cell for retreat in a luxurious urban home

New Dispensation

The faith has recently been rocked by a new dispensation, whether a new holy scripture, a new prophetic revelation, a new structure enforced by secular lords, or some other upheaval. The new structure is in control, but likely threatened by bitter devotees of the old ways, and different regions of the faith may have different degrees of loyalty to the new ways. Others might secretly condemn the new ways as a false imposition.

- E Renegade cleric of the old ways, Brutal inquisitor of the new faith, Secular ruler using the change as an excuse to settle scores
- F Upright follower of the traditional doctrine, Appealing young missionary of the new ways, Harried cleric trying to calm the situation
- C The new dispensation is very advantageous to the local secular rulers, The divide is drawn sharply between different classes or regions, The new dispensation is actually false and the work of some dark power
- T Secret roster of old faith supporters, Holy relic spirited away by traditionalists, Wondrous relic created by the new dispensation
- P Refitted temple with new symbols, Rustic shrine that has yet to convert, Prison-monastery for recalcitrant clerics

Reformist Struggle

The faith is being rocked by a conflict between reformers and traditionalists. The former usually seek to purify the faith through returning to earlier practices or expunging corruption from the church, and most have little respect for practical considerations or pragmatic limits. The traditionalists may be venal or corrupt, but may also have the support of secular powers that seek stability over a reformed but unreliable faith.

- E Murderously impractical reform leader, Corrupt hierarch of the old ways, Reasonable-sounding reformer with catastrophically bad ideas
- F Baffled clerical reformer who never meant for it to go this far, Veteran cleric struggling to cleanse corruption, Priestly diplomat trying to calm the situation
- C The reformists are actually full of terrible ideas that will inevitably bring ruin, The faith has become corrupted due to an outside force rather than mere moral inertia, A hostile rival group is supporting both sides to intensify the discord
- T Vast trove gathered by a venal pontiff, Stash of weapons or blackmail gathered by reformers, Holy relic conferring legitimacy on the owning sect
- P Angrily-strict reformist monastery, Corrupt temple full of venal clerics, Age-worn shrine full of pragmatic and worldly priests

Remnant

The religion is only a remnant of a former faith, one far larger and more powerful than what little remains. The religion may have collapsed into schism, or been destroyed by secular powers, or had its believers absorbed by a more appealing creed. Many relics and abandoned shrines likely exist elsewhere, some of which may now be under the control of other faiths or hold relics of the religion's former heyday.

- E Bitter priest seeking to bloodily revive the past, Rival power seeking to complete the faith's ruin, Scavenger lord picking at the weakened creed's wealth
- F Determined young preacher seeking revival, Latest pontiff of an age-old clerical line, Harried local priest just trying to keep things going
- C The faith's heyday was so long ago it has almost been forgotten, The faith only very recently collapsed into this ruin, Another sect of the faith is still strong and active
- T Treasure lost in the faith's collapse, Ancient relic from a now-lost temple, Trophy that would revive the faith's fortunes
- P Ruined temple from a lost age, Freshly-wrecked shrine from a chaotic fall, Half-empty temple that was once full

Rival Religion

The creed is locked in a fierce struggle with another religion. Each faith might have its own sharply-delineated region of influence, or they might be intertwined in the same land, quarreling over the same believers and resources. This rivalry might be born of inimical deities or it might be a secular fight over control of the local aristocracy or the allegiance of the common masses. One faith might even be a successful splinter sect of the other.

- E Hierarch obsessed with victory at any cost, Manipulator profiting by the struggle, Traitor in the service of the rival faith
- F Would-be peacemaker priest, Believer caught in the crossfire, Adherent secretly in love with a believer of the rival faith
- C A third party is profiting greatly from the struggle, One faith is getting desperate and willing to go to extremes, The rivalry is ancient and formalized
- T Literal or metaphorical weapon to ensure victory, Deed to precious disputed property, Right to oversee a ceremony of great social importance
- P Shrine heavily fortified against attack, Institution poisonously divided between believers, Bloody pogrom site of local minority faith

Restricted Membership

Only certain types or classes of people are allowed to join the religion. It may be exclusive to a particular sex, ethnicity, profession, locality, caste, or bloodline. Some of these religions may allow associates, those who are not full members but who profit by their affiliation with the faith. The more narrow the allowed membership, the more substantial the faith's influence or resources must be if it is to survive.

- E Ruler who considers the faith their personal possession, Cleric who's more a society grandee than priest, Priest seeking to expel rivals as unfit for membership
- F Reformer seeking a broader range of members, Proud upholder of the faith's best traditions, Pragmatic hierarch with a flexible view of qualifications
- C The faith is restricted for a very pragmatic reason, The faith makes up in social cachet or money what it lacks in numbers, The faith is hardly a religion at all so much as an influence society
- T Proof a hierarch does not qualify to belong to the faith, A sacred object characteristic of the faith's membership, Evidence that a great saint was not of the right kind
- P Combination guild or community center and temple, Well-guarded shrine sealed against outsiders, Neighborhood exclusive to the membership

Schisms

The faith is racked by schism and division, with more than one new prophet or "true pontiff" leading significant numbers of believers. If the faith is aligned with local rulers, the secular powers are almost certainly backing the largest fragment in an attempt to restore stability, while a faith without aristocratic allies might be earning the anger of a government upset at the disruptions. Unlike a multicephalous church, none of the sects recognize any authority in the others.

- E Firebrand schismatic hierarch, Brutal veteran victor of doctrinal wars, Local ruler bent on bloodily crushing all the sects
- F Idealistic well-intending sect leader, Priest struggling to unify the sects, Local ruler desperately trying to stop the struggle without extreme measures
- C The schism was born out of an abortive reform effort, The schism is the fruit of a catastrophic failure of leadership, The schism was born when the leadership became puppets of a hostile power
- T Holy relics of a destroyed sect, Legitimizing regalia from before the schism, Sacred scripture proving one sect is correct
- P Burnt-out temple, Makeshift shrine established by a new sect, Monastery torn into multiple feuding groups

Simony

Significant positions within the religion are available for sale, either openly or through a tacit exchange of resources. As a consequence, major clerics are often wealthy believers who take open advantage of their positions to advance their personal interests. Some faiths might consider this simony perfectly moral and acceptable, while in others it is a sign of advanced corruption in the hierarchy. Simoniacal priests might have purely ceremonial roles, or they may have real power.

- E Oligarch-priest interested only in profit, Prelate who can be bribed to bless anything, Cleric determined to steal or take enough to advance
- F Frustrated outside reformer of the faith, Pragmatist seeking to use the money well, Rich hierarch quietly trying to reform from within
- C The government extracts much of the simoniacal wealth from the faith, Clerical titles are actually liquid fiat currency to be exchanged, The faith pays merchants and others in clerical titles
- T Massive trove of donated wealth, Token that grants the bearer a great title, Masterwork offered by a great crafter for a title
- P Hidden vault of an arch-priest, Auction house where titles are sold, Oligarch's temple-villa

Stratified Practice

There is a very substantial difference in doctrine and worship between different levels of believers. Common folk might have colorful and emotionally-satisfying rituals for important life events or petitions for divine aid, while the clergy might prefer austere, intellectual exercises. The difference might instead be vertical rather than horizontal, with different traditions within the same faith having different goals in their worship.

- E Deviant using differences in practice to justify new dark ends, Reformer seeking to crush blasphemous practices, Zealot embracing a traditional and repugnant practice
- F Scholar studying the roots of various practices, Last practitioner of an ancient way, Revivalist seeking to bring back former customs
- C The practices are meant to keep social orders in their correct places, Some practices are secret even from other believers, Certain practices are outright forbidden to all but the great and noble
- T Valuable regalia required for certain elite practices, Tome revealing that a low-class practice is most correct, Gaudy but priceless idol fashioned by rich commoner believer
- P Worship site that looks nothing like another nearby worship site, Restricted shrine for a particular group, Forest clearing for a forbidden practice

State Faith

The religion is the official religion of a nation, one which all natives are expected to honor, even if they are not active believers. Any other faiths are expected to cede the foremost position to this creed, and any attempt to withhold worship to its god is considered tantamount to open treason. Reverence toward the god is considered identical with loyalty to the state, and its clerics are usually important government functionaries.

- E Local noble who despises other faiths, Traitorous priest-agent of a foreign power, Cynical official using belief only for secular ends
- F Stubborn local who won't revere the god, Clueless foreigner who accidentally blasphemes severely, Priest determined to uphold the faith's spiritual doctrine
- C The faith is bifurcated into purely spiritual members and secular clerics who have all the worldly influence, The faith is explicitly headed by the ruler, Doctrines keep changing to suit secular needs
- T Ancient scripture from before its adoption as state faith, Government-collected tithes, Wealth entrusted to the faith for safeguarding
- P Glorious national temple, Monastery that is more like a bureaucratic office, Vast plaza for grand religious rites

Syncretists

The religion cheerfully absorbs other faiths and gods, either casting them as servitors of their deity or different aspects of their chosen divinity. They may assimilate other elements of doctrine or ritual in the process, or swallow whole priesthoods as sub-categories of their religious hierarchy. When faced with another religion, their immediate instinct is to explain how it is the same as their own rather than to reject it fundamentally.

- E Ruthless religious imperialist, Zealot of a rival faith determined to prove its uniqueness, Assimilated priest promoting a sinister synthesis
- F Avid scholar-monk seeking similarities, Assimilated priest seeking some doctrinal integrity, Secret practitioner of now-outmoded faith
- C The faith intentionally erases all troublesome history of assimilated faiths, The faith has a very mercenary attitude toward all aspects it serves, The faith is riven by numerous utterly incompatible doctrines
- T Lost holy idol of a forgotten faith, Tome with a dark truth about a popular aspect, Holy relic commandeered by the new faith
- P Temple with numerous new additions, Converted shrine of an assimilated faith, Open-air revival where the new doctrine is being taught

Underclass Faith

The faith is a faith of the poor, oppressed, marginalized, and unimportant. While the god may not specifically be oriented toward the underclass, the great majority of believers are from socially inferior classes. Those of higher classes may be reluctant to associate with it, given its aura of disrepute. The faith itself might serve either to comfort and console the underclass, or it might be transforming into a weapon of revolt and change.

- E Bloodthirsty revolutionary priest, Noble who despises the faith, Cynical priest milking his poor flock
- F Earnest shepherd of the poor, Upper-class convert to the belief, Pragmatic cleric seeking practical improvements
- C The faith was designed as a synthetic tool to reinforce existing class structures, Secret sympathizers exist among the elite, The faith has real power via its influence on the masses
- T Tithe of some resource vital to poor believers, Relic of a great champion of the poor, Trove of some precious good produced by socially-disdained crafters
- P Tumbledown shrine in the slums, Secret shrine in a wealthy household, Hidden camp of pariah-zealots

Venality

The hierarchy has been corrupted by money, influence, or material comfort. Clergy are now selected for their ability to fit in with the existing order, and clerics view their positions as opportunities for personal advancement. The religion's debased state may have been the case for so long that the believers expect nothing else, or it may be the result of recent enrichment or the gaining of great social power.

- E Venal hierarch without a trace of piety, Theologian crusading to make the depravity doctrinally legitimate, Clerical oligarch with a heart of stone
- F Secretly-scheming reformer, Afflicted victim of a cleric's greed, Stubborn adherent to principled doctrine
- C The venality is hidden or discussion of it is harshly suppressed, The venality exists and is self-reinforcing only in the upper leadership, The secular leaders use the faith's avarice to control it
- T Rich prelate's fabulous wealth, Exotic delight craved by hierarchy, Undeniable proof of a high priest's corruption
- P Luxuriantly-appointed private clerical villa, Factory or warehouse dedicated to clerical needs, Village impoverished by clerical exactions

Upstart Underclass

The religion is an avenue of advancement for its underclass members. Its clergy and major benefactors have a high status in the society, and so those with wealth or talent but humble social origins are using it as a tool of social climbing. The religion itself is likely open to underclass membership in a way other social institutions are not, and many of its major clergy might be exceptionally talented or rich members of the local canaille.

- E Amoral social-climber prelate, Noble hostile to its influence, Secret elite sponsor of priestly catspaws
- F Brilliant young cleric from an outcast class, Broad-minded prelate of the faith, Low-class entrepreneur seeking advancement through contributions
- C A faction of the faith bitterly resents the low-class upstarts, The low-class members have very different goals for the faith than the upper-class ones, The permissibility of underclass leadership hinges on a single vulnerable doctrinal ruling
- T Rich new convert's huge donation, Blackmail collected by an intimate servant who converted, Token of legitimate possession of an important socio-religious position
- P New temple raised in a poor part of town, Somewhat gaudy and nouveau-riche shrine of a lower-class priest, Exclusive club with loud new members

Vital Service

The religion performs a vital social service. It may be the only group capable of manufacturing a certain good, or performing a critical kind of labor, or maintaining a vital resource, or providing a necessary education. The religion's control of this service gives it much of its influence and power, and it will move sharply to counter any attempt to disrupt its monopoly. The ability to provide this service may be more important than piety in clerics.

- E Oligarch-priest seeking power over piety, Avaricious noble in partnership with the faith, Cold-blooded entrepreneur seeking to seize the faith's monopoly
- F Artisan-cleric of superlative skill, Idealistic laborer in the church's specialty, Commoner utterly dependent on the church's service
- C Providing this service exacts a brutal cost on those who serve due to environmental dangers or manufacturing processes, This service is key to controlling large amounts of money or influence via secondary effects, The faith is intimately entwined with relevant craft guilds
- T Secret handbook of the deepest lore of the service, Lost tool vital to providing the service, Vast trove earned by the service
- P Bustling manufactory of the service, Market or distribution point for the service, Temple adorned with symbols and signs of the service

Godbound Cults

For those Godbound who choose not to become free divinities, it's assumed that sooner or later they'll establish their own cult. The basic guidelines for this are provided on page 133 of the *Godbound* core book, but the material below can provide a little more support for the GM and player when devising their own faith.

Establishing the Cult

To have a cult, a Godbound needs to be at least second level with the *Receive the Incense of Faith* gift provided by the Word of Apotheosis. They also need willing believers, ones ready to pledge their full faith and devotion to the Godbound.

Whether or not a group of NPCs is willing to follow the Godbound is a matter for GM judgment. This obedience cannot be won by magical compulsion, but it can be bought by mundane bribery or threats. The more devoted the NPCs are to their current religion, the more inducement they'll need to follow the Godbound, or else they'll need some suitable explanation of how the Godbound is a syncretic aspect of their original faith.

A Godbound needs at least a village worth of believers to make a usable cult. If multiple Godbound all want to get worshipers from the same pool, treat it as one step smaller for purposes of population. Thus, if a pantheon of four Godbound all save the same city and all seek followers there, treat it as four different village-sized pools of believers, one for each Godbound.

Once a Godbound has a pool of believers, they must lay down the holy laws and sacred scripture of their faith, describing what it means to be a worshiper of their sacred person. The purpose of these restrictions is to channel the power of a believer's faith into usable Dominion for their patron. The more narrow, demanding, and all-consuming the requirements, the more energy is conveyed to the Godbound.

There is no innate moral aspect to this holy law. A set of sacred principles that demand ceaseless murder, theft, and atrocity can give just as much energy as a faith that requires tireless self-sacrifice and devoted nurturing of others. The key is how much of a believer's focus and energy must be poured into the religion.

The sacred laws of a cult set a minimum floor for this devotion. Believers who exceed it do not grant any more energy to their patron, but followers who cannot meet its standards give nothing at all. A modest faith that demands little of its followers may not give a Godbound much Dominion, but it is much easier to meet its requirements than those of a red-handed creed that gives an abundance of Dominion but makes brutal demands on its believers.

Godbound have an instinctive and intuitive sense of how much energy their requirements are apt to provide them. They can feel the potential energy of their faithful believers, and can intuitively sense how their demands will shape that flow.

Once set, it is difficult to change a cult's laws, even for the Godbound. If a Godbound significantly changes the laws of a cult, it loses a point of Power as old principles linger, sectarians argue, and current believers are led to doubt the perfection of their faith. A cult with Power 1 is destroyed by such an innovation.

What counts as a change is up to the GM, but usually any new policy that moves the cult out of its current requirement category as described on the next pages is enough to qualify.

Points	Dominion and Problems
0 to 4	The cult is very relaxed, granting Dominion each month equal to its Power. It does not have any intrinsic Problems.
5 to 9	The cult is fairly firm, granting Dominion equal to its Power + 1 each month. It must choose a quarter of its action die's maximum roll in Problems, rounded up.
10 to 14	The cult is demanding with its followers, granting Power +2 in Dominion each month and possessing intrinsic Problems equal to half its maximum action die roll, rounded up.
15+	The cult is all-consuming for its believers, providing its Power +3 in Dominion each month and possessing intrinsic Problems equal to three-quarters of its maximum action die roll, rounded up.

Essentials of Faith

Once the cult is established and the Godbound means to set its holy laws, they can pick one rating from each of the five categories that follows, choosing the one that best matches the particular beliefs and practices they are adopting for their cult.

They then add together the points from those five categories and compare them to the table above. The result shows what Dominion the cult will grant each month, and what their minimum intrinsic Problems are that can never be solved without wrecking the faith.

The Godbound may choose specific Problems as they see fit, with GM approval on their choices. If a cult grows in Power and increases its action die size, its Problems grow with it.

The Cult in Play

The cult can be treated as a normal Faction for purposes of faction turn actions and other interactions. Godbound who don't want to fuss with it can leave that aspect of it unexplored, but a faith with heavy requirements is apt to demand their attention at times even if it doesn't use the faction turn.

Each session, the GM may choose to roll each cult's action die. If the result is less than the Problem total of the faith, then a problem has arisen in the faith. The various tables for each of the categories that follow can be used as inspiration to figure out what kind of issue has cropped up.

Until this problem is addressed by the Godbound, the Dominion granted by the cult is decreased by one point. This penalty stacks if multiple problems are allowed to fester.

Addressing this problem may be as simple as telling the faithful what the Godbound's true desire is. Impressing this on the believers and leading them out of error counts as a Plausible change which can be paid for in Influence, assuming the Godbound has means to fix the situation. The Influence needs to be maintained for a month to stamp out the problem before it can be reclaimed.

More situational problems may be Implausible changes, or even require active adventuring to fix. In general, however, these cult problems shouldn't be allowed to eat up much table time in play.

Clergy Requirements

How hard is it to become a clerical member of the cult? The more rigid and demanding the standards for becoming a priest of the Godbound, the better the quality of the clergy and the more effective they are at channeling worship to their patron, but the more difficult it is to find suitable candidates and the more damaging it is when a cleric goes wrong.

Universal Priesthood (0 points): Every member is considered fit to perform any necessary rite of the cult, assuming they possess whatever specific qualities are required. There are no special clergy.

Distinguished Clergy (1 point): A separate clerical class does exist within the cult, but it's expected that any interested believer who puts only a modest amount of effort into it can qualify. It's easy to mix priesthood with a mundane "day job".

Professional Clergy (2 points): The special qualities necessary to be a cleric of the cult aren't terribly rare, but the process does require extensive initiation, training, study, and practice. The duties of a cleric are so extensive that there's no way to maintain an outside profession, so they must be supported by the believers.

Elite Clergy (4 points): Only a rare few men and women have the right traits to qualify as clerics of the cult, and these elite believers must undergo extensive, grueling training before receiving consecration. Clerical duties are so demanding or dangerous that death is not unlikely in pursuit of the cult's cause.

Daily Obligations

The cult may well require some form of daily worship, prayer, or other religious obligations on believers. Adherents who fail to perform these rites give no spiritual support to their patron. These obligations may be cheap or easy to fulfill, but they may require more time and focus than the average believer is easily willing to spend on them.

No Daily Obligations (0 points): Members of the faith have no obligation to perform any daily worship at all, though they may still gather together on regular occasions for public worship or private prayer sessions

Weekly Public Worship (1 point): Members are expected to gather at least once a week for a simple, undemanding ceremony of public prayer and devotion. Other faiths might not require weekly meetings, but insist on short prayers performed at specific times each day.

Daily Simple Devotions (2 points): The believers need to spend at least an hour every day in worship-related activities, whether ritual prayer, public gatherings, or some other activity devoted to the Godbound's cause.

Daily Elaborate Devotions (4 points): Believers need to spend at least four hours of every day in some kind of ritual worship activity. At this level of devotion, worship services form the backbone of a believer's day, and the rest of their daily activities are worked in around the rigid requirements of the faith. These required activities never have a mundane utility to them, but are always strictly spiritual in nature.

d10	What Troubles Might Arise?
1	Someone important who thinks they ought to be a cleric is actually hopelessly unsuited for the role or otherwise ineligible to become a priest
2	The clerical training process is becoming corrupted by wealth or the influence of important believers
3	A clique of corrupt or venal priests has formed and is shepherding their favorites through the hierarchy
4	A zealously enthusiastic priest has introduced a new training element that may not suit the Godbound
5	A recent calamity has left a particular region seriously short on qualified priests
6	Clerical training standards are slipping so much that the new clerics aren't good enough for the cult
7	A sect has cropped up with much more inclusive and completely Dominion-useless clerical training
8	Existing clerics are proving reluctant to share authority
9	An iron-handed trainer is so harsh that he's unintentionally strangling the supply of valid clergy
10	An important aspect of being a cleric has become so dangerous or demanding that it's costing the cult an abnormal number of priests

d10	What Troubles Might Arise?
1	Innovators are establishing more convenient means of worship that don't actually provide Dominion
2	An obligation is suddenly proving dangerous or very burdensome in a particular region
3	People are using performance of the obligation as a competition in piety among powerful members
4	Zealous believers are overdoing it, increasing the daily obligations in needless and useless ways
5	A critical component of the necessary daily obligations has become difficult to acquire or dangerous to enact
6	Believers are gradually backsliding out of regular performance of the obligations
7	Doctrinal experts have devised faultlessly logical work-arounds for performing the plain words of the duties
8	A sub-group of the cult has adopted different daily obligations as a mark of group unity, but they don't actually provide Dominion
9	Zealot sectarians are encouraging the elaboration of the daily obligations in burdensome and useless ways
10	Believers are trying to foist off daily obligations on designated devotees, who promise to do them for them

Initiation Requirements

It's rarely enough to simply declare oneself a devoted follower of a Godbound. While such a simple and free declaration is enough to make a person a worshiper for purpose of Apotheosis gifts, some cults require more elaborate initiations before a believer can start contributing spiritual energy to their patron.

Free Initiation (0 points): The cult requires nothing more than a plain declaration of faith and adherence to accept a believer into its fold.

Basic Instruction (1 point): An aspiring cult member must be trained in the basic principles of the cult and shown how to properly revere its patron before their worship aids in granting Dominion. This training rarely requires more than a few weeks of light instruction.

Sacritical Initiation (2 points): Aside from being taught the principles of the cult, a would-be believer must make some significant sacrifice of wealth, suffering, foregone liberties, or other loss before they are accepted by the believers. Those without the means to offer the sacrifice must make equivalent offerings suitable to their station.

Grueling Initiation (4 points): Knowledge and sacrifice are not enough; membership in the cult is gated so that only the truly dedicated and fiercely zealous are accepted among their number. Numerous trials, stern tests of character, and varying grades of initiation are provided to distinguish the leastmost aspirants from the blessed elect.

Negative Prohibitions

Every cult has its share of prohibitions and taboos, usually such that are compatible with ordinary human life. Some cults require a harshly inhuman existence, however, forbidding believers from common pleasures or activities and denying them behavior which is normal or even expected by their neighbors. The straiter the gate, the stronger the flow of Dominion the cult grants.

No Taboos (0 points): There are no prohibitions to the behavior of the cult members, or else the prohibitions are so minimal that few would ever be troubled by them. Prohibitions on murder, or taboos against hot dog bun consumption would qualify at this level.

Minimal Prohibitions (1 point): Aside from *de minimis* moral restrictions, the cult has at least one prohibition that may sometimes prove awkward to believers, like prohibiting usury, or forbidding the eating of meat.

Stern Prohibitions (2 points): The cult has enough limits and laws that the average believer is going to have to deal with a few of them every day. Details of forbidden clothing, professions, mixed socializing, foodstuffs, and leisure behavior are all marked out to shape a believer's day in ways pleasing to their patron.

Numberless Taboos (4 points): There are so many restrictions and limits on a believer's daily activities that they must spend a significant part of their day just figuring out how to satisfy all of them while carrying out normal daily activities. At least once a day some restriction is going to prove a complication to a desired or needed activity they must perform.

d 10	What Troubles Might Arise?
1	Enemies are spreading the belief that the initiation is actually much worse or more costly than it is
2	A cultural practice of the aspiring believers is making the initiation requirements very hard to fulfill
3	The initiation process is being corrupted by wealth and secular influence
4	A necessary place, activity, or component of the initiation process has been destroyed or is hindered
5	Zealots are taking the initiation requirements much too far
6	Sectarians are convinced they have a better initiation process, but it doesn't actually grant Dominion
7	A certain important sub-group is just getting waved through the initiation process by need or inducement
8	Someone is setting up a false initiation process, bilking the candidates with false doctrine and high costs
9	Doctrinal experts are arguing over some fine point of initiation requirements, and it's hampering things
10	A sub-group with slightly different initiations is viewed with suspicion by others, even though they're valid

d 10	What Troubles Might Arise?
1	A group is being very strongly tempted by the circumstances to defy a prohibition
2	Doctrinal experts are providing a tightly-reasoned excuse not to obey the prohibitions as stated
3	Zealots are taking things too far, prohibiting even things unrelated to the actual law
4	Clergy are selling indulgences to allow people to buy freedom from the prohibitions
5	An important group objects to some part of the prohibitions and the clergy are poorly-positioned to object
6	Sectarians are interpreting the prohibitions metaphorically or spiritually and are doing them all wrong
7	A seemingly-minor prohibition is turning out to be a severe burden due to the circumstances
8	Sectarians are arguing over which prohibitions are really important and which are merely peripheral
9	A charismatic demagogue is promising freedom from the prohibitions to followers of his doctrine
10	Enthusiasts are making a public competition of piety by restricting themselves in increasingly elaborate and spiritually-tangential ways

Positive Requirements

Just as a faith forbids some things, it requires others. Almost every cult has general goals and values, and broad morality that its believers are expected to honor, but these positive requirements are specific, concrete things that the believers must do if they are to channel Dominion to their patron.

General Principles (0 points): The cult's patron may have moral goals for their followers to aspire to, but these are interpreted by each believer as they see fit. There is no specific duty they must perform to fulfill their obligations.

Infrequent Duty (1 point): At certain times or in certain uncommon circumstances, the believers must perform a difficult or time-consuming act. This may involve mandatory charity, required military service, enforced social activity at certain times and places.

Regular Duty (2 points): At all times or at regular intervals the believers must carry out some practical duty for the faith. This may be a substantial mandatory tithe to the clergy, a period of enforced temple service in youth, a requirement to fight or help certain classes of people, or anything else that is likely to cost significant money or wholly occupy the believer for some time.

Constant Duty (4 points): The believer has so many duties and obligations to the faith that at least an hour of every day is eaten up in work for the cult or its clergy. In rarer but not unknown situations, the cult may require martyrdom or other self-sacrifice in the cause of their god.

d10

What Troubles Might Arise?

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Enacting a requirement that seemed feasible has suddenly become very hard or dangerous in a region |
| 2 | A requirement that seemed very uncommon has become a constant element of life to some believers |
| 3 | Sectarians are teaching alternate interpretations of the requirement that don't actually grant Dominion |
| 4 | Influential believers are forcing everyone to overdo the requirement out of a desire for civic piety |
| 5 | A charismatic priest is teaching a "better" way to perform the requirements that doesn't actually help |
| 6 | Doctrinal experts have extremely logical reasons for ignoring the requirements or doing them incorrectly |
| 7 | People are interpreting the requirements in spiritual or allegorical terms and performing them incorrectly |
| 8 | A ostentatious group of believers is making the requirement a great burden on themselves via odd interpretations of the rules |
| 9 | A group is making performance of the requirement a direct benefit to themselves in some way, so they encourage it to excess |
| 10 | Sects are coming to blows over the right interpretation |

Creating a Cult

Having just liberated a village of escaped slaves from the ruthless exactions of their Patrian masters, a Godbound decides to make them the nucleus of her cult as a Power 1 faction. After the miracles she displayed, the GM decides the locals are enthusiastic about the idea and are willing to become her followers.

The Godbound decides that her religion is going to be about personal freedom and a deep hatred of slavery and oppression of all kinds. Of course, fighting the good fight is never quite as simple as it seems, and so she goes down the five categories above to figure out how her cult should worship her.

She knows that she doesn't want to make a lot of demands on her worshipers, and secret believers she might have among slave populations can't exactly get together for Sunday worship. She decides that there are no daily obligations on her faithful, counting it as 0 points against the burden of the cult.

By the same token, she doesn't want to inflict a lot of taboos or make a lot of positive requirements for the faithful. She does, however, insist that slave-keeping of any kind is strictly forbidden to believers, and that they have an active positive responsibility to do something every week toward combating slavery or helping slaves. The GM reflects on this, and decides that slavery is a big enough element in the campaign to make this limit awkward to wealthy or powerful believers, who would be marked out by their refusal to keep slaves like their peers. The GM decides this counts as a 1-point negative restriction and a 1-point positive requirement.

She imparts a number of other moral principles to her believers, like a reverence for personal choice, individualism, and freedom of speech, but none of these are absolute enough or specific enough in their requirements to factor into Dominion earnings or Problems for the cult.

She also wants to make initiation simple, because she wants this faith to be easy to spread to enslaved populations that can't afford to have elaborate initiation rituals. She decides that simply declaring oneself a member of her cult is good enough for her, for a 0-point initiation requirement.

For clergy, however, she wants the best. She wants determined crusaders and liberators as her clerics, a hard core of militant infiltrators and agents. Only the bravest and most capable believers are good enough for this, and many of them can expect to die in service of their goddess' cause. Their training must be done in secret slave sanctuaries or in open strongholds of the faith, and these clerics recruit only proven agents. This harsh necessity counts as a 4-point clergy requirement.

All total, the Godbound's cult has six points of obligations, which makes it grant its Power plus one in Dominion points each month and obliges the Godbound to pick a quarter of their action die in Problems, rounded up. For a d6 action die, this means 2 points of Problems. Considering the loose organization of her cult and the harsh demands on its priests, she picks 1 point of "My cult's priests tend to die in action." and 1 point of "My believers often argue with each other and don't cooperate."

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