

WARHAMMER®

# FANTASY ROLEPLAY™



## SIGNS OF FAITH™

ADVANCED RELIGION AND BLESSINGS







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# SIGNS OF FAITH

## EXPANDED RELIGION BACKGROUND, RESOURCES, AND RULES

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## NEW RULES

In addition to a wealth of new information and background material on the Old World and the role of religion in the Warhammer setting, *Signs of Faith* includes some new and expanded rules on religion, priests, blessings, and Chaos. Players and GMs should familiarise themselves with these new rules before using them in play.

### ADVANCED RELIGION RULES

Includes new rules and content for Divine Favour, sources of divine power, holy symbols and artefacts. The advanced magic rules can be found in Chapter 5, starting on page 32 of this book.

### DISEASE

Disease helps underscore the “grim” part of grim and perilous adventure in the Old World. New rules for the horrific afflictions that may debilitate the characters can be found in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Plague*.

### MARKS OF NURGLE

The Ruinous Powers may bequeath a special boon upon one of their followers, a Mark of Chaos. The Mark of Nurgle and its effects are discussed in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Plague*.

## USING THE MATERIALS INCLUDED WITH SIGNS OF FAITH

In addition to this book, *Signs of Faith* includes a variety of new cards, sheets, and components for the Game Master and his players. Some of these resources supplement the content found in the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* Core Set.

### NEW CARDS

The location, item, and talent cards can be added to the other cards of those types and used as needed. *Signs of Faith* also includes more than 80 new blessings for aspiring priests, across all nine major faiths of the Empire.

### PUNCHBOARD

The punchboard components should be carefully removed from the frames. The pieces can be added to your existing supply of tokens and standups from *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

### DISEASE CARDS

The deck of disease cards introduces a new element of risk and peril to the Old World. When a character is exposed to filth, rot, decay, or infection, he may acquire a disease, represented by a card from this deck. See Chapter 3 of the *Book of Plague* for more information about disease cards.



## SET ICON

The cards and sheets included with *Signs of Faith* are noted with a special set icon. This allows you to quickly identify the supplement materials when sorting, adding, or removing cards from your game experience.



## CORRUPTION & MUTATION

In several places in *Signs of Faith*, the rules refer to mutation and corruption. The complete rules for mutation and corruption can be found in *Winds of Magic*, available separately. If you are not using the rules for mutation and corruption, then when an effect calls for a target to suffer corruption, the target should suffer an equal amount of fatigue and stress instead.





## CHAPTER ONE

# RELIGION & HISTORY

What follows is a lengthy excerpt from the third chapter of *The Empire Then and Now* by Professor Bartolomus Weigel of Nuln University. It is considered by many scholars one of the more accurate and reliable sources of the history of religion within the Empire.

### THE EMPIRE THEN AND NOW

Sigmar's coronation ushered in a new epoch of human history, and many old customs were abandoned in exchange for the mantle of civilisation. However, the ancient religions retained a grip over the people, and Sigmar was not above using the cults to his own advantage. Religion played a vital role in his coronation, and he ensured that he was crowned by the Ar-Ulric, high priest of the Teutogen tribe. This was a highly symbolic demonstration of his success at unifying the tribes, for the Teutogens had proved to be extremely difficult to subdue.

Before Sigmar's time, the cults were probably organised at a local level, with each tribe's priests worshipping the gods in their own manner. Some tribes honoured one god above the rest, and the most influential priest of that god assumed the position of high priest. It is unlikely that he was regarded as such outside his own tribe. When Sigmar became emperor, he seems to have granted

these high priests official control over all temples dedicated to their god throughout the Empire. This tactic increased the power of the high priests, and strengthened the loyalty of the cults to the Imperial system. Some scholars think that many of the oldest temples in the Empire may date to Sigmar's time. He may well have restored older wooden temples in stone and built new ones to glorify the gods and thank them for his victories.

Sigmar may also have encouraged the adoption of new faiths, ostensibly borrowing the faiths of Shallya and Verena from Tilea. These cults added a veneer of civilisation to Sigmar's new Empire, for Tilea had a pedigree of sophisticated culture inherited from the old empire of Remas. The introduction of the goddesses of Mercy and Learning may surely have played a role in encouraging the people to abandon the old tribal ways and adopt a more cultured lifestyle.

Sigmar's own piety was inspirational. It was his faith in the gods as well as strength of arms that helped vanquish the greenskins at Black Fire Pass, the event many scholars believe ultimately secured his Empire. Indeed, such was his devotion that the gods rewarded him with the ultimate accolade – unique among mortals, Sigmar achieved godhood.



Sigmar abdicated his throne after ruling for fifty years, and disappeared east into the World's Edge Mountains. Yet a mere 23 years after his disappearance, we know that Johann Helsturm became the first high priest of the burgeoning Cult of Sigmar. The conquering hero had returned – in spirit at least – to protect his Empire. Foes were crushed in his name, and great victories were inspired by his holy presence. His hammer, Ghal Maraz, was passed to each of his successors, a physical reminder that each Emperor represented Sigmar incarnate.

It was inevitable that the Cult of Ulric felt threatened by the rise of Sigmar's cult. Ulric represented the old ways, Sigmar the new Empire. They are both fierce gods of battle, yet Sigmar had bested Artur, chieftain of the Teutogens and champion of Ulric, atop the Fauschlag, proving Sigmar's dominance. Ulric was always a distant god, yet Sigmar had stood among his people in flesh and blood. Worshippers flocked to the new shrines dedicated to Sigmar; only in the north did the Cult of Ulric remain powerful.

The Ulricans must have bristled with rage at this upstart deity – they would not have slinked north without a fight. We can only guess at the blood shed between the supporters of the rival faiths. Throughout history, this rift has fomented war between north and south – during the time of the Three Emperors, ten centuries ago, battles between Reikland and Middenland were instigated for territorial gain but excused on grounds of religion. Fortunately, although animosity still simmers today, conflict between the two cults is restricted to the arenas of theology and politics.

As for the other cults, their influence has flowed and ebbed at different periods of history. During the reign of Emperor Boris Goldgather (1053-1115 IC), where the population groaned under heavy taxes and tyranny, Ranald gained popularity. During the famine caused by Goldgather's misrule, peasants flocked to Taal's shrines seeking deliverance, and the cults of both Shallya and Morr were prominent during the Black Plague (1111-1115 IC), as the populace was assailed by disease and death.

Religious piety rose to a fever pitch during the crusades of the 1450s, where commoners and nobles alike, inspired by the zeal of preachers, marched to free Estalia from the grip of the Sorcerer-Sultan Jaffar of Araby. Many of the Empire's holy fighting orders

*For the eyes of the High Priest of Verena only – Most erudite Father, the esteemed Professor Weigel is now safe in the sanctuary of Holy Verena's temple in Nuln, hidden from the clutches of the witch hunters. He is quite at home in our library.*

*It is intolerable that the Arch Lectors of Sigmar condemned him for his comments on Luthor Huss and the life of Sigmar. They seem bent on plunging our Empire into a new dark age of ignorance, eager to persecute any scholar who dares print the truth.*

*Your devoted servant,*

*Armenius Droysen*

were formed in this war. The most famous were the Knights of the Blazing Sun, a brotherhood of noble warriors who adopted Myrmidia as their patron deity after she granted them a momentous victory in a battle fought around her temple. Upon returning home, the Knights of the Blazing Sun dedicated a shrine to Myrmidia in Talabheim, and thus was her cult introduced to the Empire.

Centuries later, the cults played a prominent role in the defeat of the Vampire Counts. Priests of Morr stood among the soldiers who defended Altdorf when Vlad von Carstein besieged the city in 2051. The priests decimated von Carstein's shambling hordes by invoking the wrath of Morr upon the undead. It is said that Felix Mann, the thief who stole the ring that granted von Carstein immortality, was secretly a warrior priest of Ranald. Vlad met his ultimate doom at the hands of the Grand Theogonist Wilhelm III, who sacrificed his own life to destroy the vampire.

The Siege of Altdorf is one of the heroic instances where the Empire's cults came together to vanquish a common foe. Another such event was the Great War Against Chaos (2302-2304 IC). Magnus the Pious's unflinching faith in Sigmar is often cited as the reason for his success against the hordes of Chaos. However, other cults played a part in the victory. The prayers of a hundred priests of Manann angered the Sea of Claws, ensuring that few Norse fleets could outflank Magnus's armies. Ulric's wild paladins, the Knights of the White Wolf, charged to victory at the Hill of Heroes. Shallyans tended the wounded, Morrites tended the dying, and cultists of Verena and Myrmidia wielded their swords and spears against the ruinous legions. The forces of Chaos did not face mere men during that fateful war, but the entire pantheon of the Empire's gods.

Since then, the nation has gradually become one again. Under the rule of Karl Franz, relative stability has brought prosperity. Religion plays its role. The Elector Counts of Reikland have



enjoyed three generations of dominance thanks to the votes of the Grand Theogonist and his two Arch Lectors on the Imperial Council. The Cult of Sigmar is traditionally allied to Reikland, birthplace of their god and stronghold of their faith. The Cult of Ulric wields only a single vote, that of its high priest Ar-Ulric, and constantly petitions for political equality with the Sigmarites. The other cults are not represented at the council.

Prosperity has brought its own problems, however. The Cult of Sigmar, heaped with gifts of gold and land by aristocrats eager to ingratiate themselves with the faith, enjoys wealth and power as never before. In recent years, some initiates into the cult have not been eager warriors of Sigmar burning with zeal, but the sons of rich families who regard priesthood as a career rather than a vocation. Some grow concerned that the populace is losing respect for Sigmar's holy representatives, many of whom seem to care more about the contents of their purses than for their congregations.

Each year, the Chaos cults grow in influence. Each year, people become more fearful, and sensing that fear, the wild beastmen of the forests have become bolder. Superstition eclipses faith, and blind fanaticism replaces righteous zeal – flagellants roam the Empire prophesying doom, and witch hunters persecute innocent and the heretic alike.

One man has made a stand against this malady. Luthor Huss, a devoted warrior priest of Sigmar, was so disgusted at the self-serving behaviour of his fellow clergymen in Altdorf that he harangued them within the sacred precinct of the High Temple of Sigmar. Ignoring demands from the Arch Lectors to apologise for his incendiary words, Huss disowned the cult and left Altdorf to wander the Empire as a rogue preacher, railing against the dangers of Chaos and the corruption that he perceives has weakened the Cult of Sigmar.

Many in the cult demand his excommunication, and some even called for his death, yet Grand Theogonist Volkmar has refused to acquiesce to their wishes. It is my opinion that Volkmar's hands are tied. He is a slave to politics, despite his integrity. If he publicly acknowledged the corruption within his cult, and openly supported Huss, he would alienate the Cult of Sigmar and the Emperor from the powerful noble families that they rely on for political support. The Cult of Ulric would seize the high moral ground and demand that Karl Franz abdicate, and the balance of power would likely shift to Middenheim. Such a crisis would undermine the Empire and possibly cause civil strife.

Perhaps Volkmar has unleashed Luthor Huss, his unwitting hound, upon the corrupt elements within the Cult of Sigmar. Indeed, the renegade warrior priest is now the scourge of every crooked priest in the land, purging the corrupt with his warhammer and fiery faith. He rallies the faithful against the encroaching beastmen and rouses them against the agents of Chaos hiding in their midst. His preaching inspires like-minded individuals to take up arms in the name of Sigmar, people devoted not to the temptations of filthy lucre but to the high ideals that Sigmar embodies – faith, honour, and courage. More importantly, Luthor Huss brings hope in these dark times.

## THE PREHISTORY OF FAITH

On the following page is an excerpt from the second chapter of *Imperial Antiquities*, by Albrecht Hoefer. The excerpt presents a fascinating perspective on the ancient roots of the traditions and rites followed by citizens of the Empire today.





The ravages of time and war have ensured that scant knowledge of our past remains. Dwarfs and high elves are avid record-keepers, but show little interest in recording human affairs. Thus, rather than rely on fabrication (as other authors prefer), I must explore the beliefs of our early ancestors using what evidence is obtainable.

It is my theory that worship of the gods advanced parallel to the growth of culture. The oldest of the gods is said to be Taal, and the incorporation of Taal in the folk-name of the ancient Taleuten tribe, predecessors of the folk of Talabecland, lends credence to this belief. Logic dictates that the brutish hunters who first populated the Great forest praised the lord of nature above all other gods.

As our ancestors discovered agriculture (traditionally the gift of Rhya, Taal's wife), they abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and thus required divine aid from other gods. Alongside their villages grew settlements of the dead, which they prayed to Morr to protect. When they expanded into different tribes and encountered hostile enemies, or quarrelled among each other, they sought Ulric for strength. When they reached the sea, they begged Manann to safeguard their vessels. Even today religion arises from necessity - witness the adoption of the Myrmidian cult among the knights, because their ideals match those of this foreign warrior goddess.

What physical evidence do we have for the beliefs of our primitive ancestors? The oldest temples were constructed after the foundation of the Empire (the temple of Ulric in Middenheim was built in 63 IC, although many mistakenly believe it has stood atop the Fauschlag forever). However, among the Kölsa Hills in northern Talabecland, I have examined a circle of tall menhirs surrounding a central altar stone. Other such monuments dot the Empire. Perhaps our ancestors sacrificed animals to Taal at these crude shrines? In the wilder areas of the Empire, priests of Taal apparently still worship at these cromlechs. It is open to conjecture whether they follow an ancient tradition or are drawn to these henges because of their remoteness and mystery, for I have met no follower of Taal willing to divulge his customs; such is their distrust of the urbane and civilised.

Some scholars warn that these henges reveal a darker aspect of ancient religion - do not Chaos tribes and beastmen sacrifice humans at such monoliths? Other authorities ascribe the stones to the wood elves, for similar menhirs are said to guard the paths into Athel Loren. The secrets of these megaliths are lost to time, but if they were used as temples by our ancestors, then early religion was well-organised, for it must have required a charismatic authority to inspire their construction, and a communal effort to raise these massive stones (although some assert that they were created by magical means).

Organised religion requires a priesthood. I have discovered proof that this sacred institution existed even among the ancient tribes. Within a barrow among the Stirhügel Hills, I found a skeleton, its brow crowned by golden oak leaves, a silver sickle laid across its chest. Beside it was a great cauldron decorated with horned deities and legendary beasts.

I have excavated several of these burial mounds (always accompanied by a priest of Morr to placate the dead) and unearthed amulets still recognisable to us today - the raven of Morr, the wolf of Ulric, and so forth. Often, stag antlers guard the passages into the tombs, perhaps placed there to beseech Taal's protection.

It is plain that the traditions we revere today are extremely ancient, stretching far back into the mists of time.





## CHAPTER TWO

# ACROSS THE EMPIRE

As major spiritual and political institutions in the Empire, the religious cults have a broad and widely varied influence on the lives of the Empire's citizens. Through some of the cults' significant religious sites and interesting followers, an observer can learn quite a bit about how religion stretches across the Empire.

### A HOUSE DIVIDED

While it can seem that Imperial religion is split into many different cults all vying for influence and power, all opposed to the other or out to solely further their own cause, this is not necessarily the case. Ultimately the official cults of the Empire are on the same side, and when it comes down to it, they will fight and die for each other. Just as the most zealous Sigmarite fights and dies next to the most devout Ulrican, and the Shallyan doctor cooperates with the Verenean scholar in search of a remedy for some virulent disease, so too does a Taalist scout guide the army of a Myrmidian general.

What must be remembered is that all the gods are real, and all the common folk acknowledge this. Everyone believes in all the gods. Even the most fanatical cultist is in no doubt that all the other gods are just as real as their chosen patron deity. It is only the priests, with their particular fervour for a single deity, who might give the impression that there is division between the religions.

Of course, the priests fight like cats and dogs over the most trivial of theological matters. However, the enemies of the Empire and the enemies of all the people of the Old World are not trivial. Anyone who allows cult rivalries stand in the way of a united defence against the awesome might of the Dark Gods is a fool, and is playing a dangerous game.

So, although there is very little sign of such a thing on the streets of the Empire, and though the cults are defined as much by their animosity to other cults and the differences between them, it should always be remembered that fundamentally they are allies in the one great, eternal conflict.

### THE GRAND CONCLAVE

The Grand Conclave was created on the order of Magnus the Pious with the intention of ensuring that inter-cult rivalry and misunderstandings were kept in check, so that the various cults could cooperate more easily and launch joint ventures against the enemies of the Empire. The process of the conclave is an ongoing one, with official contact between the various cults facilitating it.



In addition, the Grand Conclave itself meets every five years. A number of the highest ranking religious figures from across the Empire attend to set the agenda for the conclave's work for the coming years. They have the authority to clear up any matter that has been hampering progress and to implement new initiatives.

The location of the meeting changes, and the greatest temples and other religious venues in the Empire vie with each other for the honour of hosting the conclave. The Emperor chooses the venue, and the decision is the focus of a lot of politicking. This sometimes leads to underhand tactics, not the sort of behaviour that is really conducive to the ideals of the conclave and the spirit in which it was founded.

## THE HIGH TEMPLE OF MANANN

The High Temple of Manann in Marienburg is one of the most important sites for the cult in the Old World. The temple is a combination of a well appointed building at the entrance to the cityport docks and several hulks moored alongside it on the harbour wall. The building houses the immense wealth generated by generations of merchants and seamen. It is here that the Priests of Manann sell their services and business to the merchants and captains of the fleets. The ships of the temple are the area of worship and are of ancient origin – their masts point to the heavens like Manann's trident thrusting from the waves. The hulls of these ships, ancient and new, are lashed to one another and the building, to form a vast wooden temple-island vessel dedicated to the god of the sea.



No one knows why or how these vessels came to be here. Perhaps once some of these ships could have sailed like any other vessel, but barnacles and weed have long since naturally moored the ships for all time. The condition of the vessels is a hindrance too; their timbers have deteriorated badly and age has taken its toll. The ships are heavily rotting with many decks below the waterline submerged by the sea. Where the tide comes in, worshippers can wonder at the majesty of the Manann's domain, and when the tide retreats they can search for divine signs from their god. The temples' building has also been constructed in such a way to allow the rising tide to flood its wide-open courtyard – many rites are performed in this sacred place, full of sea water. Sharks come naturally to the temple, especially during dark times and portents.

Despite the failings of the vessels, they still float and are strangely unaffected by heaviest seas which batter the dock entrance – even stormy seas which would founder the strongest ships of the line in the Imperial Navy.

## THE REIKGOTT TEMPLE

Reikgott is one of the ancient names for the spirit-god of the river Reik. It is an ancient spirit with many names and has been worshipped in the Reikland for millennia. Nowadays it is generally indistinguishable from Manann. To the common man, the Reikgott is just another name for Manann.

Salkirche is a well-known figure down on the docks of Altdorf. He is a wild looking, tattered man often found begging near the docks or frequenting one of the notoriously rough dockside inns. There is very little to distinguish him at first glance from any number of similar down and outs who inhabit the area.

However, upon entering a conversation with the man (only really possible if he is getting plenty of drinks bought for him) he will show another side. Suddenly Salkirche will come across as thoughtful and educated, though a faraway look will remain in his eyes.

The man was in fact a priest of Manann. He went on many voyages of discovery to the New World and even beyond. He has seen sights that the people of the Old World can barely imagine. It was on one of these voyages that he was marooned on a desert island, after a disagreement with his ship's captain.

He lived as best he could upon the island until rescued seven years later by a passing Empire great ship. Salkirche has gleaned much knowledge on his travels, and can be a great source of stories and insights into the wider world.

This temple is situated on a small rock island in the middle of the Reik, half a mile or so downstream from Altdorf. It can only be safely reached by boat. Fortunately, an initiate of Manann is always on hand to pick up any visitors from the bank and row them to the temple. Very little of the temple is built, as such – most of it seems to have been carved from the island itself by the force of the Reik, and the smooth walls are a spectacular site and stand testament to the power of Manann.

It is accepted practice that the occupants of any vessel passing the temple stop briefly to pay their respects or offer a sacrifice to Manann, or, if they are in a hurry, to simply throw their sacrifice overboard towards the temple as they pass. Because of the impressive natural architecture and its proximity to Altdorf, the temple is a very lucrative one.

*Manann ignored me for seven years though I prayed to him every day. Now I am ignoring him.*

*– Sacha Salkirche, ex-Priest of Manann*



## THE HAUNTED CEMETERY OF OLD ALTDORF

Cutting a broad swathe through the tall, ramshackle slums, overlooked by the imposing Amethyst college, is the largest of Morr's gardens and routes to the underworld in the Empire – the fabled haunted cemetery of old Altdorf. It is surrounded by a high, spiked wall, beyond which grows a thick tangle of black rose trees. The wall is in disrepair in many places along its great length, but few dare to breach the sanctity of Morr's realm – especially in this place of ethereal notoriety.



Beyond the wall are countless ancient graves and mausoleums of generations of Altdorfers, some simple and plain, some bedecked by ornate and looming skull-headed statues. There are also thousands of shallow, unmarked graves of those hastily interred after the devastation of the Red Plague in 1786. The dead rest uneasy in their graves and their spirits still roam the garden to this day, and the proximity of the Amethyst college is certainly no coincidence. At the centre of the cemetery is the mortuary: a great, plain slab of a building in black granite accessed through a foreboding stone portal.

For most of the year, the garden is forbidden to Altdorfers, who leave their dead at the iron gates with a few of their possessions and money to pay for the burial. Only the priests of Morr are allowed in the garden and they rarely leave. But, upon the Festival of Morr the living, should they dare, are permitted to enter the garden to feast and celebrate with their deceased friends and relatives. For some, it is quite literally...

Freundlich is one of the Cult of Morr's foremost scholars on revenants and spirits. He has studied them for many years, ever since he was a boy, when his dead father visited regularly. Managing to put his father to rest, he now makes it his calling to deal with any unquiet spirits in the same way.

He travels the Old World, looking out for stories of hauntings and unusual happenings, and when something strikes his interest he investigates. His devotion to Morr has supplied him with the wherewithal to blast the spirits to the underworld, but he uses such power only in the most extreme cases.

Normally he attempts to find the most understanding way to put an end to a spirit's torment to allow it to rest in peace once and for all. If only that were possible more often...

*There are many spirits who wander the world. They have died but they cannot leave. Some are evil and cling to this place with malice. Some are merely unfortunate, and simply need to be shown the way.*

*– Caspar Freundlich*

## THE BLACK SEPULCHRE

Long ago, some of the dead of Altdorf were buried in a network of underground passages beneath the city's Gardens of Morr. These catacombs survive to this day, filled with the bones of the long-dead. Rumour has it that their most valuable possessions were buried with them, and some treasures are still to be found in the catacombs. This tempts many a brave or desperate adventurer down.

The catacombs link up several important Gardens of Morr within the city, including the haunted cemetery of Old Altdorf. Stories say that there is an underground temple, the Black Sepulchre, at the heart of the catacombs. The complex is said to be looked after by a secret order of Morrite Priests who, they say, never see the light of day. They spend their entire existence patrolling the catacombs and keeping the dead quiet. This is fanciful but it shows the sort of reputation that Morrites have that this is easily believed.

## THE TEMPLE OF MYRMIDIA

The walled and barracks-like domed temple of Myrmidia in Altdorf is relatively new compared to the temples of the more established Imperial cults, and shows the growing confidence that the cult has in its place in the Empire. A great blue marble statue of Myrmidia stands in front of the colonnaded central building. There are signs of martial activity everywhere: followers spar, duel, and joust to improve their skills and worship Myrmidia. The robed initiates are a picture of youth and prowess.

The temple and others like it throughout the Empire are rapidly gaining a reputation as excellent opportunities for the offspring of the aspiring middle class to begin their way in the world. The military connection is emphasised, but worshippers receive a well-rounded education and the instilling of self-discipline that promises to stand students in good stead for their entire life.

The Imperial army benefits as well, by having a stream of competent recruits to boost their ranks. Some of the old guard resent the Myrmidians, however, seeing their training and fighting style as too mechanical or formulaic to be effective. They believe that a prayer to Sigmar or Ulric and a rush of blood is all that is needed on the battlefield.





## KATRINA VOLKOVA

Volkova calls herself a lady's tutor, and, recommended by word of mouth, a good number of the finest ladies of Altdorf have begun to hire her for her special tuition. When their fathers and husbands might imagine they are going over the finer points of dinner party conversation, or how to fold a napkin, they are more likely to be hard at it perfecting their flunges and sixtes.

For Volkova is an ace duellist, trained by some of the finest swordsmen of Remas, and a devout follower of Myrmidia. Her father, the Erengard ambassador to Remas, eventually became tired of her duelling and masculine pursuits and tried to marry her off. What became of the prospective husband is not hard to imagine, and Volkova fled to Altdorf.

So, Volkova now makes her living by teaching the ladies of Altdorf some of what she knows of cold steel. One should not be misled by Volkova's impeccable manners and fine deportment; she is a ruthless opponent, and some might even say, a born killer. She encourages the fine ladies of Altdorf to follow her in this respect.

## THE BERGO ACADEMY

In a spectacular cliff-top location overlooking the Reik along the road to Nuln is the military school of Maestro Clemente di Bergo. The tall, single tower is reachable only by a narrow rope bridge; the place seems to be ideally defensible. Bergo came to the Empire some thirty-odd years ago and his history is shrouded in controversy. Some say he killed the Duke of Lucinni's son in a duel; some say he was run out of Tilea because of heresies against the Cult of Myrmidia.

In short order, Bergo has become one of the most respected proponents of what he calls the Martial Art of Warfare in the Empire. He runs his school based on fundamental Myrmidian principles, and the place is highly prized by the upper echelons of Imperial nobility as a prestigious place to send one's offspring for unsurpassed polish on a young noble's education.

Several assassins have travelled from Tilea to the academy to end Bergo's life, but none have succeeded, so far.

*What need have we of brute strength,  
what need of raised voice, what need  
of the law, what need have we when we  
have cold steel? Only the will to use it!*

— Katrina Volkova, Lady's Tutor

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF ALTDORF

The Brotherhood is a mysterious Ranaldian order that stretches all across the Old World, represented in some fashion in nearly every large city. The order is dedicated to one aspect of Ranald: the Night Prowler. To say it is a criminal organisation is not entirely accurate, but not far off either.

The network supports the work of some of the more adventurous cultists of Ranald in their efforts to steal as much as they can get from the privileged classes. The Brotherhood of Altdorf is particularly secretive as prominent members of the cults of Sigmar and Verena have pledged to put an end to their activities.

The order is dedicated to helping fellow members with whatever they need to procure their goods, and to get rid of it for the best price afterwards. One of their best clients, said to be a high-ranking cultist of Ranald himself, is a minor noble who compulsively collects the stolen valuables of other nobles. He is trying to complete his collection of all the Reikland's nobility's snuffboxes.



## THE BEGGAR'S BANQUET

Every year on Ranald's Day, somewhere in Altdorf, numerous beggars of the city converge upon what is called the Beggar's Banquet. The down-and-outs with a plan, the grifters and small time con men, the bawds and dubious guides, tricksters, and petty gamblers meet up to pay their respects to Ranald. Whether they are honouring his protector aspect, or his deceiver aspect, or some other facet of the inscrutable deity, is down to each individual.

The service is led by cloaked and masked priests of Ranald. After the service, each beggar donates what he can before the congregation feasts upon whatever the cult has managed to provide. Some of the wealthiest personages of Altdorf find their larder a little empty

A few years ago, talk in the streets was of a dashing young cat burglar who would break into the townhouses of the finest nobility, into the lady's chamber there, and steal but a single item, and in its place leave a calling card, a simple print of a cat's silhouette, with a large spiked collar. Thus, he soon earned the nickname the Cat, and many ladies' hearts were all of a flutter hoping that they might be the next victim of this dashing rogue.

This all came to an end after a couple of years. The Cat was too ambitious and ended up being on the unfortunate end of a guard's blunderbuss. Shot from the roof of his victim's house, the Cat plummeted into the Reik far below and was never seen again. But recently, a young noble lady had her ithilmar earring stolen from her ear as she slept, and in the morning, upon her pillow, she found a parchment card printed with the silhouette of a kitten, with a large spiked collar.



*make him a thief?*

– Rudolf Klammer, Brotherhood of Altdorf

that night. Undoubtedly, the conversation over the feast is always about what new things can be stolen, who are the easiest marks, and what are the newest ways to part the rich and the naive from their money. The Brotherhood of Altdorf does not approve of the Beggar's Banquet and refuses to support it. It is too unrefined and indiscriminate for their tastes. This has caused a friction between some followers of Ranald.

## THE TEMPLE HOSPICE OF SHALLYA

The grand marble halls of the Temple Hospice of Shallya in Altdorf resound to the sounds of the Empire like no other place. The temple has been a centre of Shallyan worship in the Empire for centuries. No one knows when the transition from serenity and calmness, a place of quiet introspection, cleanliness, and sanctuary to an institution of throngs of madmen and the desperate of Altdorf began. All that is known is that an enigmatic Arch-Lector of Shallya ordained that the gates to the Temple Hospice would remain open for all time as a sign of Shallya's divine will.

Thus, in the time since this proclamation, the Temple has been overrun by the poorest citizens, bands of zealots, and penitent madmen. Bands of flagellants often leave here, having been normal men entering on the verge of mental collapse. In some places, diseased colonies have sprung up within the grounds. Many of the dispossessed of the city have found a niche here and have even come to blows defending their territory.

The priests have become increasingly overwhelmed and out of place in their own temple. Its once white corridors have been taken over by the poor and its neat gardens home to shanty-towns. Its grand halls have become makeshift market places and even taverns. The place is filled with the screams of the infirm and the insane. The priests of Shallya bravely try to tend and pray to all who enter. It is an impossible task and unending duty, but still they try and perform their miracles wherever they can. Despite the inconveniences and challenges it poses, there is no denying the Temple Hospice is a clear testament to the ideals of the cult.



## HESTER ALSBACH

Hester Alsbach is an aged, frail lady, but although her body is failing her mind is still keen. She has dedicated her life to researching diseases in an effort to find cures for them. She believes that Shallya helps those most who help themselves, and she hopes to defeat diseases by methodical process instead of relying upon calling the goddess's attention to a particular case.

She theorises that the key to victory is to 'know thine enemy'. She has been known to cultivate diseases afflicting some of her patients and has even inflicted ailments upon experimental subjects in order to study them. Once Alsbach preached at the Hospice of Mercy in Altdorf, but some of her practices proved too radical for the Lector of that temple and she was asked to leave. Since that time, she has taken her theories into the hovels and slums of Altdorf.

## THE SANATORIUM OF MERCY

Though thousands of diseased and infirm souls suffer and die in Altdorf, only a few are admitted to this sanatorium deep within one of the great slums of the city. Here the unfortunate afflicted can hold some hope that one day they may be cured. No one knows how many of them truly recover, but those that do get better will often stay with the sanatorium, working as orderlies and nurses, converted to the cause through their recovery.

The great sprawling building is surrounded by a high, wrought iron fence, dotted with carved stone doves, as if Shallya's divine minions were guarding the place. Some argue that the fence is meant to keep the patients in, while others argue it is to keep the hopeful supplicants out. Every day, dozens of sickened lunatic souls present themselves at the gates of the sanatorium hoping to be admitted. Each dawn, a number of Shallyans pass through the gate to inspect the sick, raving and suffering to determine which ones will be allowed to enter.

The lessons of the Temple Hospice of Shallya have been learned here and access to the sanatorium is tightly controlled. The cult is careful about who they admit and often come across as uncaring and aloof. The trials that prospective patients must go through often leaves a sour taste for those not selected for treatment.



*Before we can destroy a disease once and for all, we must first nurture it as much as we can. In that way we can learn to understand it, and use our knowledge to cure it.*

– Hester Alsbach, Shallyan Priest





## THE HOLY TEMPLE OF SIGMAR

One of the true marvels of Imperial architecture, the Holy Temple of Sigmar in Altdorf is the centre of the cult and the seat of the Grand Theogonist. As such it is one of the most important hubs of power in the Old World. Some argue it holds more power than the Emperor's Palace.



Its magnificent carved stone facades dominate the city around it, and the building demonstrates to all good citizens for miles around the awesome power of the cult, of Sigmar, and of the Empire. The main hall of the temple is truly one of the marvels of the Old World. It has a massively high arched ceiling, overlooked by countless balconies and precarious gantries.

It is estimated that the Great Temple can accommodate thousands of worshippers. The building was constructed, renovated, embellished, and enhanced over the centuries, and has ancient wings and almost-forgotten corners and sections forbidden to all but ordained priests of Sigmar.

The reliquary below the temple boasts many sacred and powerful artefacts, but pride of place is taken by the Shroud of Magnus, rumoured to be the very burial cloth used when Magnus the Pious was interred. If the rumours are true, the shroud could be one of the most precious relics in the entire Old World.

Felberg is a name that might strike fear into the heart of even the most innocent Imperial citizen. He is a witch hunter of the Holy Order of the Templars of Sigmar, and rarely has that order have been served by such an enthusiastic and ruthless member.

With all the authority of the Grand Theogonist behind him, the man is able to prosecute his war with the forces of darkness across the Reikland. He believes that allowing a single servant of the Dark Gods to go free is so dangerous to the survival of the Empire that he is willing to sacrifice the lives of hundreds of innocents to prosecute Sigmar's judgement.

This was amply demonstrated when he destroyed the entire village of Bechheim, burning every one of its inhabitants to make certain that the suspected Chaos Cultist hiding there could not escape.

For his great service, Felberg has been granted a hammer from the vaults of the Great Temple. It is said to be imbued with magical properties, and its creation was commanded by Sigmar himself when he was emperor.

*It is a humble job like any other. As a stable boy cleans the stables, and a servant cleans his master's household, so I keep the Empire clean.*

– Magnus Felberg, Witch Hunter

## THE WITCH HUNTERS' GREAT TEMPLE

Great Temple, the headquarters of the Witch Hunters, was established in 1220 and built near the Holy Temple of Sigmar in Altdorf. The stoic, sturdy building is nearly as imposing as the witch hunters who congregate there. Great Temple is a vast structure where witch hunters meet to discuss the issues facing the Empire, share interrogation techniques, or philosophise on religious matters. Here, witch hunters take advantage of Great Temple's stables and smithy, recover from their wounds in the infirmary, or use its gaol or torture chambers to extract the confessions they need.

In addition to its resources for witch hunters, Great Temple is also the Chapter House for the Order of the Templars of Sigmar. Within its hallowed halls, the Lord Protector, Supreme Council, and Chamberlain of the order meet to discuss important matters – be it threats to the souls of the Empire's citizens, or disciplinary action against more zealous members of its order.

Great Temple is said to house an impressive library. The shelves are lined with texts, manuscripts, and scrolls detailing faith, history, and heresy – such as Hieronymus Black's *Rules & Statutes*, considered the authoritative work on the founding tenets and strictures of the Order. However, it is whispered that within the library, darker, more esoteric things lurk. Hidden away within the library, copies of the dread *Liber Malefic* and *Liber Chaotica* lie waiting for those brave – or foolish – enough to glean the terrible insights they hold.

## THE EYE OF THE FOREST

Of all the sites in the Empire, none is more revered for the Priests of Taal than Talabheim – the home of god of nature. Located south of the middle mountains, Talabheim lies in the centre of the Great Forest and for this reason it is sometimes known as the Eye of the Forest where, like the eye of a cyclone, all is calm amidst the danger all around.



Talabheim is built within a huge shallow crater, many miles across, whose outer edge forms a rocky rim and a natural wall. This rim wall has been built up and fortified and marks the boundary of the



Dirmann is a holy figure in the cult of Taal. He roams the Great Forest of Talabecland and rarely, if ever, ventures into civilisation. Still, he seems to know more about the politics and events of the Empire than many a courtier of the Imperial Court. It is as though his information stems from the trees and the birds of the Great Forest.

He is often sought out by cultists of Taal who want the benefit of his wisdom and insight. They enter the forest to search for him, but few find him. Only the most blessed of Taal manage to stumble across his path as if by blind luck

Some say that Dirmann is a sight to behold, claiming that he has become so wild, so much a part of the wilderness he inhabits, that he is difficult to distinguish from the beasts of the wood. Yet, others insist that he is a clean, noble-looking man in neat robes with an urbane demeanour. One thing is clear, however, one should not search for him unless one's faith in Taal and adherence to his strictures are absolute.

town. The land inside the wall is extensive and includes farmlands as well as the city itself. Around the city flows Taal's river, the Talabec, forming a natural moat against attack.

The majority of Taal's temples are in the fringes of wild and untamed places; they are self-reliant and seldom have contact with one another. Priests of Taal spend the majority of their time wandering the lands as rangers, helping to protect against the evils that would despoil nature. However, there are countless ancient shrines to Taal throughout Talabheim. All of them are revered to the utmost by the Cult of Taal – for all Talabheim is considered Taal's home. Therefore, of all the places in the Empire, Talabheim is the most likely place to meet the Priests of Taal, who are normally reclusive and unused to the trappings of civilisation. Here, they speak to their followers, make sacrifices to their god, and offer tidings to the dangers within the Great Forest.

## THE KARLSBAUM MONASTERY

Deep within the Reikwald, not far from Grünburg lies an ancient, long abandoned Rhyen monastery. It is very hard to find. The thick and gnarled growths of the old forest slowly turn to what were once neat rows of fruit trees – but now are as old and twisted as the forest. The wild undergrowth makes way for once well-tended but now overgrown herbs and shrubs. The drab monotony in the forest becomes a rainbow of colours and melange of exotic smells.

Plants are not native here, some from different continents and largely unsuited to the climate, somehow thrive. Native species grow strong and abundant. It is almost as if the soil is warmer and the sun shines just a bit brighter here, than in the surrounding forest. The monastery buildings seem to have been made out of the living flora itself, low and unobtrusive, woven from bramble and willow, reed and hazel.

The power of Rhyen here can only be felt by the most perceptive as she is now almost gone from the land. Occasionally a wandering priest of Taal will stay here and give praise to Rhyen before continu-

*These priests of Taal, these horned hunters, these worshippers of the forest, they may live upon the forest as we do; hunt its creatures as we do; even revere her beauty as we do. But they will never understand as we do.*

– Asterion, Wood elf scout

ing on his way. But mostly the place lies abandoned and almost forgotten. Nevertheless rumours abound of elves and spirits and other strangeness that live in the woods.

## THE ULRICSBURG

The centre of Ulrican worship in the Old World is the Ulricsberg. Legends speak of the creation of the Ulricsberg. The brothers Taal and Ulric were the most powerful of the gods. Both were widely worshipped. And yet Ulric was troubled, for it seemed that his older brother came before him in all things. To Taal he voiced his concern. Taal asked what would make him content, and Ulric replied that he desired a place, a realm that he could truly say belonged to him alone.



Taal considered this and decided to grant his younger brother's request. He gave to Ulric a vast rock, surrounded on all sides by harsh forests filled with beasts. Ulric was well pleased with the gift. Thanking his brother for his kindness, he struck the rock with his fist, smashing the top away and leaving a plateau a mile across. Here, he declared, his followers would build a great fortress-temple and a city, where his fires would burn eternally and where men would come from far and wide to pay him tribute. And thus the Ulricsberg was in times past called the Fauschlag which in the tongue of the Teutogens means Fist-Strike.

The Ulricsberg was discovered by Artur, the chief of the Teutogens, in -50 IC. He tunnelled up to its peak and constructed a mighty fortress. In 63 IC, Wulcan, the High Priest of Ulric, experienced a vision of Ulric smiting the top of the Ulricsberg. Inspired, Wulcan built a temple to Ulric on the site around an eternal flame. It is said that if this flame ever goes out then the next winter will last a whole year and even forever. The Great Fortress Temple to Ulric on the Ulricsberg is the most important shrine to the God in the Old World, and all members of Cult of Ulric are expected to make a pilgrimage at least once in their lives.

## THE SHRINE OF THE WOLF

On a country road ten miles north of Altdorf lies an obscure shrine. It is a small stone tower not more than ten feet square and four storeys high. It tapers as it rises and ends in a tiled belfry. The bell is gone, however, and hasn't been there for hundreds of years. On the



## OLAF EICHHORN

Eichhorn is a priest at the Temple of Ulric in Altdorf. His family of devout Ulricans came to Altdorf when he was very young. Olaf was beaten many times during his childhood by his peers, as his strident Ulrican doctrine did not match the prevalent Sigmarite views. However, he refused to be cowed or silenced.

He has resented the Sigmarite dominance of the Empire, especially in Altdorf, all his life and prays for the day when proper balance is restored. As Eichhorn gets older he is increasingly strident on the matter, and some of his sermons have turned into rants that might border on the heretical if overheard by a less than generous Sigmarite and especially by a Witch Hunter

One of Eichhorn's more extreme heresies foolishly doubts whether Sigmar is a true god at all. He has privately formed theories that Sigmar was nothing more than a mighty mortal hero – and by implication the entire Empire is founded on heresy.

*Heed me. It will snow in the Reikland once more.  
And through the snow, the wolves will hunt.*

– Olaf Eichhorn, Priest of Ulric

ground floor is a wooden altar supporting a small, wooden statue of a wolf, and carved into the wall behind it is the simple legend: Sigmar and Ulric. According to local legends, the place commemorates the site where Sigmar was said to have met with Ulric himself in wolf form. He fought the wolf to a standstill and, depending on which version of the story you believe, either Sigmar was impressed by the wolf's bravery and agreed to spare it, or the wolf was impressed by Sigmar and agreed to spare him. However, both versions of the story are obscure these days. Locals who call it anything at all call it the Shrine of the Wolf.

As can be seen from the state of the place, hardly anyone visits here anymore, and few of them leave offerings. There is no one to look after the shrine. Although the building belongs to the cult of Ulric, it surprises few that it remains untended.

## THE TEMPLE OF VERENA

The main temple of Verena in Altdorf is little more than a chapel that connects the University to the Great Library. This reflects the Verenean philosophy that learning is an act of worship in itself. Members of the cult seem to assume that the university and library are part of the temple and belong to the cult. This is not actually the case, but so many of the professors and librarians are devout followers and cultists of Verena that it may as well be.



Fabius the Pole Sitter is a familiar sight along the Nuln road in the south of Altdorf. He is a wizened Verenean scholar who took to his pole over forty years ago in penance for some long-forgotten misdeed. He has remained on his narrow platform thirty feet above the street ever since. He is usually surrounded by piles of books. He lets down a bucket into which people can put food and things for him to read. He leaves notes in the bucket to request reading material and Verenean initiates usually fetch them for him.

If someone puts a question in the bucket, Fabius will attempt to answer it, in writing, and lowers the answer down by bucket. He seems to have prodigious powers of recall and an uncanny ability to answer remarkably accurately and quickly. Sometimes, if someone has a question, Fabius will request some favour before he will answer it. This usually involves finding a particular book.

Many of the vaults and annexes of these institutions are locked and guarded. Access is only granted to priests of Verena and those whom the high priest approves. The nature of some of the artefacts and tomes to be found are somewhat dubious, and the Holy Order of the Templars of Sigmar might be very surprised to discover the sort of things being studied here, almost right under their noses.

## THE ORDER OF MYSTERIES

The Order of Mysteries is a Verenean order based somewhere in the University of Altdorf. It is dedicated to finding lost tomes and artefacts. They are utilised by the cult in general, and by clients from outside the cult who wish to locate legendary objects.

This involves much research, but also, unusually for Vereneans, much fieldwork too. The order has at its beck and call some of the finest minds in the Old World. What they have in common is a willingness to travel, get their hands dirty, and face unspeakable dangers, all in the name of intellectual study and discovery. Because of the nature of their work, the Order of Mysteries often comes into direct opposition with the Witch Hunters. A lost item interesting enough for the Order of Mysteries to be concerned with might also hold a reason for the Templars of Sigmar to take an interest.

*How far can you see down there? How far do  
you think I can see from my perch? Bring  
me a book and I can see the whole world.*

– Fabius the Pole Sitter





## CHAPTER THREE

# CULT HIERARCHY

All the cults of the Empire use slightly different structures to organise their followers, but they can be expressed under the same basic hierarchy. This is reflected in the career sheets and advance structure common to the Imperial cults. The following elements are typical of most of the cults, but they describe no single cult in particular. Each cult has its own unique exceptions.

### FOLLOWERS

Followers of the Imperial cults are many and varied. Anyone who works for or is supported by a particular cult, or even anyone who favours a particular god above the others and takes a keen interest in that god's cult, can be described as a follower. Most followers do little more than simply attend services, donate their tithe, do trivial tasks for the cult, and never rise above this status.

This is usually not a problem for them as they will have their own careers and interests to follow. They do not aspire to leadership, they show no particular divine talent, and are thankful to serve and worship their god in their own small way.

Some followers show a skill for directing the will of the gods and can manifest blessings. These talented members may rise in the ranks of the cult. They are usually easily spotted by the senior members of the faith, who direct and mentor them, and put them to work, for the future well-being of the cult is in their hands.

The most talented followers are singled out and given more ambitious tasks to perform. This is useful to the cult, of course, but also acts as a test of faith and ability for the prospective initiate. If the follower is seen to do well, and acts according to the strictures of his god then he will be indoctrinated into the cult proper and becomes a formal 'initiate'.

### INITIATION

Most cults have some sort of initiation rite that every member must perform. This shows a proper devotion to the cult and an element of trial or sacrifice. This is not usually a major or particularly difficult task, and is often merely symbolic. Some cults are more demanding than others in this respect.

For example, the Cult of Taal might require a prospective initiate to spend eight days in the wilderness fending for himself. If he succeeds, then it is deemed that Taal himself has seen fit to protect the supplicant and he is worthy to enter the cult. The Cult of Verena,



# TYPICAL EMPIRE CULT STRUCTURE & HIERARCHY



his simple diagram shows the general organisational structure within the common religions of the Empire. While each faith uses different means to evaluate when a follower is ready to move from one rank to the next, most faiths have several distinct tiers which influence the responsibilities, expected behaviour, and prayerful practices deemed appropriate for a member of that rank. Further, despite similarities and shared tenets of faith within a particular religion, various temples or practising cults may differ regionally.

The graduated triangle behind the ranks indicates a general guideline of a faith's composition. The broad base of the triangle represents the fact that there are more initiates and

members of the lower ranks, where the lighter shade represents an access to the simplest prayers and blessings of that faith. As the triangle narrows toward the top, fewer and fewer followers of that calibre ascend to such prominence within a single faith, while the colour darkens, showing those who do advance this far within the cult have access to more powerful prayers and blessings.

The High Priest rests at the top point of the triangle, the supremely dedicated priest who has ascended to a position to direct the affairs of the faith, as well as represent the faith in the Emperor's court.


on the other hand, may instead require an initiate to memorise a long religious tract or present a researched argument to a number of peers.

For a character that starts the game as an initiate, this will probably have happened long before even the first session begins, and the game will follow his career as his period of initiation comes to an end. For a character that becomes an initiate during the game, initiation can be played out, and giving the character a task in which he must prove himself and his devotion can be a challenging and fun part of the game.

## INITIATES

Once initiated into an Imperial cult, an initiate formally becomes part of that cult, and usually wears the robes and other trappings of the cult that distinguishes him as a member of that faith. He will be expected to obey his superiors in all things. Initiates do not normally have a formal title, but are often referred to as Brother or Sister. Being an initiate does not mean that a character's path is set for life, however. Many initiates go on to serve their cult further and rise in rank within the organisation, but some fall by the wayside. Either they do not have the inclination or fortitude to follow their god so closely or they choose to leave the cult and follow another





*swear before Sigmar they don't teach hem right, any more. They just don't know what they're doing. He put the incense in upside down and couldn't remember the proper words to the dedication. He had to hum the last bit.*

*– Klara Vogel, Barkeep and Cutpurse*



path. They are usually let go without grievance. These former initiates can even be successful in other walks of life and continue to be devout supporters of their faith.

The life of an initiate is often tedious and hard. In a way, an initiate works full time for the cult, and is often provided with shelter, food, drink, and other necessities as he pursues his duties. Any luxuries must be purchased by the initiate himself, though in most cases such luxuries are frowned upon. In many Imperial cults, an initiate is expected to demonstrate his worthiness by suffering hardships and denying himself small pleasures.

Initiates can be employed at a small local temple under a single priest. They might even be left to their own devices, looking after a remote wayside shrine, for example. This can be a lonely job, relieved only by the occasional visitor. Local temples often have a priest and a lower ranked assistant, either an initiate or a disciple. An initiate will be expected to perform the mundane jobs around the temple, freeing the priest for the more important duties. The priest will be expected to teach the initiate all he needs to know to rise in rank so that perhaps one day he will take over the running of the temple. There are some temples, especially in the more remote towns, where an unbroken line of priests and initiates goes back decades, if not centuries.

In a larger temple in a big city, or in a remote monastery, there could be dozens of initiates at work at one time. Their duties are usually spread around various chores, giving an initiate a chance to learn about all the functions of the temple. So, an initiate might scrub the steps every Aubentag morning, copy holy scripture throughout Marktag, and dole out food to the poor on Backertag evenings. The exact duties that an initiate must perform depend on his cult and his temple or monastery, and might also be influenced by local traditions.

To start with, an initiate has little time to himself. For any time not spent doing menial work or attending services, he will be expected to study the various scriptures, sacraments, rituals, or rites of his faith. As his initiate period draws to an end, he is given much more freedom and opportunities to prove that he is worthy to become a disciple. Again this will depend on the cult and other circumstances, but the sorts of jobs a senior initiate might be tasked with are many. See **Chapter Six: Playing a Priest**, starting on page 38, for some ideas.

The latter stages of an initiate's service will certainly be an exciting time for him, as he gets to interact with the outside world more frequently, and he will be given important and potentially even dangerous jobs to do. If he is fortunate, he may be able to find a reliable band of like-minded souls to help him. Regardless, he will be expected to uphold the good name of the cult and to act responsibly in its service. In many ways, his conduct and adherence to cult strictures should be more important to the service of his god and his future in the cult than the success or failure of his mission.

No doubt, priests will keep an eye on the initiate's progress and take his actions into consideration when deciding if he should become a true disciple of the cult. An initiate who has proven himself capable of taking on missions successfully and acting on his own initiative will doubtless be called upon again by the cult when difficult situations arise and a reliable, devout, and adventurous soul is required. On the other hand, an initiate who shows himself to be perhaps more 'expendable' than others might get given extremely dangerous tasks.

## DISCIPLES

Even after completing his time as an initiate, a cultist is not yet considered a full priest. Rather, he is known as a disciple. A disciple often continues to bear the title of Brother or Sister, and may expect to be addressed in that manner.

A disciple should by now be a relatively experienced and respected member of the cult who has shown that he can be trusted with the cult's affairs. Because he does not have the responsibility of overseeing a temple or ward, a disciple has a lot more freedom to roam than a priest. The cult often takes advantage of this, moving disciples around to different areas so that they may learn from the customs, practices, and prevailing thought of different areas so that the temple may in turn benefit from fresh insights and new ideas. In addition, larger temples like to expand their network of contacts as widely as it can. Having the resources to send disciples off to work in distant places can serve to raise the profile of a temple and gain influence for its clergy.

Disciples are usually expected to perform services and minister to the flock, but they do not have the full official authority of a priest. For example, they might be able to perform a marriage ceremony, but, based on the region, permission for the marriage might need to come from a full priest.

The more rural communities that cannot support a full priest often have an itinerant disciple who travels between the local villages in an area called a ward. Some of these wards can be very large indeed, especially in a sparsely populated area. A disciple might only visit an isolated village once every few months. These itinerant disciples can be a vital source of news and views for the locals.

The disciple stage of a priest's career can often be one when he is likely to travel and pick up new experiences. He is expected to act increasingly on his own initiative and he is given some of the responsibility he will eventually come to wield as a full priest. His behaviour is closely scrutinised during this time, and he will eventually be called back to his temple to answer for his actions. If he is deemed suitable and if the omens and portents are right, he may then be ordained as a priest of the faith.



## MENDICANTS

Some initiates and disciples forsake the formality and structure of an established cult and decide to take their ministry directly to the people without official sanction. They wander from village to village with no means of support save for the generosity of those they meet and common alms.

Mendicants are given a mixed reception depending on their audience and their message. The rare mendicant becomes well respected and sought after, gathering a following of his own. Most are considered little better than a nuisance – unless their talents or services are direly needed, of course.

Though often called priests by the common folk, these mendicants are certainly not priests in any official sense. However, it can be sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a mendicant priest who has been trained and instructed by a cult, and has chosen this lifestyle to best spread the word of his god, and a common beggar just trying it on. Impersonating a priest is a crime that most cults treat with great severity – it is tantamount to heresy and usually punishable by death.

## PRIESTS

The ordination of a priest is usually accompanied by an important formal ceremony, marking a profound transition between common man and servant of god. It may even be attended by all the available priests and several higher-ranking members from the area. The priest will make a solemn oath to his god and fellow cultists to place the service of his god above all other things. It can be an important occasion, not just for the new priest, but for the cult in general and the local community. A priest, unlike the lower ranks of the cult, is often a public figure and, in a sense, belongs to his community.

The rank of priest is sacred throughout much of the Old World. It is an ancient tradition of the Empire, going back at least to the time of Sigmar, that priests lead the people in all matters spiritual and so must be obeyed and respected. Whatever cult he belongs to and however long he has served, the rank brings a priest authority and respect from many of the Empire's citizens, even the nobility.

A priest may be appointed to run a temple. It might be a small one in the wilderness, and he may be given an initiate or disciple to help him, or charged with the responsibility of recruiting one. Some priests are assigned to a larger temple, probably in a larger city. These major temples are generally overseen by a Lector, but their size is such that several priests contribute to its management. It is this appointment that an ambitious priest will aspire to because this can be a good way to gain influence within the faith. As an assistant at a major temple, a priest stays close to the cult's source of power – if he makes a positive impression, he can expect to be promoted much sooner than someone stuck out in the backwoods. Of course, most priests are more interested in serving their god than looking for promotion and influence. However, on the other hand, it is commonly accepted that a competent and confident priest owes it to his god and his cult to be promoted quickly so he can serve his faith to the fullest of his ability.

Some priests will be assigned to a special office within the cult, often in one of the smaller sub-orders associated with the cult. Such an appointment can take advantage of their specialised skills and any particular talents they have shown thus far in their career. For example, a priest of Verena who has shown a knack for rooting out

*no doubt.*

*– Verenean saying*

lost lore and reclaiming forgotten objects might be appointed to the Order of Mysteries, while a Sigmarite priest who has displayed an enthusiasm for prosecuting mutants might be inducted into the Holy Order of the Templars of Sigmar.

## LECTORS

The rare priest who shows singular ability and profound piety may be appointed to the lofty status of Lector. A Lector will be responsible for one of the great temples or perhaps one of the minor sub-orders of the cult or a number of lesser temples and shrines within a ward. It is a position of great responsibility. This is not for petty bureaucrats and plodders – the future of the cult can be said to be in the Lector's hands, and the decisions he makes will have lasting ramifications throughout his ward.

Lectors are given almost limitless power in the name of the cult to pursue their own agendas and advance their spheres of responsibility. Even the most powerful noble would think twice before antagonising a Lector. They are considered to be enlightened and responsible enough to interpret the word of their god themselves. Provided that it is in line with standard doctrine, tradition, and







precedent, and not too controversial, the Lector has room to choose which parts of the cult's tenets and doctrine he should emphasise, and likewise which other dogmas to play down.

Some Lectors become involved in politics. They may join the court of the Emperor, an Elector Count, or some lesser noble, or represent their faith's interests on a city council. Some are suited to this sort of lifestyle, using their diplomatic skill and respected position to advance their cult's agenda and spread its influence within the relevant community. A powerful noble who supports a cult more than any other can be a vital ally in the politicking of the Old World. Likewise, a city that promotes and embraces the cult more enthusiastically than others can be a great source of personnel, influence, and income.

Another duty of the Lector in some of the cults is to vote on who will become the new High Priest when it is time to make such a decision. Usually the Lectors convene at the High Temple of the cult or some other auspicious and holy location, where they spend many days discussing the leading candidates and thrashing out the issues. It is through this process that one of the Arch Lectors will be elevated to High Priest.

## WARRIOR PRIESTS

Some Priests feel the call of battle. Their zeal inspires them to join the Empire's forces and defend the faith from enemies without. These devoted men and women are called Warrior Priests. They are famous in the Empire's armies for protecting and succouring the soldiers while at the same time putting the fear of their god into the enemy.

Warrior Priests have felt their god's call to take the fight directly to the enemy. This is a vocation that has probably shaped their career within the cult thus far and will undoubtedly shape it in the future. Though the name is evocative of a priest's role on the battlefield, for some cults it can have a different context.

The cults of Sigmar, Ulric, and Myrmidia have a clear martial function and a great number of Warrior Priests in many dedicated orders. The 'Longshanks' of the cult of Taal are experts in fighting in wooded and other difficult terrain and infiltrating enemy positions.

Verenean Warrior Priests of the Order of the Sword and Scale do not hesitate to enter the fray, but they are usually more concerned with seeking advantage in more subtle ways: gathering intelligence on the enemy and the environment and helping with the war effort's logistics.

The Warrior Priests of Manann are usually found in the Imperial navy. The Hospitaliers of Shallya not only tend to the wounded and dying but also have an important role in trying to make sure disease is kept out of the camps. The Warrior Priests of Morr have been known to fight fiercely alongside their comrades but inevitably turn to their duties of seeing to the dead.

Though few Warrior Priests of Ranald are openly employed (or even known to operate) in the Imperial armies, an astute general knows that espionage and subterfuge can bring the advantages that could make all the difference between victory and defeat. A skilled assassin or spy could be a Warrior Priest of Ranald, though it is unlikely any but another follower of Ranald would know their true role.

As well as supporting the cause on the battlefield, Warrior Priests have an important function in day to day life in the military. They bring the words of the gods to the troops and remind them why they are fighting. They are also in charge of the soldiers' pastoral care.

## HOLY VOCATIONS

As they have free rein to choose how they serve their god, and are allowed to interpret the god's signs in their own way, some Lectors and Warrior Priests choose to bring their expertise to bear on the less regimented duties of their cult. They lead small bands of like-minded colleagues on small scale, and sometimes clandestine, missions to target specific enemies of the cult.

A Lector of Shallya might choose to follow up suspected manifestations of Nurgle and pursue the incident until she is sure that the pestilential influence is entirely eradicated. A Warrior Priest

*doubt Sigmar? And should he doubt you?*

*— Sigmarite saying*



*anoint myself with the blood of Ulric that I shall not fear to bleed. I pledge myself to Ulric's work that I shall not fear to suffer. I give myself to Ulric that I shall not fear to die.*

– From an Ulrican Initiation

of Ulric might lead a hunt into the Border Princes and attempt to carve out a holy site there, in the White Wolf's name. A Lector of Verena could put his effort and resources into reuniting all thirteen lost volumes of the Chronicles of the Twelve Inviolable Martyrs, if that is what he thought his god required.

## ARCH LECTORS

Apart from High Priests, Arch Lectors represent the ultimate rank that can be achieved within the holy orders. Ostensibly, they must be the wisest, most devout, and most accomplished members of their faith: eminent personages even among the great and the good. They must lead the cult through perilous times. The future of their god's followers in the world is in their hands. Needless to say, such responsibility is a heavy burden.

Arch Lectors are often already aged when they attain their position. However, this is not a position that a priest can achieve simply by serving his time and keeping out of trouble. Sometimes younger, energetic priests are recognised for their talents, and given the rank of Lector or, in unusual cases, Arch Lector. Most cults cannot afford to squander what talent they have, and the Old World is not the sort of place in which complacency and seniority trumps skill, devotion, and talent.

Arch Lectors usually represent a territory or an important city. A territory can be as large as a province or even several provinces. They have the final say on religious matters that arise in their territory and are answerable to none save the High Priest of their order and the Emperor himself. Orders within a cult might be represented by either a Lector or Arch Lector, and this gives a good indication of the status of that order.

## HIGH PRIEST

Some cults have a figurehead who is the ultimate authority, and essentially represents that god's presence in the world. Their title depends on their cult but they are generally referred to as High Priests. In the Cult of Sigmar this is the Grand Theogonist; Ulric's representative is called the Ar-Ulric; in the Cult of Shallya, it is known as the Matriarch.

Every cult has a different way of appointing its High Priest. He might be elected by Lectors and Arch Lectors, elevated according to signs and portents, or bequeathed the position by the previous High Priest. In the Cult of Myrmidia, the High Priest is determined by a ritual duel. Of course, as most of the cults are spread

throughout the Empire and even beyond, the High Priest is not necessarily going to be from the Empire itself. In the Cult of Myrmidia, founded in Tilea, the most devoted followers could not countenance the esteemed office going to an Imperial.

## DISCIPLINE

As soon as a follower is initiated, he is subject to the rules of the cult and obligated to endure any penalty that the cult imposes upon him, under Imperial law. That is to say, any penalty or punishment a cult officially hands down to a member of the cult is supported under law, and the cultist will have no other recourse to justice. Cults are quite literally a law unto themselves.

Essentially, a follower's conduct is a matter between him and his god. It is accepted that in general a follower will rise to a rank in the cult merited by his actions. Should his behaviour not be becoming of his rank, that is a matter for his own conscience, though his god may send him omens and portents to warn him of his misbehaviour. On occasion, of course, the cult feels obliged to intercede.

Trivial matters are easily dealt with: a cuff to the ear for an initiate who is daydreaming when he should be scrubbing the steps, a quiet word for the disciple who keeps turning up late to scripture class, a frank exchange of views with a priest whose sermons may be straying from canon. This sort of thing is handled exactly as it might in any other organisation. However, because of a cult's role and the corrupting influence of the forces it opposes, sometimes more drastic action must be taken.

The way the cults police themselves is a process that can vary wildly. The Cult of Sigmar is notorious for clamping down hard and fast on any transgressions. Its authorities can seem overly paranoid that any activity against the cult caused by one of its own members is influenced by the Dark Gods and must be purged ruthlessly. An offender is fortunate if he is simply expelled from the cult. The penalty for Sigmarites who are found to be a significant menace to the cult is usually torture and death. In this respect, they practice what they preach.

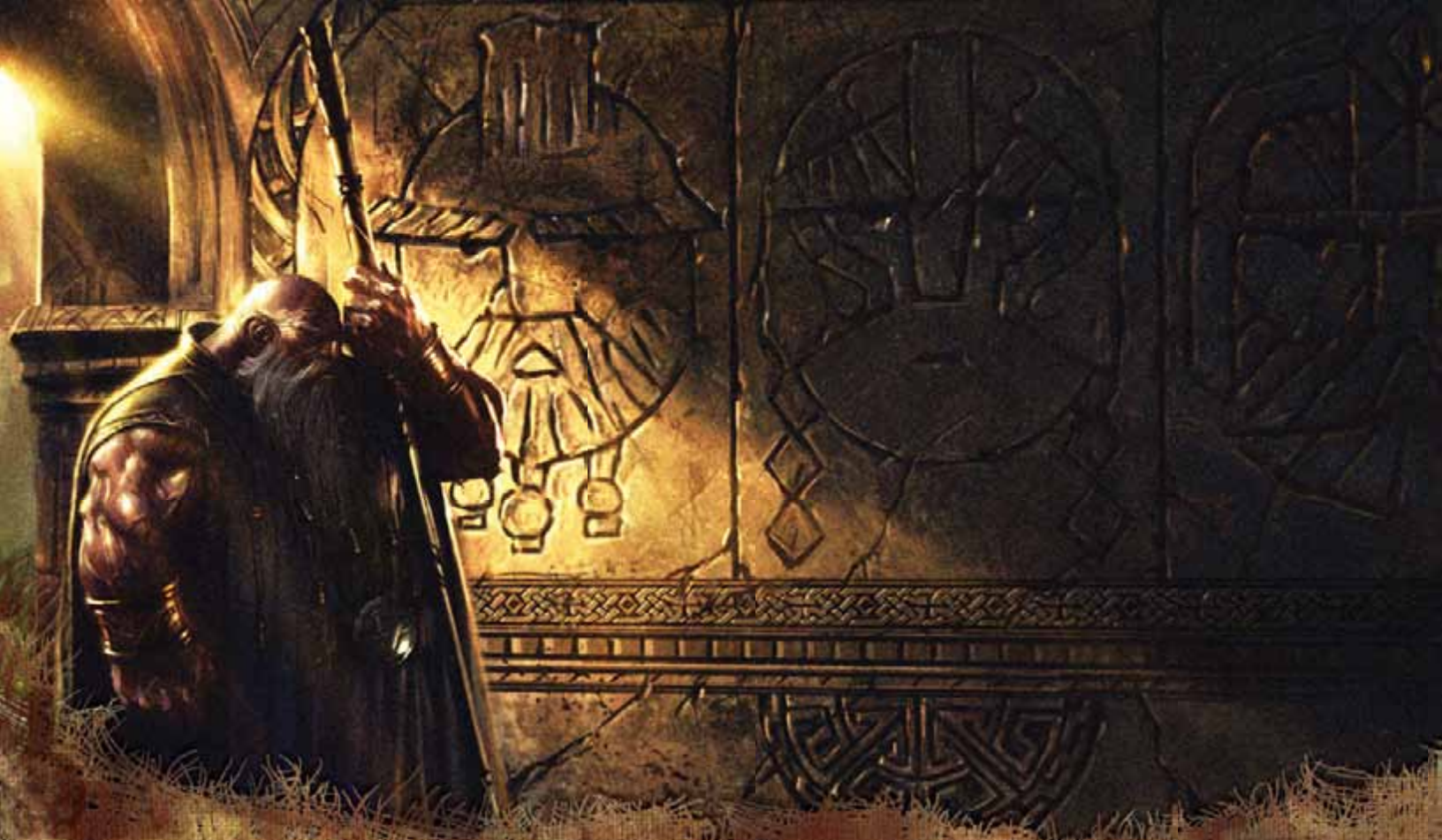
Other cults are usually more accommodating. They might offer counselling and re-education, but a stubborn transgressor will either be sent off to some remote shrine or monastery where they can do no damage or excommunicated. The Vereneans and Myrmidians greatly favour formal trials with pomp and circumstance, even if the matter might be embarrassing. Ulricans and Taalists prefer to keep such matters discreet and handled quickly.

## EXCOMMUNICATION

Excommunication is the act by which the membership of a cult is formally withdrawn. This is a very serious occurrence. The protection that a cult affords represents the spiritual as much as the physical. A follower who is excommunicated will likely feel the genuine fear that he could fall to the Dark Gods once he has been rejected by his cult and, therefore, his god.

A follower who has been excommunicated will be allowed no contact whatsoever with his cult. Since only the most serious transgressions are dealt with in this manner, the followers of other faiths will also be loath to deal with him. This leaves such a character utterly alone in the world, both socially and spiritually.





## CHAPTER FOUR

# CULTURE & FESTIVITIES

Throughout the Empire, every town and city has its temples, every village has its shrines, and the rich and poor alike display their faith with holy icons and relics. However, there are many diverse ways of worship within the Empire, and a person's religious views are often dependant on social status, wealth, and environment.

### THE GOLD TIER

Society's elite tend to display their piety loudly. They occupy prominent positions at temple sermons, appear at all the major religious events, make ostentatious sacrifices to the gods, and sometimes fund the building of new temples. However, many have earned a reputation for paying only lip service to the gods. How many of the nobles or merchants who have enriched the High Temple of Sigmar are prepared to battle the minions of Chaos themselves? The faith's leaders are unwilling to reproach this hypocrisy – the generous gifts of the rich and powerful go far in furthering the Empire Cults' ideals.

Well-to-do families may send their younger sons and daughters to join the holy orders, not only to gain influence among the cults, but also to conveniently offload unproductive offspring. As a consequence, the calibre of priests has suffered in several cults – put an over-indulged brat in a priest's frock and he is still a brat.

Of course, many among the cream of society do possess a deep faith, but a majority believe that their high station is a sign of the gods' favour. It is a popular theory to some high born that low birth and poverty indicates irredeemable impiety. Not all of society's elite are so blinkered. Magnus the Pious earned his sobriquet because he believed that all were equal in the eyes of the gods, so long as they took up arms and resisted Chaos, and Karl Franz seems to hold a similar view.

Sigmar is popular among the upper classes, because his cult wields the most political influence (though northern nobles often favour Ulric instead). Verena is revered as a guardian of the laws that maintain privilege, while Manann appeals to officers in the Imperial navy, and Myrmidia to army captains and generals. All aristocrats pray to Morr to protect the souls of their noble ancestors. It is currently fashionable for noblewomen to be seen alleviating the suffering of the unwashed masses in Shallya's name. However, Taal and Rhya are generally looked down on as the gods of simple peasants, while Ranald is despised as a god of thieves and scoundrels.

### THE SILVER TIER

The burghers and the tradesmen of the Empire are among the most devout of the Empire's citizens. They must work hard to maintain their livelihood, and if the gods can be persuaded to help alleviate



their burdens, then all the better. They consider each tithe of silver to the temples as a sensible investment, hoping that a small donation of their well-earned savings will attract some acknowledgement from the gods.

The middle-class knows its place, and fear that hubris will earn divine wrath. They are meek in worship, and dutiful according to the divine strictures. Sometimes, when business is good, a guild of craftsmen or traders might work together to fund repairs for a temple roof or raise a new shrine to thank the gods. Parents are proud if one of their children decides to enter the holy orders, for surely a little bit of piety is going to rub off on the rest of the family. However, they are unwilling to allow too many sons or daughters to become initiates, as who will then take over the family business?

The middle-class tries to honour all the gods equally, so that every aspect of life is insured against calamity. The exception is Myrmidia, who is misunderstood by many, imported from strange lands by sun-addled noblemen. Ranald is disliked among law-abiding folk, but they still ensure the proper coins are slipped to the right people so that he will turn his eye from their businesses.

## THE BRASS TIER

While, for the most part, the gold and silver tiers of society are mainly found in urban settings – bustling cities and commercial towns – the brass tier is unique in its diversity. While wealth, status, and privilege may be restricted to certain lifestyles and settings, poverty knows no such prejudice.

## THE URBAN POOR

The people of the urban slums suffer poverty, hunger, and disease, yet they flock to the temples on holy days, for the gods provide them with the one thing that helps them fight on: hope. Some cults are sympathetic with the plight of the poor – for example, Shallyans organise temple hospices in the slums for the relief of the dispossessed. However, many temple priests alienate the common folk because they cannot empathise with their lives. This is especially true of Sigmar's cult, whose ranks are increasingly filled by initiates from the middle and upper classes.

This situation has led to an upsurge in firebrand cultists of Sigmar who have abandoned the pulpit for the market streets. These priests, born and bred among the poor, have suffered alongside them. They preach the spirit of Sigmar at street corners, railing against heresy, but also castigating the corruption endemic within their own cult. The Arch Lectors of Sigmar regard such priests as troublemakers out to upset the social order, but can do little against them. The recent excommunication of the renegade priest Luthor Huss has made him a popular hero, and the authorities do not want to make any more martyrs.

Ranald, champion of the downtrodden, is a popular god among the urban poor, and Morr is always accorded the proper rites, for death hovers at every shoulder. Manann is an important god in sea and river ports, and Ulric rivals the Cult of Sigmar among common folk of the north, sometimes resulting in riots between mobs supporting the two gods. Myrmidia, a goddess of the higher classes, is ignored, and the illiterate masses have little interest in Verena despite her cult sometimes organising missions to educate them.

Although Sigmar is officially meant to be the dominant god throughout the Empire, some provinces traditionally favour one god above the others.

Taal is a dominant god in the heavily forested province of Talabecland, while Morr is favoured by the folk of Ostermark and Stirland, for their provinces border the haunted land of Sylvania ruled by the Vampire Counts, and they live under the shadow of the walking dead.

In Middenland and all the northern provinces, Ulric's faith rivals that of Sigmar, though along the coasts of Nordland, Manann is the most popular deity.

The halfling folk of the Moot have little respect for human gods, but revere a goddess of the home and hearth called Esmerelda.

Some radicals do not understand why society needs 'parasitic' priests to intercede with the gods on the people's behalf. These are usually the rowdy supporters of agitators who try to stir up revolt against the ruling classes, and often end up rotting in gaol.

## THE RURAL PEASANTRY

Countryfolk are at the mercy of nature. They sacrifice to Rhya so that she might make their land and women fertile. They pray to Taal for the protection of their livestock from his wild beasts, and to ensure that he spares their crops from drought. Fisherfolk bow to Manann, and in the north, where it is bitter winter for half the year, Ulric is held in high esteem by the tough peasants. Morr is feared and respected as he is by all folk.

However, the other gods have little to offer simple farming folk. Rhya, in her aspect as mother goddess, is often more popular than Shallya, and even reverence for Sigmar is muted in some rural areas, for the concepts of Empire and Emperor are remote to farmers and herdsman who travel no further than neighbouring hamlets. However, every sizeable village has a shrine to Sigmar to keep the witch hunters happy.

In places barely touched by civilisation, deep in the forests or lost among the hills, there are folk who still follow ancient traditions forgotten elsewhere. They believe that every stone, tree, and river hides a nature spirit that must be appeased. Some peasants even claim to see or commune with such beings, and sacrifice to them at ancient stone circles. These ignorant folk have sometimes mistaken elves as nature spirits.

Official dogma teaches that Empire folk should revere only those gods sanctioned by Imperial tradition, and the Cult of Sigmar regards the worship of nature spirits as being dangerously close to daemon worship. The cult often sends missionaries to 'educate' the errors of such countryfolk, and where preaching fails, the hammer usually succeeds.



# RITES OF PASSAGE

To quote a popular Stirland saying: “*We are born, we weep, we die.*”

However, a lot more usually happens during the life of a typical citizen of the Empire, and every major milestone is accompanied by ritual, ceremony, and superstition.

## BIRTH & MARRIAGE

When a woman feels the first stirrings of life in her womb, she prays to Shallya (or to Rhya through Taal if she is a rural peasant) for the health of her unborn child. Wealthy women will sacrifice an expectant sow, cow, or even mare, but most others make do with a pregnant cat or, at a pinch, a rat. The father makes an offering to Taal, Ulric, or Sigmar so that his child will be strong, and to Morr to stay his hand.

Mortality at childbirth is high, unless a family can afford a physician. Poor women are attended by a midwife, hopefully a skilled cultist of Shallya (or Rhya in rural areas). The priest cannot invoke blessings to help the mother, for Morr must be allowed to claim mother or child if he demands it. Traditionally, the father buries a coin in a safe place. It is unlucky to remove this coin until the child comes of age, when the father will dig up the coin and present it to the child as a symbol of entry into adulthood. No good will come to a person who loses his birth coin. On the anniversary of a person's birth, friends and family offer sacrifices to Shallya or Rhya for his or her continued health.

Society frowns upon unmarried mothers. The upper classes arrange marriages to form political or mercantile alliances. Among the lower classes, a mother who bears a child out of wedlock is disgraced, unless she gives her child to the Cult of Shallya to be adopted as an initiate.

For the rich, marriage involves a grandiose ball and a blessing by a high-ranking Lector, but most folk have to settle for a simple handfasting ritual with a few words mumbled by a priest. A common custom involves the happy couple jumping over a jug, which

## IMPERIAL NAMES

The naming of a baby is performed before a gathering of family and friends. Babies are given a forename that evokes physical qualities, such as Dieter (Warrior of the People) or Rambrecht (Bright Raven), or that honours a god (Sigmund, Ulfred, Mannricht, Ulrica, Talima etc.).

Most nobles are recognised by the suffix ‘von’ (‘from’) followed by a place-name traditionally associated with their family. Many of these ancestral places are so ancient that they do not exist anymore! Commoners often have surnames deriving from their father's occupation, such as Schmied (Blacksmith), or Bauer (Farmer).

Empire names are similar to Germanic names in the real world. GMs and players can find inspiration for characters' names on the Internet – there are various sites that list traditional German names and their meanings.

A player may want to invent a Dooming for his character with the GM's cooperation. A Dooming can be as vague or as precise as the player wants. The character's actions will determine his true fate, but his Dooming can have an influence.

The GM can add modifiers to a player's dice pool when his character experiences a situation described in his Dooming – for example, a character doomed to die at the hands of “*the two-hoofed beast under Mannslieb's smile*” might suffer ■ to Weapon Skill checks when fighting beastmen at night, but might gain □ to his Discipline checks because he is bravely resigned to his fate.

must be kept safe thereafter lest the marriage be doomed. Divorce is disapproved of. Usually only failure to bear children is sufficient grounds, and the same priest who married the couple (or his successor) must undo the marriage by ritually severing a knot.

## DOOMING & DEATH

At the age of ten, most children endure the Dooming ceremony, which is carried out in different ways throughout the Empire. In Reikland, to grant long life, meat and milk mixed with the child's blood is thrown on a brazier, so that Morr thinks the child is already in his under realm. The ceremony always culminates in the terrified child being left alone with a Doomsayer of Morr. The priest interprets the omens to reveal the child's fate. This ritual is meant to stiffen a child's courage in preparation for life – it is reckoned that a person's fear of death is conquered when he knows and accepts his own doom. People keep their Dooming secret in case their enemies use that knowledge against them.

When a person dies, it is vital that the rites of Morr are whispered over the body as soon as possible. A brief commendation of the dead person's soul to Morr must suffice in the absence of a proper priest. If this is not done, it is believed that the soul will wander lost, unable to enter Morr's kingdom, allowing necromancers or the Ruinous Powers to enslave it. Ideally the corpse must be buried before sundown within a Garden of Morr, where Morr's priests can guard it against necromantic magic. Bodies buried elsewhere must be decapitated or have their hearts staked to prevent them from rising, or are buried at crossroads to confuse the spirit and stop it returning to haunt the living. There is a legend that Sigmar visited and returned from Morr's underworld, but otherwise no living person knows what that place is like. Not even spirits summoned from the afterlife can be induced to talk about the afterlife.

The wealthy are buried in extravagant mausoleums or family vaults, while the poor are commemorated by a simple slab. Priests of Morr must dig up old graves to make way for fresh burials, and the exhumed bones are stored in ossuaries.

## CHARMS AND SACRED RELICS

Prayers and sacrifices may not be enough to secure protection against life's many dangers, and there is a craze among the people of the Empire to carry all manner of amulets and charms to ward away evil.



Charms are believed to bring luck to their owner. They might take the form of a sprig of holly plucked on the Winter Solstice, the foot of a white cat worn on a string, the left toe of a murderer hanged on the 13th day of the month, and so on. Peddlers hawk such trinkets for a few pennies at fairs and festivals. Many profit from credulous buyers, but many others are convinced that their wares bring genuine luck.

Some items are imbued with sacred power. These might be objects touched by famous holy men, heroes or emperors (a piece of torn cloth; a bent spoon; a rotting vegetable, etc). Many folk bear parchment inscribed with holy sayings. They may also carry skulls, bones, mummified fingers, sand timers, and so on, said to belong to religious martyrs or great heroes. These are believed to ward evil. Many are fakes (there are at least a dozen noses belonging to the Emperor Hedrich knocking around), but some may be genuine.

The popularity for these sacred items has created a black market, where relics are stolen at great effort despite the Templars of Morr who guard important tombs. Aristocrats are major clients of these tomb robbers, and pay highly for a rare relic to add to their collection. The only guaranteed way to see a true relic is to visit a temple that houses one. Almost every temple boasts at least one relic, and the largest temples contain several. They are brought out during ceremonies to be seen or even kissed by the congregation. The relic can be a famous sword, or the withered heart of a long-dead champion of the Empire.

The most important relics, such as the Shroud of Magnus, the Helm of the Ratslayer, or the sword of Ulfdar the Berserker who fought alongside Sigmar at Black Fire Pass, inspire annual pilgrimages. For safety, pilgrims travel in groups, sometimes numbering hundreds. The further and more hazardous the journey, the more likely a pilgrim's prayers will be answered at journey's end. Pilgrims might travel for various reasons: for example, to secure a god's favour, as penance for a wrong, or to seek a miraculous cure.

A horde of pilgrims descending on a town brings great economic rewards to the townsfolk and the temple, making possession of a renowned relic even more important. Some Lectors have been known to authorise the theft of relics from rival temples, claiming that their god has demanded that the sacred items be re-housed. This sometimes sparks conflict that only the High Priests or the Emperor can resolve. Sometimes temples send out cultists to recover lost relics, and some priests dedicate their entire lives to this sacred quest.

## FLAGELLANTS

A curious form of pilgrimage is practised by fanatics devoted to Sigmar known as flagellants. Driven mad by terrible events, these people abandon their old lives, dress in rags and chains, and mortify their flesh in penance for real or imagined sins. They believe that the End Times are nigh, brought on by human wickedness, and that Chaos will soon engulf the world. They seek a glorious death fighting the enemies of Sigmar, and roam the Empire gathering recruits and urging repentance.

Their pilgrimage usually ends on a battlefield, where they experience bloody martyrdom. When they cannot find a battle, they wander the wilderness hoping to be attacked by greenskins or beastmen. Some particularly crazed and frustrated zealots have been known to harass road travellers with blunt clubs, hoping to suffer martyrdom on the edge of their victims' swords.

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

Buildings dedicated for worship take many different forms, depending on which cult built them and which region of the Empire they are in. However, the general structure and purpose of temples, shrines, and other sacred places are similar throughout the Empire.

### TEMPLES

Temples are the main focus of a cult's worship, and are usually the most important and dominating buildings in the towns and cities of the Empire. They are public places, where folk come to commune with the gods via the intercession of the priests.

All urban settlements have a temple dedicated to Sigmar, and all have a walled Garden of Morr, to ensure that the dead sleep safe under the aegis of Morr's priests. Many towns have a Shallyan hospice, and in university cities, a temple of Verena adjoins the centre of learning. Temples to Ulric abound in northern areas, and most settlements along the Empire's coast have a temple dedicated to Manann.

Temples are often ancient buildings, and many date back to Sigmar's rule, but worship may have taken place there long before the founding of the Empire. Wealthy individuals, eager to demonstrate their faith, occasionally refurbish old temples, or construct new ones.

Temple architecture might be practical and unassuming, or highly grandiose, depending on a cult's ideals and its influence in a town. Shallyan temples are modest buildings with gleaming whitewashed floors and walls, and temples of Manann are usually built of wood,





and resemble upturned vessels within. Temples of Morr are their Gardens, and are rarely visited except by grieving relatives who make prayers and offerings at the many reliquaries and shrines built into the outer walls.

The more ostentatious cults, such as those of Sigmar, Ulric, Myrmidia, and Verena, construct great edifices of breathtaking architecture. Whether roofed by a golden dome or graced with towering steeples, these temples dominate a town's skyline. A magnificent facade of columns and arches, decorated with statues of cult heroes, might overawe the visitor. He might enter through a great portal into a nave ablaze with candlelight, the atmosphere heady with incense, prayers echoing into the soaring vaults of the ceiling. Statues of gold and marble might line the aisle leading to the altar, vibrant murals on the walls depicting myth and legend. A massive statue of the deity will loom above the altar.

The largest temples, such as the Holy Temple of Sigmar in Altdorf, or that of Foretress Temple to Ulric in Middenheim, tower above their surroundings and contain a labyrinth of passages leading to shrines for private prayer. However, even the most modest temples of these gods are an impressive sight. Many combine architectural grandeur with solid defences that can withstand weeks of siege.

Most temples house a library of religious tomes, and a treasury where relics and the temple coffers are kept under armed guard. Temples of the warrior cults also possess armouries. Away from public view are the priests' living quarters, the kitchens and refectory, study areas for initiates, and cloisters for quiet meditation.

On holy days, temples are crowded with devotees eager to worship with hymns and prayers, and to hear the priest's sermon. They may have brought with them offerings of coin, or animals for sacrifice. The loud murmur of prayers mixes with the grunts, bleats or lowing of frightened beasts. Sacrifices are performed by the priests before the altar, special gutters draining away the blood. The meat is flayed and taken away for later, to be consumed by the priests at a sacred feast, while the bones and offal are burned in a furnace beside the altar to nourish the god. Omens are read from the flames.

Outside the temple, traders set up stalls selling cult trinkets, or small animals to haggle to worshippers requiring a sacrifice. Mummers perform plays based on myth and legend, and fire-eaters, jugglers, and musicians entertain the waiting crowds. Temple guardians patrol the crowd, keeping order and watching out for godless pickpockets.

On normal days, temples are much quieter. Some temples organise daily worship at set times, others are less formal. People come and go throughout the day to seek a blessing, words of comfort or wisdom, or for quiet prayer and contemplation.

## SHRINES

In smaller towns and rural areas, where there are fewer temples, folk must worship at a shrine, offering devotion with a lit candle and a quiet prayer. Some settlements have a shrine to each god, but sometimes a single shrine may be dedicated to several gods. These sacred places often consist of a simple altar or statue, either open to the elements or housed in a small building of wood or stone. Devotees often leave offerings of money, which are collected by the itinerant priests who attend to the shrines. This money is usually left well alone, for to steal from the gods will certainly invite their

wrath. Folk are convinced that their community's vitality is bound with the upkeep of their shrines, and they regard these sacred places as their personal link with the gods.

Some shrines have strange superstitions attached to them – for example it might bring luck if the statue's head is rubbed or if the worshipper walks withershins thrice around the altar backwards when Mannslieb is full. Other shrines, usually those associated with sacred streams or wells, are reputed to have healing properties. On holy days, worshippers might dress shrines with flowers.

Apart from centres of worship at Talabheim, the veneration of Taal is almost singularly performed at small shrines and temples in the wilderness. Ranald is only ever worshipped at shrines – little more than a disguised altar in a secret location. Shrines to Sigmar outnumber those of all the other gods, except in the north, where they are equalled by shrines to Ulric. Shrines to Verena are usually confined to public libraries, colleges, town halls and other places of learning or bureaucracy. Myrmidia has few shrines in the Empire, for she is a relatively new and foreign goddess.

## MONASTERIES

For some priests, the call of their god is strong and they choose to devote their lives entirely to their faith. They might dwell alone in the wilderness as hermits, spending their days in solitary prayer, or as small communities of like-minded cultists glorifying their god together, segregated completely from the distractions of society. They are convinced that their constant devotion attracts their god's favour upon the Empire, and that their prayers play a crucial role in the nation's survival.

The focus of a monastic community is the temple, where liturgies are sung at regimented intervals of the day and night. The priests dwell in the surrounding buildings, and share the burden of agricultural work to feed the community. Monasteries are founded in remote areas, and are well defended against enemies. The Abbey of Maisontaal, in the foothills of the Grey Mountains, is famous for resisting the undead hordes of the Lichemaster, Heinrich Kemmler, in 2491. The exceptions to this rule of solitude are Shallyan monasteries, which exist close to communities. One of the most famous of these was the Frederheim Hospice in the south Reikwald. Shallyan monasteries remain closed to public worship, however, so that the cultists can devote their attention to the sick who are brought to them for help.

The monasteries of the warlike cults, such as those of Sigmar and Ulric, often overlook mountain passes or guard the freezing borders with Kislev to defend against incursions of the Empire's enemies. There are several monasteries of Manann on islands off the Sea of Claws, some of which maintain small warfleets to see off pirates or enemy ships.

Despite their secluded location, monasteries sometimes attract pilgrimages, particularly if they possess sacred artefacts, and devout pilgrims are often allowed to join the cultists' worship on holy days. Monasteries also allow travellers refuge from the wilderness, though the priests will avoid contact with their guests as much as possible.

## OTHER SACRED SITES

A traveller along the Empire's highways is certain to encounter way-temples and roadside shrines. Way-temples provide a place to worship and a safe bed for the night. They are usually dotted at in-



tervals along wilder stretches of road where it is unprofitable or too dangerous to maintain inns, and their high walls are guarded by a few well-trained warrior priests. Guests are expected to bequeath an offering to the temple according to their means. By contrast, roadside shrines are usually simple altars or statues where travellers can invoke the protection of the gods during their journey.

Deep in the forests, or high on remote hills, cultists of Taal sometimes worship their gods at strange circles of tall standing stones. They claim that their faith has always been practised at these cromlechs, but the true purpose of these stones remains a mystery. Sometimes, beastmen desecrate these sites, and Taalists are obligated to cleanse the stones and slay the desecrators.

Lost among the wilds, marble pillars can sometimes be encountered, weathered and broken, and carved with strange flowing patterns and runes. Their presence unsettles most humans, and even Taalists avoid these monuments, though they attract great interest from the Colleges of Magic as well as elves.

Some locations are steeped in legend. Pilgrims journey to Black Fire Pass to be overawed by the dominating crags that Sigmar himself defended, and other significant battlefields are also considered sacred places where the gods inspired victory. Many of these battle sites are dangerous to reach, but this does not stop pilgrims trying. Keepsakes recovered from these battlefields, such as a rusty sword blade or arrowhead, are considered powerful relics by many Empire folk, and worth the journey alone.

## FAITH BEYOND THE EMPIRE

The Imperial cults are not the only religions that are encountered in the Empire. There are many strange beliefs held by humans outside the Emperor's domain, as well as the faiths of other races.

### DWARF RELIGION

Dwarfs have been the allies of the Empire since its foundation, and many live in the towns and cities of men. However, dwarfs are a very secretive race, and so the average Imperial citizen has only a vague understanding of dwarf religion.

People know that dwarf gods govern the things that dwarfs hold dear, such as mining, smithing, and battle, even if they can't remember the dwarf gods' names. The cleverest know that Grungni and Grimnir are important gods. Some folk have heard that dwarfs revere a mother goddess called Valaya. Many presume that she looks exactly like her brother gods – stocky and heavily muscled, but without a beard on her grumpy face.

The closest thing that dwarfs have to priests seem to be the master craftsmen known as Runesmiths, who claim to be descended from Morgrim, the son of Grungni. Humans think it arrogant of the dwarfs to say that they are the direct descendants of a god, but would never raise such a theological dispute before a dwarf. The Runesmiths jealously guard their secrets, passing them down only to trusted apprentices. They have the ability to harness magical power into runes that they carve on weapons, armour and other items, and the act of crafting a runic item is a sacred act of worship to them.



Dwarfs do not worship loudly in public, as humans are wont to do. If they have temples, they are quietly hidden away in a clanleader's house or a dwarf guildhall. Certainly no human has been admitted into the dwarf religion, and no dwarf has ever shown an interest in worshipping the human gods. They are polite towards the human gods and their devotees, but that is all.

Many dwarfs have the audacity to refer to Sigmar as “that lad”, or “young King Sigmar”. However, given the special relationship that dwarfs enjoyed with Sigmar, even the most fanatical Sigmarite priest turns a deaf ear to such irreligious remarks. Indeed, on days sacred to Sigmar, dwarfs are honoured guests at the festivities, and it is good luck for a man to quaff ale with a dwarf at such times.



Once. The gods work through it, I swear by my ancestors. I got it off a mad smith. I promised to take it back to Karak Azgaraz for him, and I will. One day.

– Thrumdorin, Dwarf Ironbreaker





## ELVEN RELIGION

Many people in the Empire, particularly rural folk, have few dealings with either high elves or wood elves. Elven religion, like the rest of their customs, remains a mystery to most men. However, people who spend time in the company of an elf may learn a little bit about their faith.

The name of Asuryan, lord of the elven pantheon, is whispered with great reverence when mentioned by elves. Hoeth is their god of knowledge, whose magic-wielding servants dwell in a white tower that reaches to the stars, guarded by legendary warriors. Vaul is the divine smith, crippled and blind. His priests apparently put out their eyes to honour him. Humans cannot explain why elves would want to worship a crippled deity. He is said to be chained to his anvil by the war god, Khaine. This name is anathema to men of the Empire – a god called Khaine is worshipped by human murderers, and this cult is banned in all Imperial provinces. That elves worship a god with the same name does nothing to calm men's fearful suspicion of this race.

Those gods described above, as well as others, seem to be highly favoured by high elves. The wood elves honour above all Kurnous the Hunter, the wild lord of beasts and forest. Kurnous is said to lead a wild hunt every springtide, collecting the souls of men who stray too close to the mysterious forest of Athel Loren. He is the consort of Isha, the goddess who rules the forest in the aspect of Queen Ariel. She is said to bring life from death with a whisper. The strangest god is Loec the Trickster, whose devotees are mysterious tattooed warriors who weave weird dances in the midst of battle.

Some minor deities are aspects of an official Empire deity, and thus tolerated by the official cults. Aspects of Taal include Karog, god of rivers, and Karnos, lord of beasts. Haleth, goddess of hunting, and Dyrath, goddess of fertility, are aspects of Rhya. Forsagh, god of prophecy is an aspect of Morr.

However, some traditions are considered heretical. Stromfels, god of reefs and currents (an aspect of Manann) is popular among pirates and wreckers, but his worship is illegal. Khaine, god of murder, is another deity whose worship is banned.

Many minor deities are patrons of a town or city, or the spirits of natural features such as mountains, lakes or rivers. For example, Bögenauer is the spirit of the River Bögen adopted as the protector of Bögenhafen. Sometimes a minor god governs a particular activity, such as Handrich, god of commerce.

These deities have no organised cults or temples. Bögenauer is honoured with a statue before Bögenhafen's town hall, which contains a small shrine to the god. Handrich is invoked whenever merchants do business together. Almost every trade has its own divine patron, but the main cults regard such traditions as superstition.

High elves treat the Imperial gods with respect, but do not enter their temples. They never appear to perform any outward display of worship to their own gods. Wood elves sometimes mock mankind's need to 'shackle' their gods behind stone walls. They have a quiet reverence for the natural world, much like followers of Taal, though Taalists distrust wood elves as much as other men do. Like Taal's followers, wood elves revere the stone circles found in the wilderness, and go to great lengths to preserve them from Chaos.

## FOREIGN HUMAN FAITHS

The Imperial gods are not worshipped universally by all men. Foreigners hold traditions of their own, though these strange superstitions are considered inferior to their own beliefs by Empire folk.

### BRETONNIA

The primary goddess of the Bretonnians is the Lady of the Lake, who has guarded their kingdom against invasion since the days of its first king, Gilles le Breton. Her earthly representative is the Fay Enchantress, who emerges from the Lady's sacred Otherworld to announce her decrees. The Lady is worshipped at sacred Grail Chapels, dedicated to the magical Grail that is her icon.

A worthy knight might be granted a vision of her, where he sips from the Grail and is tasked to guard a chapel, lake, or grove that is sacred to her. These Grail Knights are like living saints, renowned among their knightly peers. The peasants revere these heroes, and some fanatics trail their every move, exulting their deeds and seizing every scrap they discard as a holy relic.

Apart from the Lady, Shallya is an honoured deity among the Bretonnians, and the centre of her cult is at the city of Couronne, built over one of the springs the city is renowned for.

### KISLEV

The Kislevites worship gods that are strange to the people of the Empire. Ursun is the Father of All Bears, and worshipped in sacred caves, or at cairns and standing stones raised in the depths of Kislev's forests. Tor is the god of thunder and lightning, a warrior god whose temples are built atop high ground. Dazh is a sun god, lord of fire, and protects Kislevites from the harsh midwinter. Taal and Ulric are honoured in the south of the country. Kislevites also believe that nature spirits inhabit every tree, rock, stream, and hearth, and they perform daily rites to appease them.

### TILEA AND ESTALIA

In the southern lands, Myrmidia is the chief goddess, her high temple being at Magritta in Estalia. It is believed that she came among the men of the south in the form of a mortal woman and led their armies to victory against many invading hordes. Before she could be crowned queen, a mysterious assassin slew her mortal body, and she became a goddess once more. Shallya, Morr, and Verena are also popular gods in these regions. Indeed, Morr's seat of power is in the Tilean city of Luccini.

## THE CHAOS CULTS

The greatest blasphemy considered by all the Imperial cults is for a man of the Empire to give himself to one of the four Ruinous Powers, Khorne, Slaanesh, Tzeentch or Nurgle. These are the enemies of all sane men and women, and all priests must guard their flocks



against Chaos corruption. Anyone who displays any sign of corruption, either physical mutation or perversion of mind and spirit, must be ruthlessly hounded and killed.

The Templars of Sigmar, the witch hunters, are experts at this, but it is the duty of all Imperial priests, and indeed every citizen, to counter Chaos worship wherever it occurs. Unfortunately secretive Chaos cults are spread across the Empire, as tainted men and women meet to revere the four unholy powers.

The marauder tribes of the Norse, the Kurgan, and the Hung are all lost to Chaos, and worship the Ruinous Powers in unspeakable rituals. The Norse often raid the Empire's coastal settlements for captives to sacrifice to the Dark Gods. Beastmen in the forests also kidnap folk to torment and eventually kill and eat at orgiastic feasts held to honour the Chaos powers.

## GREENSKIN BELIEFS

There are as many strange beliefs among orcs and goblins as there are greenskin tribes. Various night goblin clans grovel before one or both of the moons, forest goblins are reputed to worship massive spiders the size of houses, and some orc tribes revere any unusually shaped rock outcrops as gods. However, there are two deities worshipped by all greenskins: Gork and Mork.

Gork epitomises the brutal warlike aspect of the greenskins, while Mork represents their animalistic cunning (though it is often the other way round). Faith in these gods manifests as a terrifying phenomenon known as the Waaagh!, particularly when large groups of greenskins are gathered together. The smell of blood and taste of danger can cause greenskins to explode in a mindless frenzy akin to religious zeal.

Waaagh! energy also empowers the greenskin shamans, whose destructive powers are believed to come directly with their gods, and are fuelled by the rage and violence of the orcs and goblins around them. Captives can be expected to be sacrificed and eaten (but not necessarily in that order) in honour of Gork and Mork, who are often represented by large piles of stinking dung shaped in their likeness.

## THE IMPERIAL CALENDAR

The Empire uses a standard calendar of twelve months divided into thirty-two or thirty-three days, with six extra days that fall between months. There are eight days in each Imperial week. The calendar marks the passing of the seasons and important holy days. You can find a copy of the Imperial Calendar on page 48.

## THE DAYS

The eight days of the week are: Wellentag (Workday), Aubentag (Levyday), Marktag (Marketday), Backertag (Bakeday), Bezahltag (Taxday), Konistag (Kingday), Angestag (Startweek), and Festag (Holiday).

The reasons for these names are long-forgotten and probably originated in pre-Empire times. Nowadays, market day occurs on any day of the week depending on which part of the Empire you are in, and festivals and holidays take place according to the traditions of each cult. There is no weekly religious holiday, but everyone seizes the chance to celebrate at festival times.

## THE MONTHS

The twelve months of the year are: Nachexen (After-Witching), Jahrdrung (Year-Turn), Pflugzeit (Ploughtide), Sigmarzeit (Sigmartide), Sommerzeit (Summertide), Vorgeheim (Fore-Mystery), Nachgeheim (After-Mystery), Erntezeit (Harvest-tide), Brauzeit (Brew month), Kaldezeit (Chill month), Ulriczeit (Ulric-tide), and Vorhexen (Fore-Witching).

The six extra days are: Hexenstag (Witching Day – New Year's Day), Mitterfruhl (Start Growth – Spring Equinox), Sonnstill (Sun Still – Summer Solstice), Geheimnistag (Day of Mystery), Mitterbst (Less Growth – Autumn Equinox), and Mondstille (World Still – Winter Solstice).

Three of the months mark the agricultural activities that occur at those times – ploughing, harvesting, and brewing. The equinoxes and solstices mark the peak of each season – spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

Sigmar and Ulric each have one month apiece dedicated to them. Sigmar's month dominates the onset of summer while Ulric's month falls in midwinter. This clearly demonstrates their opposing natures. Nobody knows what Sigmarzeit was called in pre-Empire times, though some scholars surmise it was named after Taal.

## THE TWO MOONS

Two moons orbit the world. Silvery Mannslied (Beloved of Manann) has a cycle of 25 days and affects the ebb and flow of the tides. Dark-greenish Morrslieb (Beloved of Morr) has an erratic cycle, unpredictably appearing smaller or larger in the sky. In times

### E

Only Doomsayers of Morr and Celestial Wizards are officially allowed to foretell the future in the Empire. However, Doomsayers soothsay according to Morr's revelations, not at the behest of mortals, and only the rich can afford to employ an Astromancer, so common folk rely on self-appointed astrologers to tell their fortune.

Astrologers overawe their clients with crystal balls, star-charts, and high theatrics. For a silver piece they will waffle a convincing reading. They never stay too long in one place. Many towns ban astrologers, but some authorities tolerate them in return for a fee. If an astrologer actually displays divinatory powers, he will end up as a wizard's apprentice – or burned at the stake. It all depends on whether a witch hunter or the Celestial College reaches him first. It is treasonous to prophesise the fate of the Emperor or an Elector Count, and anyone who does so faces arrest and execution.

Rural peasants sometimes seek the advice of cunningfolk who claim to read the future. These seers, mystics, or 'hedge-wizards' are sometimes ostracised, and if disaster strikes a rural community, they may be blamed and killed. Witch hunters seek these cunningfolk out, for their use of raw magic to foretell fate is surely evidence that they consort with daemons.



of disaster, some claim to see a mocking, twisted face appear on its surface. Also known as the Dark Moon or the Chaos Moon, Morrslieb heralds great misfortune when it appears close.

A popular legend tells of a gateway in the sky through which daemons emerged to prey on people. Morr destroyed this gate and created Morrslieb so that mortals would never forget that he had saved them from a fate worse than death.

Hexenstag and Geheimnistag mark the only times in the year when both Mannslieb and Morrslieb are full. Before sundown on those days, animals are brought in to shelter, and folk huddle in their homes, hanging up charms to ward away evil. Even the streets of Altdorf, usually thronging at all hours, are empty from dusk to dawn on Hexensnacht (Witching Night) and Geheimnisnacht (Night of Mystery).

On these ill-omened nights, Morrslieb's sickly green light bathes the land, and Dark Magic collects in invisible pools of stagnant evil. Its influence can corrupt flesh, mutate the unborn, and inspire madness and murder. The veil between this world and the next is thin at these times, and many people experience strange and prophetic dreams. Creatures of Chaos howl in the forests and the dead stir awake. Necromancers, vampires, and evil sorcerers walk abroad, and Chaos cultists sacrifice to the Dark Gods. It is not unknown for individuals, families, or even the entire population of a village to mysteriously vanish overnight, never to be seen again.

## FESTIVALS IN THE EMPIRE

Festivals are a welcome diversion from the relentless grind of daily life. Most festivals honour the gods, but some are secular celebrations commemorating important events in the Empire's history. Major festivals are described below, but there are countless other minor holidays, many unique to a particular town or region.

### HEXENSTAG

The year's end is greatly feared. During the day, people flock to temples and shrines to pray for protection against the horrors of that night, known as Witching Night. Priests of Morr conduct solemn rites in graveyards, and endure a night-time vigil to ensure that the dead remain still.

### YEAR BLESSING (1ST NACHEXEN)

On New Year's Day, people praise the gods for helping them survive another year. However, it is also a time of sorrow, when those who did not survive Witching Night are commended to Morr.

In the ritual of Year Blessing, people sacrifice to Verena for justice and wisdom in the coming year. Her temples are filled with those petitioning her priests to settle legal grievances before the year begins. Witch hunters are busy during Nachexen, hunting down those cursed by mutation during Hexensnacht.

### MITTERFRUHL

At Spring Equinox, peasants sacrifice a firstborn lamb to Taal and Rhya. Manann also receives sacrifice, so that he might calm the seas and spare the land from flooding rivers. The followers of Ulric ritually lament their god's passing and his priests remain in mourning until the autumn.

A notable custom in Altdorf is the offering of a painted griffon's egg to the Temple to Sigmar. Adventurers comb the mountains for a suitable egg in the preceding months. Few return, and only the largest egg is chosen. Military disaster is foretold for a year when no egg can be presented.

### SIGMARTAG (18TH SIGMARZEIT)

This festival celebrates Sigmar's ascension to the heavens as a god. It also marks the first day of summer. Throughout the Empire, work ceases and citizens feast, drink, and sing. Sigmar's exploits are recounted in tales and plays. Consumption of the intimidating 'Sigmar's sausage' is central to the celebrations. Those who manage to eat a whole sausage in a single sitting are promised strength and vigour for the rest of the year.

The most magnificent celebrations take place at the High Temple of Sigmar, presided over by the Grand Theogonist, and attended by the Emperor. Thousands crowd outside the temple to partake in the holy liturgies. The festival culminates with spectacular pyromantics organised by the Bright College (though many priests of Sigmar boycott this display).

There are various holy days devoted to Sigmar throughout the year, marking events of Sigmar's life such as the rescue of King Kurgan, the Battle of Black Fire Pass, and his coronation. Dwarfs, as the allies of Sigmar, are honoured on such festival days with gifts of food or drink presented to them by passing strangers.

A major festival in Altdorf marks the accession of the first Grand Theogonist, Johann Helsturm. On the 33rd of Sigmarzeit, Sigmarite priests parade Helstrum's gilded skull and his sacred mace through the capital's crowded streets.

### DAY OF FOLLY (10TH SOMMERZEIT)

On the Day of Folly, sacred to Ranald, the great and good in every town and city are expected to produce a lavish feast for the poor and to act as servants to the lowly. Any aristocrat or merchant who avoids this duty is fair game for humiliating pranks. Throughout the day, everyone is expected to target everyone else with harmless mischief. The revellers dress in colourful costumes and ridiculous masks, and make merry well into the night.

### SONNSTILL

At Summer Solstice, peasants invoke Taal and Rhya with ancient fertility rites. Young couples dance around brightly decorated poles singing bawdy songs, until the evening when they sneak away to cavort in fields and woods. Older folk take the opportunity to indulge in ale and song. Austere priests of Sigmar often rail against such frivolous immorality from their pulpit.

### GEHEIMNISTAG

The spirits of the ancestors are believed to return to the world on the Day of Mystery. People visit the Augers of Morr to hear messages from dead friends and relatives, and the Gardens of Morr are opened to allow folk to honour their dead kin with sacrifices and feasting. Among the sombre Stirlanders, folk dress up in skeleton costumes and join together in a grim Dance Macabre. The spirits of the dead are believed to join in, and hopefully become too exhausted by the dance to haunt the living during the night.



By nightfall all celebration is over, and the night is given over to Morrslieb. Only the priests of Morr remain outside, guarding the graveyards against the restless dead.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY (13TH NACHGEHEIM)

Many folk leave out offerings of meat for Morr's crows in memory of the Night of the Restless Dead in 1681, when thousands of graves across the Empire erupted with the walking dead who terrorised the living. It is believed that Morr saved the Empire from utter destruction, for by sunrise the horror was inexplicably over.

## PIE WEEK (1ST-8TH ERNTEZEIT)

Empire folk have enthusiastically adopted this halfling festival. Across the Empire, folk indulge in a week-long orgy of pie-eating and beer guzzling, during which all business effectively ceases. Each city vies to bake the most magnificent pie. The record is held by Averheim, where 420 live blackbirds were enclosed under the crust, trained to sing in chorus when the pie was opened.

## MITTHERBST

Taal and Rhya are offered the first fruits of harvest as thanks for a successful year. On bad years, peasants offer their own blood by flagellating themselves to appease the gods for next year. This festival also marks the return of winter, and great bonfires are burned to welcome back Ulric. Cattle and sheep are driven between these bonfires to cleanse them of evil spirits. The first few sheep through the fire are set free in the wilderness so that Ulric's wolves will sate their hunger and spare the rest of the flock.

## MONDSTILLE

During the bleak midwinter, bonfires are lit again, this time to guide Taal and Rhya back to the world. Peasants hang wolf pelts at the edge of their villages to ward away Ulric's wrath. The great festival of Ulric is held in Middenheim to celebrate the city's founding. Priests of the White Wolf meet in ritual combat around the god's sacred flame – the winner becomes the guardian of the sacred flame until the following Mondstille. Each combatant memorises a special prayer to Ulric beseeching him to protect the city, so that if a priest is accidentally killed during the fight he can personally deliver it to his god.

## FESTIVALS OF MYRMIDIA

Myrmidia's main sacred day is called the Day of the Spear, a big event in Tilea and Estalia but a minor one in the Empire. Falling on 8th Jahrdrung, it commemorates Myrmidia's greatest victory, when she vanquished a great army of daemons. Her followers mark this day with solemn prayers and recitals from her holy books. The event culminates with displays of martial prowess by Myrmidia's most devout followers.

A festival unique to the Empire is the Day of Sanctuary (7th Sommerzeit). It remembers the founding of the Knights of the Blazing Sun, and is celebrated in every city where the goddess has a temple. A mounted procession of the Order of the Blazing Sun, resplendent in their battlegear, winds through the streets, ending at Myrmidia's altar where her priests bless the knights' weapons.

## SECULAR FESTIVALS

Goldgather's End (23rd Vorgeheim) celebrates the death of Emperor Boris Goldgather. Some people fast during the previous week in memory of the thousands who starved to death during his reign. On the day itself, wine is traditionally drunk from a murderer's skull representing Goldgather's head, gifts are exchanged, and misers pelted with dung.

Emperor Mandred Ratslayer is remembered on 4th Kaldezeit when townsfolk descend into the sewers to catch as many rats as possible. Ratcatchers are treated as kings at banquets of grilled rat-flesh held in streets and market squares throughout the Empire.

The heroic death of Emperor Sigismund is commemorated on 9th Vorgeheim. In Altdorf, the skull of the wyvern said to have slain the emperor is paraded through the streets and vilified. The parade ends at the steps of the Imperial Palace, where the Emperor ceremonially plunges Sigismund's sacred sword into the monster's skull. Elsewhere in the Empire, the wyvern's head is represented by any large, horned skull, and the local lord or burgomeister enacts the ritual slaying. Green is considered unlucky during this festival, and mobs roam the streets, harassing people wearing this colour.

The victory over the Vampire Counts is celebrated on the first day of spring (17th Nachexen). An effigy of a vampire is paraded through the streets, and folk stab it with stakes until it is utterly ruined. It is tradition for each town to release one thief from gaol on this day. The rogue is treated as a hero from sunrise to sunset in honour of Felix Mann who stole Vlad von Carstein's magic ring. By nightfall, anyone who can recapture the thief wins a reward of three silver shillings from the local Merchants' Guild.

The greatest of the secular festivals falls on 8th Erntezeit, and commemorates Magnus the Pious's victory over the forces of Chaos. All across the Empire, prayers are said for Magnus's soul, and mugs of ale are raised in his honour. Criminals, dressed in horned, bestial masks, are executed before cheering crowds in market squares. In Altdorf, hundreds of pilgrims swarm to the High Temple of Sigmar to witness the unveiling of the Holy Shroud of Magnus by the Grand Theogonist. The shroud was used to cover Magnus's corpse as it lay in state, and miraculously preserves the likeness of his features.







## CHAPTER FIVE

# EXPANDED RELIGION RULES

### OMENS AND PORTENTS

Sometimes, the gods send signs to their followers to help guide and warn them. Usually these omens and portents are just small inspirations and visions that flash across a priest's consciousness during the act of invoking a blessing or currying favour with his god. Sometimes they are longer, more detailed, and occur at other times, such as while the priest is praying, meditating, fasting, or sleeping.

Omens and portents are an important part of how a priest sees the world. Everyday life can be full of small visions and signs that have meaning for those who know what to look for. The common folk see portents everywhere, and interpret them wildly, whereas the trained clergy are more selective about what they take notice of and how they interpret it. An experienced priest is much more likely to know when a sign is intended for him and how to appreciate its true meaning.

The sending of such signs can be a good way to add atmosphere to the game, give players the feeling that there is more to the world than meets the eye, and prove that the gods are indeed present and interested in what is going on. They can be used to show that the

people of the Old World are indeed right to trust in and be guided by superstition. And even the most seemingly innocent sign can bring a real foreboding of the whims of the gods.

The nature of signs can vary. Some are clearly illusory and sent from the heavens, for example the vision of a great battle that is yet to happen. Some are everyday occurrences that might pass unnoticed, for example a black cat crossing a priest of Ranald's path. Some signs manifest in reality and some in the imagination, but with some signs it can be hard to tell whether they are real, imagined, or a bit of both.

### STARS AND COMETS

The GM could choose to use a more formal method to decide the occurrence of omens. He can rule that any ✨ and ☾ on Piety and Invocation checks contribute towards omens. This should be in addition to any other effects invoked by the symbols. The omens can occur either immediately, or shortly after the check depending on the dramatic needs of the scene.

The sort of omens granted by ☾ will generally be helpful to the priest. They may not be clear or literal, but they should contribute to the priest's ability to help the situation. Conversely, omens



granted by ✨ can be twisted and obscure, and even misleading. They can add to the atmosphere of doom while not offering too much to help interpretation. Of course, the more dice symbols that contribute to the vision the more dramatic and portentous the omen will be.

If a character rolls both ✨ and ➡ then the GM should be left with the task of finding a good balance between the obscure and unhelpful portent of doom, and the helpful and elucidating sign of what may be. But really, the GM can hardly go wrong; the gods move in mysterious ways, after all.

The GM should not worry that this sort of thing gives the players clues they might not normally get, or throws them off the scent when they were doing well, or otherwise affects the game. These are random results, and such things, appropriately, are down to the gods. If Shallya wishes her devoted follower to be tipped off about a disease that an erstwhile innocent-looking character may be carrying, then she will find a way to bring it to the table.

Interpreting omens and portents can be fun, and can lead the adventure in all sorts of directions, especially if the players get the interpretations wrong. Because a player's ability to interpret the signs will not be the same as his character's, the GM may wish to allow the priest to attempt an **Average (2d) Intuition (Int) check** in order to make sense of his omens and visions. If he succeeds, the GM can then explain more about what the omen could mean. Of course, the significance of a lot of a cult's imagery should be readily apparent to a follower of that cult in any case.

## OMENS OF MANANN

The albatross is the iconic sign of Manann's presence. It can be a portent of good or ill equally and is therefore difficult to interpret. It is usually seen flying high in the sky above a ship far from land. It is one of the most famous divine omens in the Old World. Because of its importance, the bird is considered sacred by all Manannites. A dead albatross is always a bad omen.

Example visions that a priest of Manann might receive include a stormy sea, signifying change and conflict, or a ship, usually telling of good fortune, riches, or an impending visitor. Other images in visions from Manann might be fish, sea monsters, sunken wrecks, and perilous rocks.

One vision always interpreted by priests of Manann as a dire warning and a need to change one's ways is the drowning man, especially if the priest imagines it is himself that is drowning.

## OMENS OF MYRMIDIA

Myrmidians take much significance from sighting an eagle. The time of day, the direction of flight, the height it was flying and if it had prey in its talons, it was combating other birds, or was part of a pair, all mean something to her cultists. The most important time to see an eagle is just before a battle, of course. An eagle often appears in Myrmidian visions, too. It is considered a messenger sent directly from Myrmodia, so its message will always be heeded. A proud eagle holding its prey or diving for the kill is a most auspicious omen. A dead or bleeding eagle portends disaster and defeat.

The keenness and cleanliness of weapons are also important signs to a Myrmidian – a dull blade or broken weapon is a bad sign.

## OMENS OF RANALD

Omens and signs from Ranald are often playful and cryptic. They can contain puns and other wordplay. This means that a follower of Ranald must be quick-witted and may even need to think laterally in order to understand what his god is conveying. For example, a vision of a cat picking its way through the rubble of the Sigmar's Arms, might mean that that inn is going to fall down. However, it might mean that becoming involved with Sigmarites is going to get the priest into trouble.

A common augury of the god is, of course, the black cat, but other types of cat appear, too. The ginger cat can be a sign of conflict and potential violence; a white cat, the feminine or the innocent; or with a tortoiseshell cat, confusion or complications. Other symbols associated with Ranald are gold coins and large, valuable gems. These are used in visions to show the way or to display a worthy goal. A coin on its heads side represents good fortune, while on its tails side represents the opposite.

Mundane occurrences are common in Ranaldian omens and the list is almost endless: toast falling on its unbuttered or buttered side, spilled salt, a chimney sweep whistling, a broken glass or mirror, an upside-down hat or bucket, torn clothing, a cuddly toy, shoes on the wrong feet, and so on.

## OMENS OF TAAL AND RHYA

The omens most meaningful to priests of Taal and Rhya are the simple happenings of nature. The natural world in tune with itself is a fund of small indicators and signs, and it can show that things are wrong in any number of subtle ways. The nightingale singing at midday, the lark at midnight, other odd behaviour by small animals or plants springing up in the wrong place or wrong season are some of the minor natural occurrences that can show a Taalite that all is not what it seems.

Visions from Taal often show the natural world at its most angry: trees twisted in strange ways or growing faces and eating travellers, or feral animals rampaging across the land. Sometimes Taal shows the wild world affected in strange ways: wild animals on the hunt for unnatural prey or human babies, or man-made objects infringing on Taal's domain, such as clockwork animals or metal trees.

Visions from Rhya often show nature at its most vulnerable: crops spoiling and dying, fields coloured like blood, rivers blocked or stagnant, and poisoned wells. Alternatively, Rhya might show nature tainted by dark forces: animals giving birth to strange things or other animals, human-animal hybrids, and other blasphemous fusions of animal/animal or animal/plant.

## OMENS OF ULRIC

The definitive sign of Ulric is the wolf. The lone wolf in winter, striding through virgin snow midst bare trees, is a sign that all is right with the Old World. Other than that, the situation the wolf is seen in could be an indication of a looming danger. Passing through a twisted and mutated wilderness would indicate the forces of Chaos. A rheumy-eyed beast with sores upon its back might portend a plague. A nest of wolf cubs being attacked by a ferocious horned ram foretells of a beastmen raid.



It is not uncommon for a travelling Ulrican to see fleeting glimpses of a wolf in the distance among the trees. Try as he might, he will not be able to catch up with the beast, and it will always be just ahead of him, seemingly enticing him further. More often than not, this will lead the follower to where he is needed to do Ulric's will.

A vision of ill tidings to the followers of Ulric might be a parched landscape with a hot, high sun shining down upon it. This could mean that the forces of Ulric will be weakened or that a harsh test is imminent.

## OMENS OF VERENA

Signs from Verena often include the notion of balance. When the times are right then things will be balanced. A thing moving to a state of imbalance can forewarn of danger and struggle. Things already imbalanced, or toppled over, may indicate that the ill deed is done, and the priest must deal with the aftermath. Even something as simple as a cart overturning and spilling its wares into the street could foreshadow a plot to undermine the power of the cult in the area.

Verena is concerned to let her followers know when justice is not truly done, especially when this is by the cult itself. The vision of a broken sword indicates that an injustice has been done, or the dream of a hanged child might show that an innocent person faces accusation.

More widely, the owl is a sign of the cult. An owl seen at night is usually a good omen. An owl, seen or heard during the day means that something is wrong. A dull or jagged blade is also an indicator that injustice is at work, and the cult should be wary.

## FAVOUR AND DISFAVOUR



The GM may wish to give benefits and penalties to priest characters depending on how well they serve their god, how closely they adhere to the strictures of the cult, and to what lengths they go to advance their god's cause. Of course, priests of all ranks should be devoted to their god, and are expected to aspire to live how their god has decreed. A good priest obeys all the strictures of his cult as best he can, and every time he invokes divine power, it should be for the glory of his god.




*ly across the sky, nor a wolf howl in the night without someone declaring it a sign from one of the gods. And yet, when these human priests wish to send a message to a colleague, they write it down.*

– Suriell Lianllach, High Elf Envoy



A priest should not be given positive modifiers just for properly following his vocation. If a priest has shown impeccable devotion to his god and has made many personal sacrifices along the way, he might garner an extra fortune die at crucial moments. If he is putting his life on the line by performing an action that directly elevates his god or takes on that god's enemies then that might be worth adding one or more  or even a single  directly to the pool for one climactic act. Usually, however, this sort of thing is dealt with by the general supply of fortune in the fortune pool, so this should only be used in extreme circumstances.

On the other hand, poor conduct from a priest should incur  to Piety and Invocation checks. This represents the disfavour of a god caused by a priest not following his strictures closely enough or otherwise acting in a way that the god would not approve of. A priest behaving selfishly or using the god's powers for his own ends should certainly incur this penalty. It is easy for a character to see the favour that he is granted as a means of power in its own right and to forget that every act must honour his god and advance his deity's cause.

Plainly there will be occasions where the priest considers that his actions are beneficial in the long term, though they do not directly advance his god's ideals. A priest might decide that although using blessings to defend himself against angry townsfolk might not directly please his god, it will be worth it in the long run, as he will be free to continue the god's work later, once the ignorant peasants are out of the way. This sort of balance needs to be left up to the GM and player to sort out between them.

Player characters can be good at convincing themselves that they are acting appropriately and following their god even when they are not by justifying their actions as a 'means to an end', when really they are being selfish or serving other masters. Just as the gods themselves know what is in a character's heart, so too does the GM, and he should give out black dice accordingly.

## PARTY FOLLOWERS

Although a priest's own behaviour in relation to his cult should be a given, he could be rewarded for encouraging others along the path. He can certainly be an example to those he meets from day to day, but from a gaming point of view, it could be interesting to see how his example and teaching impacts upon the adventuring party.

A PC priest could be inclined to encourage his party to act on behalf of his god. This might be worth rewarding inside and outside of the fortune pool. In addition, a party that acts to the same ends, adhering to the strictures laid down by the party priest, should be able to keep party tension lower than normal.

However, religious dogma and fanaticism being what it is, if only one player acts in way that does not honour the god, this can make the party tension rise quicker than normal. A priest proselytising aggressively to a party that is not interested at all in his chosen path will also make party tension rise quickly. Party dynamics in regard to religion and faith can be fun and rewarding to role-play.

## DISPLEASURE OF THE GODS

If a priest acts in such a way that he might be harming his cause, or if he regularly takes advantage of his position while ignoring cult strictures, then the GM can take action. The easiest way to create a clear reaction to such behaviour is to use omens and portents.



A priest who displeases his god will see hints of such displeasure in the visions and signs he receives. This might be as blatant as the god looking at him with an angry expression, or the priest could be shown the results of his actions, the suffering of those he refused to help or the consequences of poor behaviour. In any case, it should be made clear to the priest that his behaviour is meeting with disapproval and if he doesn't change his ways then more serious repercussions could be forthcoming.

Note that a player should be under no obligation to make his character live life by his cult strictures, and the character should not be made to act in strict accordance with the cult. Playing an apostate character, a lapsed priest, or just a very bad follower is as legitimate as any other type of character, and can be interesting and fun. Equally, it is fair for the GM to play out the consequences for that character.

If a character does not take such a hint and continues to defy his god then the GM can rule that the character no longer has access to his Faith talent card. This should be a hint beyond any misinterpretation that the character is not acting in a way that pleases his god. If he continues in his bad behaviour then the GM can restrict access to his Blessing actions.

This might sound harsh, but it is in no way intended to punish a player for doing things wrong. It is there to show that the gods have power and meaning and a servant of the god must pay for access to that power with obligations of his own. If he cannot fulfil the obligations then he should not be bestowed such power. This is the way the Old World works. Of course, the setting is open to interpretation and the GM should tailor the game to best suit his group.

## ATONEMENT

A priest who is suffering from ill omens, divine misfortune, or who has lost talents and actions may seek redemption. How this is achieved will depend on how severe the character's transgressions have been and how severe a penalty he is currently under.

The simplest remedy is for the priest to be contrite and to follow his god's will more closely, denying himself anything that might even be interpreted as unholy, and doing his best to follow as closely as possible to the strictures of his cult. Provided the priest has not done a particularly blasphemous act or been so severe in his transgressions, this should be an adequate way to redeem himself. The priest might need to follow such impeccable behaviour for some time before the god's favour returns, of course, and this should be related to the amount of time the priest spent straying from the true path.

For a more severe transgression, the GM may decide that the priest needs to undertake some sort of quest or pilgrimage, or carry out a specific act in the name of his god. The character can be informed of this by his cult superiors, or he could glean such knowledge from the omens. The quest should be relevant to the god or the transgression, and should probably involve some personal danger to the priest.

The omens could simply direct the priest to a nearby temple or to an important priest who can then outline the quest in person. Or, if the entire quest is imparted through visions and omens then the vision can be repeated and extended over the coming hours and days to better describe what is required. Such repetition can also be used

to nag a delinquent. The vision can be deliberately vague, leaving the character some doubt as to what he must do as a further test of his character.

The chore could be as complex as travelling a long way, tracking down a sacred item, defeating its guardians, and returning with it, or as simple as fixing the roof on the local shrine: whatever helps the game run best. If there is more interesting stuff already going on in the game, players might not want to make a significant detour in order to indulge a single character. On the other hand, if the whole party gets behind the priest's effort then the road to redemption can be a worthy campaign in itself.

As soon as the penitent makes it clear that he is willing to follow the omen and do the god's work, then his powers of blessing can be (temporarily) restored if the god wills it. It might be that the true nature of the quest is not the one apparent to the priest. The quest can be more about how it is fulfilled rather than whether it is fulfilled. The most important aspect of the mission might be that the priest acts in a becoming manner and follows the way of his cult closely throughout the quest. Succeeding in the mission might only be of secondary importance to the god. Should the priest succeed in the quest, however the GM wishes to define such success, then the GM can remove the penalties he had imposed.

## SOURCES OF POWER

Just as miraculous power originates directly from religious faith, so too does that power surround objects and places that are especially venerated or holy. The power can derive from diverse sources, but the more closely attuned a holy item or sacred place is to a god, the easier it is for a priest of that god to curry favour and invoke blessings while possessing that item or remaining in that location.

### F

One mechanic that can be used to reflect the favour of the gods is to give a player the option of re-rolling all white and black dice from a pool. This can be a very effective way of representing fortune being changed by the power of divine influence, and is a more interesting and evocative mechanic than just giving extra white dice to a pool.

Likewise, if the GM wishes to show divine disfavour he can insist that the white and black dice be re-rolled when this might be disadvantageous to the character.

The GM may wish to consider using Divine Fortune in this manner as a bonus instead of granting the odd fortune or misfortune die to a pool. This chapter offers a number of options and ideas for when to bestow dice upon a priest's pool, and a GM can easily bestow Divine Fortune, or indeed Divine Misfortune, to the check instead, if he feels it is appropriate.

This is an excellent opportunity to add drama and flair to a check, but if used too often, the influence of Divine Favour loses some of its impact. The GM should make such events memorable, weaving details into the story that show the relationship between the priest and his deity made manifest through these mechanics.



## SACRED SITES

Most temples have been sites of worship for so long and the focus of so much devout energy that the very building can be a source of magical power conducive to the wishes of that god. Almost any temple will offer  $\square$  to Piety or Invocation checks dedicated to that god. The more sacred and important sites will give 2 or 3 (or even more) fortune dice to relevant checks. Similarly these sites confer the equivalent  $\blacksquare$  modifiers to any Invocations, Piety, and even Spellcraft and Channelling checks that are intended to undermine the aspirations of the deity.

These sites need not be temples. They can be simple roadside shrines, the locations of holy acts from days of yore, long-forgotten places of divine power, or another site the GM decides holds the potential for divine favour. A priest may catch a glimpse of the nature and power of such a place in an omen or vision.

These places might not just impart the bonuses described above. They can give modifiers to other checks too, such as adding  $\blacksquare$  to Fear and Terror checks, and similar Discipline-based checks for devoted believers. The aura in these holy places gives succour to the citizens of the Empire. Taking refuge in a temple or other holy site is a natural thing for people to do in the face of adversity.

## ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which a blessing is invoked can affect its chances of success, too, as it can affect a priest's ability to curry favour. Ideally, a priest will be in a place conducive to his god in order to make a blessing without penalty.

For example, to best appease his god, a priest of Manann should be near some significant natural body of water, even if it is only the village stream. A priest of Taal should be in wild, untamed lands. A priest of Ulric should be in a forest, or surrounded by wintry conditions. If the environment is not conducive to the deity, the GM

may wish to add a misfortune die or two to the pool. Most gods, however, are not tied to particular surroundings, so invoking their blessings will not incur such penalties.

When a priest is particularly in his element, he may gain white dice. A priest of Manann aboard a ship on the ocean or on the shore during a great storm, an Ulrican in a snowy forest in winter, or a Taalist in rain-lashed wilderness, might all gain white dice to their Invocation and Piety checks.

## ARTEFACTS

There are any number of holy and sacred objects across the Old World said to possess divine power either by virtue of having been associated with or even touched by a god or one of the gods' most holy servants. Remains from holy or revered followers are also common – the knuckle bone of a legendary priest, or the skull of a famous prophet.

And while the literacy rate in the Empire is low, prayer strips and scrolls are quite common. A soldier may attach a prayer strip with his favourite Sigmar blessing to his armour for luck, or a physician may hang prayers of Shallya about his workplace to aid his work.

Sometimes objects gain power simply through the belief that they possess power. The faith that people put in an object is sometimes enough to give it power whether or not Sigmar once slept on it, or Verena used it as a bookmark, or Manann caught it in his fishing net. These venerated objects become a focus of miracles and being near one can make it easier for a priest to curry favour with his god and invoke divine blessings. The types of objects revered in this way are diverse and depend on the cult that venerates them.

Most major temples across the Old World possess at least one such holy artefact. These are often objects that inspire pilgrimage and homage in their own right. Sometimes a minor temple will house an artefact of power. Such an object is usually tied to the place through long tradition and sometimes the exact nature of the object is unknown to the locals. Some of the great temples have vaults within them that house a variety of sacred objects, the powers of which vary greatly. They are sometimes loaned out to important expeditions or to those doing vital and dangerous work on behalf of the cult.

For example, many relics of the Cult of Ulric will be carried by the Ulrican orders in the Imperial armies. As well as bestowing their objects upon the Imperial armies, Sigmarites may bequeath them to witch hunters and similar orders who help keep the Empire safe. Manannite objects are lent to ship's captains to keep vessels safe on voyages of exploration, and Verenean objects are often brought to ease mediations or negotiations where perspicacity and good judgement is particularly needed.

These sorts of objects often do no more than give  $\square$  to Piety and Invocation checks done in the god's name or bestow Divine Fortune (see page 35). Some objects can be protective, adding  $\blacksquare$  to the bearer's defence, for example. Lots of effects can be created by the GM, but they should generally be minor and bring a single die to any relevant checks.

More important and powerful religious artefacts are to be found, too, and some are detailed on the item cards included with this set. Because of their importance and significance to the people, these sorts of objects make excellent goals for campaigns and quests. Searching out long-lost objects, retrieving recently stolen religious relics, and discovering previously unknown artefacts can serve to focus devout characters' efforts, and bring fame and prestige to the heroes who might succeed in such a holy mission.



Artefacts of such power are often able to create a number of effects depending on the circumstances, in addition to bestowing general modifiers, and can allow the person holding them to invoke blessings and similar effects.

## PRAYERS AND HYMNS

The support of other followers can improve a priest's invocations and attract the favour of the gods. If a priest leads a group of worshippers in an appropriate act of worship then this can give large modifiers to his Piety and Invocation checks.

The people need to willingly and actively participate in the worship or ceremony. Sitting quietly while the priest tells them what's what will not be any use. They need to join in with a prayer or a hymn, or give some sort of response. Also, the congregation needs to be comprised of devout believers – simply going through the motions under the orders of a priest is not enough.

The amount of time spent on an act of worship can prove important. A quick one-line prayer or "let it be", from the group will not trouble the gods to grant them favour. A rousing hymn lasting some minutes, or a long prayer or passage from a holy book might. Likewise, general timing can be important, as well. A prayer to Taal may be better received at dawn or dusk. Prayers to Manann as storm winds roll in off the ocean may catch the god's ear.

The modifier that the GM should award for a communal act of worship can vary greatly. A group of three or four people having a quick prayer before the invocation of a blessing is might warrant  $\square$  whereas a congregation of hundreds, all singing joyously as one and exalting their god's glory while a priest invokes a blessing before them could grant several  $\square$ .

## SACRIFICES

Sacrifices to the gods can help curry favour and invoke blessings. Each god requires the right sort of sacrifice in the right circumstances. All the gods require sacrifices from their followers at some point, whether it is the first fish of the catch being thrown back into the sea to appease Manann, Ranald's tithe, or a libation of fine Tilean wine to Myrmidia. However, a sacrifice designed to favour a blessing needs to be significant and somewhat spectacular. A significant sacrifice might contribute up to  $\square\square\square$  to a priest's Piety and Invocation checks.

A sacrifice to Manann could be a particularly large fish or even the scuttling of a seaworthy boat. Sacrifices to Taal could include the slaughter of a wild animal, the more ferocious and harder to catch the better. A sacrifice to Rhya could be freshly harvested grain or a domesticated animal: new-born lambs are best.

Perhaps a priest of Morr must spend a long vigil in a tomb praying for the souls of the departed. A priest of Shallya may have to undergo a period of self-denial and physical suffering, so that he or she experiences and weeps for the pain of others. A priest of Myrmidia may have to break a finely wrought spear and cast the shards at the altar to his goddess, while a follower of Verena must pour a libation of expensive ink, and a worshipper of Ranald must sacrifice an item stolen at great personal risk.

The slaughter of a live wolf is the ultimate sacrifice to Ulric. Meanwhile, Sigmar appreciates the demise of any of his enemies, and their death in battle would make a worthy offering to him.

## HOLY SYMBOLS

Almost every priest carries at least one symbol of their gods, as do most of the populace of the Old World. For a devout cultist, it will often be a high-quality and expensive object that has been crafted especially to honour a god, or a specially made object that has been passed down to the character through generations of his family.

However, it could just as well be a simple item that the character has made himself, for example a likeness of Rhya whittled from the branch of a tree from his home village, or, for a devotee of Shallya, a pebble found on the ground that looks a bit like a dove. Alternatively, it could be an object that has been obtained through great danger, which shows that the priest has achieved courage through his devotion. For an Ulrican, this could be the foot of a wolf slain with his own hands, or, for a Myrmidian, an eagle's feather taken from a lofty eyrie.

These holy symbols bring a reminder of courage through faith and so, whenever the character is holding a holy symbol and concentrating on it (by performing a manoeuvre to intercede with his god), it confers  $\square$  to any Discipline check. For the GM, it is important that the priest earns this bonus by showing his faith in his god, and displaying discipline and honour. It is not sufficient for a character to claim such a bonus just because he has purchased a symbol and visits the temple occasionally. There must be a clear demonstration in the way that the character acts to show that he has the necessary faith and devotion to earn such a bonus.

## STANDARDS

Some holy symbols have the power to inspire larger groups. This is especially true if it is in the hands of a devout follower. A carving of a raven carried by a priest of Morr might have enough influence to confer some sort of bonus to an entire village assailed by the walking dead. A priest of Manann on board a ship being buffeted by wild storms could brandish his trident in defiance of the storm and give heart to the entire crew.

Any military company would use their standard as a focus of activity and as a boost to morale, but religious fighting orders, or just a company that shares a common faith in a particular god, would get more of a boost from a religious banner, or a company banner that incorporates religious symbols. Such standards may confer one or more  $\square$  to Willpower checks made by those inspired by its presence.

## HIGHER RANK BLESSINGS

Priests can sometimes acquire action cards for blessings of a higher rank than their current one. However, the blessings are given a higher rank for a reason, and the effect can be difficult to achieve. At the discretion of the GM, a priest can buy a higher-ranked blessing, but he must spend one extra advance for each rank it is higher than his own.

So a Rank 1 priest can acquire a Rank 3 blessing for 3 advances. The blessings are more rarely granted, even if a priest knows how to ask for them. Therefore, invoking a blessing always counts as one difficulty level greater for every rank higher than the invoking priest's rank. A Rank 1 priest can attempt to invoke a Rank 3 blessing, but he must add  $\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$  to his pool.





## CHAPTER SIX

# PLAYING A PRIEST

This is a continuation of Chapter Six of the *Tome of Blessings*, offering description and advice on playing priests of the six major Cults of the Empire detailed more fully in this book.

In addition, special cult skills are suggested that represent the sorts of activities the various cults specialise in and that might be picked up in the life of a priest of that order. The GM can offer these options as career skills if he feels they better reflect the activities of a priest character in his campaign. If the GM agrees, these additional skills can apply to all careers in the priest path, starting with Initiate and Disciple.

For Empire Cults detailed here, these special skills are listed along with the corresponding entries. These special skills can also be applied to priests of Morr, Shallya, and Sigmar, described in the core set. The special skills for these priests are provided below.

### SPECIAL SKILLS FOR THE CORE SET CULTS

MORR	SHALLYA	SIGMAR
Discipline (WP)	Medicine (Int)	Discipline (WP)
Intimidate (St)	Resilience (To)	Weapon Skill (St)


## PRIESTS OF MANANN

*Manann be praised, for he is the breeze to take us out,  
Manann be praised, for he is the wave to bring us home,  
Manann be praised, for he is the food to feed us,  
Manann be praised, or his be the wrath that drowns us.*

Priests of Manann exist to glorify the power of their god, the lord of the seas and the rivers, and to exalt in the strength of his element. At the same time, through their faith they hope to protect the people from the destructive power of the waves and currents and ensure they are supplied the water's magnificent bounty. This dual role is hard to separate; these priests exalt in the god's raging mood yet fear such a thing and strive to placate it.

The priests of Manann can be said to be like the sea itself: calm, measured, and resolute, and then, just like the sea, without warning they can fall into a rage and become dangerous and merciless. That is a common perception of them in any case. Most people encounter priests of Manann in their calmer demeanour, as protectors against the power of the sea and rivers, as guardians ensuring that Manann's bounty is not abused, and as suppliants asking the god to continue to provide for his loyal followers year after year.





## PRIEST OF MANANN CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Manann if you want to...

- + Glory in and protect people from the ravages of the sea
- + Defend communities that rely on the sea and rivers for their livelihoods
- + Give thanks to the gods for the bounty of the sea and rivers
- + Travel and see the world

## CULT SKILLS

- + Folklore (Int)
- + Nature Lore (Int)

Priests of Manann are most likely to be found among coastal communities and in the great ports, whether near rivers or by the sea. In smaller riverside settlements, Manann is often associated with the local river spirit, and the line between rites dedicated to such spirits and those performed in Manann's name is not always clear. However, even far from the rivers and shores, his presence is felt in the rain and storms that shape the land.

The symbols of Manann are the five-tined crown and the trident. The albatross is a fickle portent of the god's presence or impending manifestation, and is interpreted as a good omen as much as a sign of danger.

## THE WATER'S EDGE

Almost every sizeable seaside village will have a priest and temple to Manann. In these sorts of places, especially the fishing villages dotted along the coast of Nordland, village life is entwined with the teachings and rites of its priest of Manann. This relationship is vital for the very survival of such communities, which live so vulnerably in their god's shadow.

Priests of Manann are required to administer the day-to-day rites that keep their god satisfied and assuage his anger. They must also ensure that the people are kept supplied with the water's bounteous harvest. If boats are sunk, storms wreck their homes, or the catch is poor, then the townsfolk will want to know why and expect their priest do something about it.

## rites of passage

The largest trading ships often have their own full-time priest of Manann on board, ensuring the well-being of the crew and vessel alike. Ships that are away from home for a long time, especially those which explore new areas and search out new lands and trade routes, will require Manann's indulgence, and so are especially in need of a priest aboard. The priest leads the crew in prayers, and in the shanties that lift their spirits and coordinate the shipboard work. In addition, many of Manann's priests are competent and experienced sailors, able to put their hand to the running of the ship as well as any salty sea dog.

The priests will be on board to ensure that the crew carry out Manann's wishes and offer suitable sacrifices back to him. The first fish of any catch must be thrown back in. A scrap from any shipboard meal or drink must be sacrificed. A penny earned from every voyage must be thrown into the water, too. (Wealthier sailors are expected to offer more.)

The priest on board a ship acts as a sort of unofficial representative of the crew. If they have any grievance with the captain then they will often go through their priest, and the priest is expected to take it upon himself to ensure that the captain does not exploit his crew. In turn, it is a wise captain who makes sure he is on good terms with the ship's priest.

Manann's representative is well respected aboard ship, of course, and it is considered the worst luck to lose him from the crew. Conversely, it is a tradition of the sea that if all hope is lost and the sinking of a ship or other disaster looks certain, then the priest of Manann is thrown overboard as a last chance at placating Manann.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF MANANN

- + The skeleton of a boat, wrecked long ago, has been thrown up by the tides. The priest is sent to interpret this omen and discover why Manann has disgorged the vessel.
- + Several ships have crashed into the rocky coast over the last year. Rumour has it that a gang of wreckers are operating in the area. It is even said they are making blood sacrifices to Stromfels, the bloodthirsty shark-god, the dark mirror of Manann. It is up to the priest to put an end to their sacrilege.
- + A wrecked ship has spilled its cargo along the coast. Two villages are coming to blows over who has the wrecker's rights. A priest of Manann needs to go and sort it out. Meanwhile, some of the cargo is decidedly dangerous.
- + A gigantic, hideous sea monster is preying on a hapless fishing village. Someone needs to deal with it.
- + All the fish being pulled out of this stretch of the river are sickly or dead. Local villagers turn to a priest of Manann to find out why.



- ✦ A great expedition is being launched to find the fabled north-west passage to Cathay or perhaps explore distant Lustria. Volunteers for the dangerous voyage are being sought. Manannites are especially welcome.

## PRIESTS OF MYRMIDIA

*Show me the eyes of the eagle that I may see my enemies,  
Show me the strength of the eagle that I may persevere,  
Show me the wings of the eagle that I may strike in good time,  
Show me the heart of the eagle that I may not fear.*

Myrmidian priests are skilled warriors. For them the very act of battle is a prayer to their god. They practice and perfect techniques and skills. They study and learn tactics and strategies. They master the art of battle for its own sake and to glorify Myrmidia. To them, armed conflict is an inevitability, and therefore mastery upon the field of battle is simply mastery of one's own fate.

The followers of Myrmidia are obsessively dedicated to the physical and mental skills that underlie all combat. They also realise that their skills are a privilege and an honour to their god, and they feel a moral obligation to lend their skills to just causes.

Myrmidia's followers defeat their own fears by ensuring that they are as well prepared for battle as it is possible to be. Therefore death, should it occur, is not failure; it is simply their final tithe to their god.

Priests of Myrmidia seek the discipline to keep their emotions in check during combat. To fight with anger or passion is to fight with an exploitable weakness. Anger is counterproductive to Myrmidian training, whereas the other martial cults of the Empire seem to embrace anger and emotion as a means to the same end. For this reason, priests of Myrmidia also have a reputation for being aloof, dispassionate, or even cold-blooded.

The symbol of the cult is the shield and the spear, which are Myrmidia's favourite weapons, but many Myrmidians are equally skilled with a sword, seeing a well-forged blade as a noble weapon worthy of their dedication and mastery. The eagle epitomises many of the qualities that Myrmidians most admire: ambition, alertness, and decisiveness.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Followers of Myrmidia are fanatical about martial skills. They concentrate not just on physical excellence, but also scrupulously study strategy and tactics. A Myrmidian temple contains books and maps of some of the most famous and instructive battles from throughout history, and Myrmidians are especially fond of studying first-hand accounts of battles.

These temples are run just like military academies, and although Myrmidia is revered in traditional ways, training, sparring, and studying are also regarded as important ways of worship. The routine in an academy is strictly regimented and extremely hard. This sets the tone for a cultist's life, and many followers of Myrmidia seem to be mechanical in their observations of routine and their predilection for the austere.

One of the most important things to a Myrmidian is the study and adherence of the rules of battle. Devout followers impeccably observe the established conventions of warfare, such as accepting

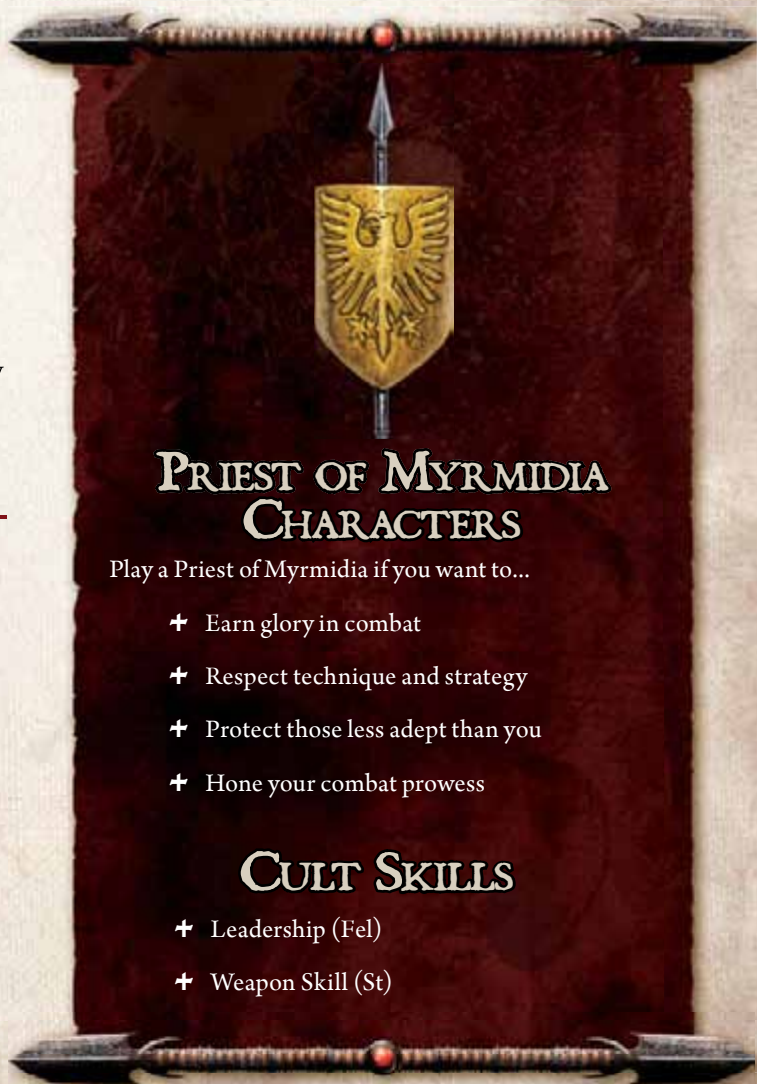
surrender from an honourable foe, or humanely treating prisoners of war in a civil conflict. Abusing these strictures is a grave offence that could lead to dismissal from the order.

## ADVISING THE MILITARY

As it is not just physical prowess that the Cult of Myrmidia venerates, Myrmidians are often in demand as military advisors. They would say that intellectual rigour and the study of tactics and strategy is as much a part of the soldier's code as the physical aspects. Priests of Myrmidia will be familiar with all the great battles of history, even with the mythical conflicts that Myrmidia is said to have taken part in, and many priests, especially the older ones, are devout students of military history from all eras.

These strategists and tacticians offer themselves to the Old World's armies as advisors. Many of the continent's armies are wise enough to take up the opportunity. Myrmidians also act as experts on matters as mundane as equipment and logistics, an aspect of warfare often underestimated by the Imperial generals.

Because of the increasing popularity of Myrmidian doctrine and practice in the armies of the Empire and its contrast with the attitudes of the other martial cults, there is often a clear rift among the officers of Imperial armies who follow different traditions. This can lead to problems, but a good general knows how to turn such conflict into healthy rivalry.



### PRIEST OF MYRMIDIA CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Myrmidia if you want to...

- ✦ Earn glory in combat
- ✦ Respect technique and strategy
- ✦ Protect those less adept than you
- ✦ Hone your combat prowess

### CULT SKILLS

- ✦ Leadership (Fel)
- ✦ Weapon Skill (St)



## BLOOD MONEY

As excellent soldiers, Myrmidians also make excellent mercenaries, and there are a good number of Myrmidian mercenary companies across the Old World. Whereas they have a generally poor reputation, the role of a mercenary is just as honourable to a Myrmidian as any other sort of soldier. Thus Myrmidian mercenary companies do their business openly in the good name of Myrmidia. This works as a sort of mark of quality and gives employers a general confidence that they are getting the right sort of mercenary for their coin. In return, a good proportion of a company's bounty is offered up to the cult's coffers.

Because of the cult's excellent reputation, the nobility of the Empire are catching on to the well-tried southern tradition of having their sons trained by Myrmidians. Even if the nobles don't put much stock in the goddess herself, they are keenly aware of the martial skills that the Myrmidian priests possess and pay well to retain them in their household for months at a time. The cultists also make a prestige bodyguard for pilgrimages and other hazardous journeys made by the wealthy.

All the above factors mean that the cult is extremely rich, and high-ranking members of the cult are often keen to show off such riches by purchasing extremely fine and intricate arms and armour, and riding the best horses. All this impressive pomp only serves to raise the Myrmidians' martial reputation even further.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF MYRMIDIA

- ✦ An ambitious baron wishes to carve out more territory for himself from the goblin infested marginal land in the shadow of the mountains. He needs a competent Myrmidian who can raise, equip, and lead an effective fighting force.
- ✦ A minor noble wants his slapdash men-at-arms trained up in short order, before an important visit. Unfortunately, years of slack leadership mean that they are largely beyond help. Or could there be a more sinister reason for their malaise?
- ✦ A priest of Myrmidia is challenged to a duel. The challenger is obviously unhinged, drunk, or suicidal and is no swordsman in any case. Should the priest accept?
- ✦ A local noble is holding a tourney. There will be a prize for the finest swordsman. It would make a mockery of things if it should be won by the wrong sort of fighter.
- ✦ Some Tilean mercenaries have turned up at the local inn and started abusing their martial skills to intimidate and bully the locals. Someone needs to sort them out.
- ✦ Some farmers from a distant village beg a Myrmidian to see to the defence of their village from rampaging marauders. They cannot afford to pay very much. Perhaps the cultist should try to get a few more mercenaries to help him (six of them should suffice).

## PRIESTS OF RANALD

*Grant me quick wits so I need not my quick feet,  
Grant me quick feet so I need not my quick arms,  
Grant me quick arms so I need not my quick wits,  
But, all three would be nice, Ranald.*

Followers of Ranald are an eclectic bunch, and it is hard to say what a typical 'priest' might be. Certainly they seem to hold a dim view of pompous authority and are least like the priests of other religions. They are often free spirits who do not like to be told what to do, and they take a pleasure in disrespecting those who demand respect without having earned it, especially those who get their rank by an accident of birth.

Many display a playful love of trickery and games. Some separate these games from the real world, while many see their entire life as a game. Many adopt the philosophy that life's game has but one rule: don't get caught.

Ranaldians have a strong dislike of injustice, but what they think of as justice is based on natural law and common sense rather than the formalised and codified version of the Vereneans. They are disdainful of the Vereneans' philosophy because they think it maintains the present order and further entrenches the separation between the high-born and the have-nots.

There is a popular notion of the happy-go-lucky Ranaldian, ready to help out the poor and quick to stick up for the downtrodden and give voice to the disenfranchised. They are savvy characters, quick-witted with a clever trick to bring well-deserved come-uppance to the greedy rich. There is another notion of the ruthless underworld figure exploiting the poor for their tithes in the name of protection and preying on those who can least defend themselves. They





are cowardly criminals, hiding behind their cult, using religion where other thugs might use threats and brutality. Plainly these are two extremes but pragmatism and idealism must be married somehow in the heart of every priest of Ranald.

Priests of Ranald do not like to stand out in a crowd or be recognised for what they are, except by their own kind. Therefore, they dress, to the casual observer, just like everyone else. Their garb is often adorned with subtle signs and pointers to their identity. The cross motif is the most common and one a lot of people know about. Cross-stitches on cuffs and belts is a common sign. However because many people know about this design, only initiates and disciples commonly use it. When they wish to remain incognito, priests of higher ranks use other more subtle signs that nobody outside the cult knows about. Other symbols associated with Ranald are the coin and the black cat.

## TAKING WHAT'S YOURS

Ranaldians love a fair fight and a battle of wits, but they hold that violence proves a lack of wits and should only be used as a last resort. They believe that violence can always be avoided by the right cunning and quick thinking.

However, they are not so naive that they think that every problem can be solved as if by a character from one of Ranald's fables. They realise that the world of man is built upon injustice after injustice and that human nature is not always a pleasant one. They realise that their task is not to bring about a new order in the world. They simply want to even the score a bit, and play the game.

It follows quite closely, therefore, that taking what you can get away with, from those who can afford to (or deserve to) lose it, is a holy act that honours Ranald. Of course, everything is better with Ranaldian flair, so particularly clever, risky, or high-profile heists are all the more worthy of the god's approval.

## PROTECTING THE INNOCENT

The massive inequality between those with power and those without is so stark and obvious a fact of Old World life that it often seems to be almost unnoticed by people going about their daily lives. Ranaldians are keenly aware of this. They see the injustices and inequalities of the world close up, especially in their urban heartland where the rich are richer and the poor are poorer. It is one of their beliefs that they should try to stand up for the disadvantaged whenever possible. This of course gets them into conflict with the authorities, who are indeed rich and powerful themselves.

As a result, the common cultist generally does what he can to help without making some conspicuous stand against impossible odds. Helping out often but in small ways is a strategy that Ranald approves of. That is not to say, when given the chance, Ranaldians should not attempt to strike bigger blows at the world's injustices and evils.

## DON'T GET CAUGHT

It might sound obvious, but it bears saying that not getting caught is important to the Ranaldian way of thinking. Outwitting authority and success in their goals is like a prayer to their god. A well-crafted and executed plan is a hymn. The success of their endeavours is an act that cannot be bettered by any symbolic sacrifice or abstract sermon. Life itself is worship, so life must be lived according to Ranald's intentions.

## PRIEST OF RANALD CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Ranald if you want to...

- + Stand up for the common man
- + Earn a little on the side
- + Outwit the rich and powerful
- + Take what doesn't belong to you with a clear conscience

## CULT SKILLS

- + Skulduggery (Ag)
- + Stealth (Ag)

For this reason, getting caught not only casts shame upon the cultist but it also offends the god and is sacrilegious in itself. If a cultist of Ranald is caught then he must at least be sure not to have to suffer the consequences imposed by the privileged rulers. At every opportunity, there is a prison to be escaped from, a fine to be defrauded, or a verdict to be undermined. A cultist who has been caught is required to make amends by the cult. This can often involve some sort of high profile and ingenious robbery or prank.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF RANALD

- + The authorities are clearing the riverside hovels in order to construct fashionable town houses there. Someone needs to make sure that anything the builders attempt goes mysteriously wrong.
- + A 'respectable' gang of local smugglers, which has been paying its dues to the cult for many years, has recently begun a highly profitable sideline in smuggling artefacts and relics that may be tainted by Chaos. Infiltrate the gang or plant evidence so the smugglers get what they deserve.





## PRIEST OF TAAL CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Taal if you want to...

- + Glory in wilderness and nature
- + Respect the old ways
- + Shun civilisation and technology
- + Look after the rural people

## CULT SKILLS

- + Taal: Animal Handling (Fel)
- + Rhya: Medicine (Int)
- + Both: Nature Lore (Int)

- + For reasons too complicated to explain, someone needs to break into the local prison, take a rubbing of one of the cell walls, and then break out again.
- + The son of a local noble has been kidnapped by an over-enthusiastic gang of footpads. They have lost their nerve and handed him over to Ranald. Now his followers have the problem of what to do with the lad.
- + A loyal cultist has been defrauded of his inheritance (an old town house) by his greedy cousin. He begs the cult to help him. Perhaps the town house will become haunted by its previous owner...

## PRIESTS OF TAAL

*Taal, I pray you protect me from the beasts of the wilderness, and see me safely home. And I pray you guide me through the temptations of civilisation and see me safely to the wild places once more.*

Taalists often come across as angry, raging against what they see as the sophistry of the modern world and the emasculation of man. Or they are exultant, glorifying in the ineluctable power of nature, which can be just as intimidating. They look down upon the urban folk, fearing the disease and filth of the city, but also despising the weakness that urban living has brought.

They take pride in their own self-sufficiency and respect all who live off the land in a reasonable and harmonious manner. Though Taal is attracted to the wild places that humans find difficult to survive in, his wife, Rhya, is the goddess of community and fertility. So Taal has sympathy for mankind and their need to tame the wild places in order to survive, even if they need a sharp reminder now and again of the power of nature.

Priests of Taal have a reputation for being the wild men of the woods, running around half naked through the forests, caked in mud, trying to commune with things that would rather eat them. This is of course an exaggeration, but, even so, those who get to know dedicated Taalites still feel they are otherworldly and aloof from the civilisation of mankind.

Taalites are often seen as forsaking civilisation and looking to the past, avoiding home comforts through dogma, and preferring hardship out of some sort of guilt for the ascendance of man. Even in their heartland, they can be seen as over the top and out of touch. However, priests of Taal undergo these hardships in order to commune with their god. Only through existing in his element and suffering the depredations of the wilderness can they know their god.

When officiating, priests of Taal wear naturally coloured robes of brown and dull green adorned with simple cult symbols. Otherwise they wear the clothes of the common hunter or woodsman and can be indistinguishable from them if they wish. However, they shun metallic objects and prefer to use materials that nature provides. They favour using flint for tools such as arrowheads, knives, and axes, and often carry staffs, sometimes adorned with antlers or horns. Such staffs symbolise their office, but also act as weapons. The symbols of Taal are antlers, deer skulls, and the flint-headed axe. Rhya's symbols include the wheatsheaf and flowers.





## FATHER GOD

As Taal is an old god from the wild places, he is worshipped in wild areas. He has shrines and temples in the towns and cities of his heartland, such as Talabheim, but these are not true places of worship. They stand only to remind the locals of the wild places. Most acts of worship to Taal take place out in the woods, in ancient stone circles, and sacred groves.

Priests of Taal much prefer to be in the untamed wilderness. Cities are represented in Taalite tradition as an abomination, and some influential Taalites have likened the ever-changing and chaotic nature of the great cities to that of the dark gods. However, this is an extreme view, and most priests of the cult regard cities as a necessary evil.

Many Taalites believe that the civilisation in the Old World is not here to stay. They feel that the forces of nature (or other forces) will bring about the fall and humans will be forced back to self-sufficiency and made to rely on the traditional crafts and skills simply to survive. Then the urbanites and nobility will have their degeneracy shown to them, as they struggle to cope. One of the functions of the priesthood is to make sure that mankind will be fit and strong enough for the return of nature's ascendancy.

Those who favour Rhya have a more balanced view. They see that man and nature need to be harmonised and balanced. They see that mankind, for all their civilisation and technology, are still ultimately beholden to the land and the fickle moods of Taal and Rhya, and that many urban dwellers have forgotten this blatant truth.

## MOTHER NATURE

The changing of the seasons is the turn of Rhya's wheel. Anything that interrupts the smooth running of this pattern of life is of concern to her. Rhya is the god of community, well-being, health, love, fertility, and birth. She is the god of gentle nature, the land that humans have tamed, farming, and the harvest. She seems to have the widest range of all the Old World's deities. Her domain touches everybody, every moment of the day. Her remit is so broad, she seems to have spread herself very thinly indeed, and has, as a deity in her own right, almost disappeared. Now she is known merely as the gentler side of Taal, since all her associations are subsumed into her husband. Although her name is remembered, she has no temples, save perhaps a few out of the way shrines that are maintained out of the public purse or by the priesthood of Taal. Likewise, there is no priesthood of Rhya either – her customs and blessings are largely taken up by the priestesses of Taal.

However, although the people may pray to Taal to ensure that their crops are not spoiled, they thank Rhya when the crops are finally harvested. Many people have not forgotten her and give thanks to her in varied ways. Many traditions and customs have their roots in Rhyan ritual. Rhya has been supplanted by Shallya in much of her care for the people, but she is still pre-eminent across the Empire in her interest in conjugal rites. Female cultists of Taal are often the midwives of the wilderness, and try to attend every birth where they are needed.

The Priestesses of Taal are also versed in general medicine and herb lore. In the deepest wilds a follower of Rhya is often the only medical practitioner for many miles. Urban folk who do not understand rural ways find a Taalist priestesses' natural remedies, blessings, and reliance uncomfortable, but this is a small price to pay in

service to their deity. These aspects of Taal represented by Rhya's nurturing, protective nature are often expressed on the conservative side of Taal's blessings, while the more wild and aggressive aspects of nature are depicted on the reckless side of his blessings.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF TAAAL AND RHYA

- ✦ The great oak in the middle of the wood is bleeding. It's weeping real blood, according to the local woodsmen. Someone needs to go in there and find out what is happening. And if need be, chop the tree down.
- ✦ The old local baron and his new young wife are desperate for an heir. They've been trying for several years now but with no luck. A priestess of Taal has been requested to visit them to provide an omen or blessing to help with conception. Should the baron get an heir then the cult will be well rewarded... if not, the cult may be blamed.
- ✦ A standing stone has been discovered deep within the forest. Someone needs to inspect it, and determine which powers it is dedicated to.
- ✦ A pool of dark magic deep within the forest is causing the flora to twist and grow in ungodly ways, and the fauna to mutate and take blasphemous forms. The area needs to be cleansed.
- ✦ The harvest looks like it will fail. Crops are beginning to wither. People are worried that they might not last the winter. A priest needs to find out what lies behind the blight, and put things right as soon as possible.

## PRIESTS OF ULRIC

*Ulric give me the fangs of the wolf,  
Ulric give me the claws of the wolf,  
Ulric give me the coat of the wolf,  
And I will show your enemies the mercy of the wolf.*

Priests of Ulric serve the god of winter and wolves by celebrating his power through the blood of his enemies and victory in battle. They are often blunt and ebullient and can come across as warlike for the simple enjoyment of battle. They are most often from the lands of the north of the empire, those touched most harshly by winter.

Priests of Ulric appear unkempt and wild as much for effect as anything else. They let their hair and facial hair grow free but also shave selected bits for a more ferocious and intimidating effect. However, they are rarely as unsophisticated and barbaric as they appear. The priests often dress for battle, even when the prospect of a fight is far away. The celebrated order of the Knights of the White Wolf is the epitome of the cult, and usually the first thing southerners think of when considering the Ulrican faith. They carry their ceremonial warhammer with pride, and their wolf skin (should they be entitled to it – they must slay the wolf themselves) with even greater pride.

Ulricans despise weakness or even perceived weakness, and will do anything to avoid losing face. Being deceitful, or even clever in a tactical sense, does not often occur to them. Feigning weakness on the battlefield, for example, in order to gain a tactical advantage is almost as bad to them as actually being weak.



They have confidence in their doctrine and their god, and they are not afraid to make their views known or to correct someone who might not agree with them. They are warm and friendly to their allies and often inclined to give them the benefit of doubt, but even among friends they are never the most tactful. However, when they are crossed, they are slow to forgive. They have a reputation for steadfastness and reliability, which most people might describe as stubbornness. Their ways are short and to the point, and their strictures and sermons lack sophistication. This makes them popular with the common man.

## THE GLORY OF ULRIC

The Glory of Ulric is the primary concern of his priests. This means fighting battles bravely in his name and never retreating or showing weakness. The least Ulric expects of his followers is to keep his lands free of his enemies, and to always meet them face to face without fear.

Priests of Ulric are great demagogues, too. Should a fighting force need assembling in an emergency, a priest of Ulric can be relied upon to get a crowd inspired and do the task in Ulric's name.

The Cult of Ulric looks after its people. It is a focus for communities across the north of the Old World and its influence touches every part of their lives. However, beyond all that, it is a martial cult. Its very reason for existence is to create warriors for the Imperial armies, especially its knightly orders, so that they may carry the spirit of Ulric to the wider world through their feats upon the field of battle.

## THE COMPANY OF WOLVES

Just like a pack of wolves in the inhospitable wilds, Ulricans often stick together and see themselves as fighting against the entire world for their god. This brings a great sense of loyalty that is encouraged through their military orders. Ulricans will strive to be as loyal to their brothers in arms as to Ulric himself.

A similar ethos affects villages in the Ulrican heartland. They have a great community spirit and much of their resources are shared in order to get everyone through the harsh winters. Old Ulricans always grumble that it used to be even better in the old days, of course, but there is still a sense of community and common good that many say is just not there if one travels down south.

## THE WOLF AND THE GRIFFON

Ulricans are proud of their god and of their traditions. While they are proud of the Empire, they resent the notion that it is Sigmar's Empire alone, for much Ulrican blood was spilt carving it out, and much is spent every day defending it from its enemies.

Thus, many Ulricans see it as their duty to spread the word of Ulric across the Empire, even in the warmer climes where his benevolence and power might not be so apparent. His place among the gods must be fought for with words and deeds. It is accepted practice in the cult that the stories of Ulric's finest warriors must be presented to show them in a good light when compared to Sigmar's.

While they are happy to give due respect, they are not inclined to deference, and feel that any respect should be earned, especially in battle. They are often resentful of the Sigmarite dominance of the Empire, and go out of their way to show Sigmarites that Ulricans are the true strength of the Empire.



## PRIEST OF ULRIC CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Ulric if you want to...

- + Glory in bravery and battle
- + React against Sigmarite hegemony
- + Never back down or show weakness
- + Bash heads

## CULT SKILLS

- + Resilience (To)
- + Weapon Skill (St)





High Priest Ar-Ulric has a place among the Imperial Electors. This gives the Cult of Ulric a position of great power and rank above the other cults of the Empire, and yet this pales when compared to the power of the Sigmarites. It is a view of many Ulricans that the Empire would be better served by having a more even balance of power between the two great factions. Whatever Ulrican theologians say about the desirability of such a balance of power, it is still true that, put plainly, Ulricans simply don't like Sigmarites very much.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF ULRIC

- + A band of marauders is pillaging its way through the countryside. Someone needs to unite all the local villagers and lead them into a pitched battle against the tainted foe.
- + The temple of Sigmar in a nearby village has been vandalised. Ulricans are suspected. Someone needs to make peace with the priest of Sigmar there, guarantee his safety, and have a word with the perpetrators.
- + A strange wolf-like beast has been spotted prowling the forests. It has dragged off livestock and even a farmer's son has gone missing. It needs to be stopped. If this creature is a true wolf, that has ramifications. If it is an abomination of wolfkind, then that may be more serious.
- + A temple to Ulric in the World's Edge Mountains is being attacked by greenskins. It must be defended to the last man.
- + A pilgrimage to the temple of Ulric in Middenheim is setting out. Initiates must escort it and see that no harm comes to any of the pilgrims.
- + The winter this year is so harsh that mining villages in the Middle Mountains have been cut off. Someone needs to volunteer to bring them supplies.

## PRIESTS OF VERENA

*Verena let me see the truth,  
Verena let me hear the truth,  
Verena let me speak the truth.*

Priests of Verena are serious-minded and diligent students. They hunger for knowledge and prize that above all else. They have a reputation for being humourless and for being uninterested in the small pleasures of life like simple human contact and a good gossip.

Some also consider them to be head-in-the-air theorists, and too good for the likes of the common man, only interested in contemplating the higher questions without any experience of real life or grounding in the practical. They might be able to work out the meaning of life, but not what it means to work for a living.


Their position in the judiciary also brings with it a reputation for mercilessness and a predilection for the letter of the law, instead of a common sense approach to the spirit of the law. Many an anecdote is told of a bizarre court ruling made by a Verenean priest that would seem to defy all logic and common sense. Suffice it to say few of these are true.

Vereneans tend to wear their robes whenever they can. It brings respect and shows their rank. They generally wear pure white robes enhanced with silver or gold edging. The white robes are to represent their own neutrality. When acting as aides to the Imperial Judges, sitting on a noble's court, or as magistrates on behalf of a city, or province, they often wear the colours of that jurisdiction, either as robes or coats of arms embroidered into their own robes. Considering what the white represents, adding these colours is actually a controversial issue among some Vereneans.

The holy symbol of the Vereneans is the scales of justice, often incorporating a sword. They also use the owl to symbolise wisdom, knowledge, and their powerful vision incisively piercing the darkness.

## THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

With all the confusion of the Old World, the eclectic peoples and the various races, the human struggles and disingenuous politicking, strange enemies within and without, and the ever present threat of the Dark Gods, there is little wonder that human nature strives for some simple truths. Vereneans can represent this point of certainty in a shifting and dangerous world.



### PRIEST OF VERENA CHARACTERS

Play a Priest of Verena if you want to...

- + Pursue knowledge for its own sake
- + Stand up for truth and justice
- + Judge or arbitrate without favour
- + Show everyone how clever you are

### CULT SKILLS

- + Discipline (WP)
- + Observation (Int)



Vereneans hold the truth as a banner to rally round, a point that is worth defending for its own sake. They appreciate too that it can be a powerful weapon, and the will to adhere to the truth, brings strength in return. Vereneans are taught that if you lie this will make it much harder for you to recognise deceit from others.

Many Vereneans specialise in narrow fields of knowledge, learning all they can, writing this up in a tome, and accumulating specific objects and artefacts relating to their studies. As time goes by these specialisations grow ever more arcane. Some become obsessed by their fields and go to extreme lengths to achieve completeness in their knowledge and collections.

## LAW AND ORDER

Away from the defence of its borders and more mundane than the search for Chaos cultists and witches is the day-to-day working of justice in the Empire. As any Verenean will point out, this is just as vital to the nation's survival. In many places, law and order is wholly the responsibility of the cult, and in most other regions the cult still plays an important role. Whenever judicial boundaries are not clear or factions vie for influence, it is usually given to the cult to decide where the jurisdiction lies. Needless to say this gives the cult great power.

As well as administering justice in the major cities, the cult is responsible for the magistrates who travel on a circuit through villages and towns seeing cases and passing judgement on minor crimes. Some magistrates are more feared than respected, but it is a matter of Verenean dogma that magistrates are always as even-handed and as fair as they can possibly be, even if this means making enemies of the powerful and influential. For this reason, the judgement of Verena is held in higher regard among the common folk than judgements made by the more enthusiastic followers of Sigmar.

## PROTECT BOOKS

As the most important repository of knowledge, books are deemed holy and inviolable under Verenean doctrine. They should never be damaged or destroyed. Writing on them and annotating them, provided the original text is not obscured, is allowed; it's a common practice that only adds to the knowledge.

Almost every temple of Verena contains a library, crammed with every important tome that the local priests can acquire. One of the largest Verenean libraries in the Old World is the Great Library of Altdorf. There are similar institutions just as vast and spectacular in Remas, Marienburg, Miragliano, and Magritta. There are also countless major libraries across the other great cities. Between them, all these Verenean libraries are said to contain the sum total of all human knowledge.

Some tomes are indeed dangerous. If such a volume is considered perilous, for example corrupted by Chaos, it will be sent to a major library and placed in a vault there. Only the most careful of scholars will be given access to it. This is the safest way to deal with it, since the cult will usually not countenance the destruction of even the most daemoniac tome, regarding even this as sacrilege to Verena.

Vereneans see all knowledge as sacred, and do not believe that some knowledge is inherently evil – the danger lies in evil men obtaining that knowledge. This policy has brought the cult into conflict with the Cult of Sigmar on many occasions.

## SAMPLE DIVINE MISSIONS OF VERENA

- ✦ Blasphemous comments have begun to appear in red ink in the margins of books from the Great Library. Someone needs to discover a pattern to the affected books, and set a trap for the phantom rubricator.
- ✦ A land dispute between a priest of Ulric and a local farming family has erupted in a far-flung village. The priest has requested arbitration, so a young priest of Verena has been sent. Before he leaves, however, a high ranking and respected Ulrican makes it clear that only one verdict will be tolerated by his cult.
- ✦ A new species of bogspratt is discovered in a shipment from the Border Princes. A keen bogspratt fancier and wealthy patron of the cult is very excited by the find. He promises a large donation to the cult should they send an expedition to the area in search of other exotic bogspratt.
- ✦ A scandal has broken among the town council that the temple library contains a proscribed medical tome. The priests of Sigmar and Shallya are both demanding that the library be opened to their scrutiny. Someone needs to convince them otherwise.
- ✦ An important book has come to light in a private collection. A priest needs to travel there and pick up the volume. However, the Cult of Sigmar has got wind of this and, suspecting the book might be dangerous, have sent their own agent to deal with the issue in their own way.





# THE IMPERIAL CALENDAR

## HEXENSTAG — NEW YEAR'S DAY

NACHEXEN						
	■	9	17	25	—	
Aubentag	2	10	18	26	—	
Marktag	3	11	19	27	—	
Backertag	4	12	20	28	—	
Bezahltag	5	13	21	29	—	
Konistag	6	14	22	30	—	
Angestag	7	15	23	31	—	
Festag	8	16	24	32	—	

SOMMERZEIT						
Wellentag	—	6	14	22	30	
Aubentag	—	7	15	23	31	
Marktag	—	8	16	24	32	
Backertag	1	9	17	25	33	
Bezahltag	2	10	18	26	—	
Konistag	3	11	19	27	—	
Angestag	4	12	20	28	—	
Festag	5	13	21	29	—	

## MITTHERBST — AUTUMN EQUINOX

BRAUZEIT						
Wellentag	—	3	11	19	27	
Aubentag	—	4	12	20	28	
Marktag	—	5	13	21	29	
Backertag	—	6	14	22	30	
Bezahltag	—	7	15	23	31	
Konistag	—	8	16	24	32	
Angestag	1	9	17	25	33	
Festag	2	10	18	26	—	

JAHRDRUNG						
Wellentag	■	■	■	25	33	
Aubentag	2	10	18	26	—	
Marktag	3	11	19	27	—	
Backertag	4	12	20	28	—	
Bezahltag	5	13	21	29	—	
Konistag	6	14	22	30	—	
Angestag	7	15	23	31	—	
Festag	8	16	24	32	—	

## SONNSTILL — SUMMER SOLSTICE

VORGEHEIM						
Wellentag	—	5	13	21	29	
Aubentag	—	6	14	22	30	
Marktag	—	7	15	23	31	
Backertag	—	8	16	24	32	
Bezahltag	1	9	17	25	33	
Konistag	2	10	18	26	—	
Angestag	3	11	19	27	—	
Festag	4	12	20	28	—	

KALDEZEIT						
Wellentag	—	2	10	18	26	
Aubentag	—	3	11	19	27	
Marktag	—	4	12	20	28	
Backertag	—	5	13	21	29	
Bezahltag	—	6	14	22	30	
Konistag	—	7	15	23	31	
Angestag	—	8	16	24	32	
Festag	1	9	17	25	33	

## MITTERFRUHL — SPRING EQUINOX

FRÜHZEIT						
Wellentag	—	8	16	24	32	
Aubentag	1	9	17	25	33	
Marktag	2	10	18	26	—	
Backertag	3	11	19	27	—	
Bezahltag	4	12	20	28	—	
Konistag	5	13	21	29	—	
Angestag	6	14	22	30	—	
Festag	7	15	23	31	—	

## GEHEIMNISTAG — DAY OF MYSTERY

NACHGEHEIM						
Wellentag	—	4	12	20	28	
Aubentag	—	5	13	21	29	
Marktag	—	6	14	22	30	
Backertag	—	7	15	23	31	
Bezahltag	—	8	16	24	32	
Konistag	1	9	17	25	—	
Angestag	2	10	18	26	—	
Festag	3	11	19	27	—	

ULRIEZEIT						
Wellentag	1	9	17	25	33	
Aubentag	2	10	18	26	—	
Marktag	3	11	19	27	—	
Backertag	4	12	20	28	—	
Bezahltag	5	13	21	29	—	
Konistag	6	14	22	30	—	
Angestag	7	15	23	31	—	
Festag	8	16	24	32	—	

SIGMARZEIT						
Wellentag	—	7	15	23	31	
Aubentag	—	8	16	24	32	
Marktag	1	9	17	25	33	
Backertag	2	10	18	26	—	
Bezahltag	3	11	19	27	—	
Konistag	4	12	20	28	—	
Angestag	5	13	21	29	—	
Festag	6	14	22	30	—	

## MONDSTILLE — WINTER SOLSTICE

ERNTENZEIT						
Wellentag	—	4	12	20	28	
Aubentag	—	5	13	21	29	
Marktag	—	6	14	22	30	
Backertag	—	7	15	23	31	
Bezahltag	—	8	16	24	32	
Konistag	1	9	17	25	33	
Angestag	2	10	18	26	—	
Festag	3	11	19	27	—	

VORHEXEN						
Wellentag	—	8	16	24	32	
Aubentag	1	9	17	25	33	
Marktag	2	10	18	26	—	
Backertag	3	11	19	27	—	
Bezahltag	4	12	20	28	—	
Konistag	5	13	21	29	—	
Angestag	6	14	22	30	—	
Festag	7	15	23	31	—	







