

Steal a Relic!
Imperil your Soul!

Burgs & Bailiffs Trinity

*The Poor Pilgrim's Almanack, or,
The Handbook of Pilgrimage and Relic Theft*



*Pilgrimages and Relic Theft in the Middle Ages
were some kind of extremely hardcore live RPG
that went on 24 hours a day*

Mike Monaco

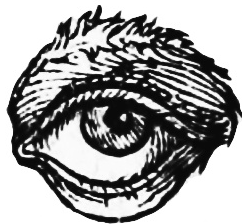


Lost Pages

Burgs & Bailiffs *Trinity*

*The Poor Pilgrim's Almanack, or,
The Handbook of Pilgrimage and Relic Theft*

a Lost Pages book



issue seven

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Cum superiorum privilegio veniaque

Introduction & Acknowledgements

A few years ago I wrote a few articles for a zine that was strange, even by the standards of DIY role-playing games and the “old school revival”. It was the brainchild of Paolo Greco, and he invited like-minded folks to write articles to support gaming in the grim, dark fantasy world that was medieval Europe. The result was *Burgs & Bailiffs*. He published it as a free pdf and a print-on-demand book which was sold at cost. The reception was favorable and a sequel followed. Both volumes have loose themes that tie them together, but honestly the articles were written by a lot of different people with different styles and ideas. The present volume is a sort of sequel to them, but I hope you’ll find it to be more tightly organized than the first two issues of *Burgs & Bailiffs*. Although the present work is independent of them, I think many of the articles in the original *Burgs & Bailiffs* volumes are worth consulting to further flesh your campaign world with medieval beliefs and practices in secular matters like law, warfare, and medicine.

The original idea for this book grew out of the plan to write a short article for another issue of *Burgs & Bailiffs*. My idea was to suggest a campaign revolving around the trade in relics — a madcap business involving visions, journeys, espionage, and outright theft. But researching the relics trade inevitably expanded into related topics: the “translation” of relics led me to look at the history of burial practices; the economics of shrines led me to research pilgrimage and travel; the early “rush” to retrieve relics from the Roman catacombs led me to the exploration of catacombs. By good fortune, Paolo happened to have some ideas germinating about fitting pilgrimage into a “divine” magic system, and suggested collaborating on something he was toying with calling “*Burgs & Bailiffs: Trinity*.” The result is the present volume. The bulk was written in 2013, with occasional editing and additions over the course of the next two years. In the spring of 2015 I realized that I could keep adding bits and pieces forever as I continued to read more about tombs, burials, and so on, and although I’d barely scratched the surface in terms of identifying interesting pilgrimage sites and wacky saints, this would never see light of day unless I could muster the restraint to just stop. That’s how it goes with research. Some of the sidebars and a bit of material on transportation were added in 2016.

Along the way I’ve certainly learned a lot, and while I may continue to collect notes on these topics, I’m pretty happy with the finished articles here. I hope you’ll find things you can use, in whole or part, in your own adventures, campaigns, or worldbuilding.

I’d like to gratefully acknowledge Paolo Greco, for encouraging my work and contributing his own; Dyson Logos for generously agreeing to let me use his maps; my wife Deb and my daughter Riley for showing enthusiasm and support for this project; my brother Tom for suggestions regarding the use of relics for spell-casting and tons of information on animals that did not make it in this edition; and my family and friends for listening patiently while I went on about tufo, reliquaries, and all the other trivia I became fascinated by over the past few years.

-Mike

First of all, many thanks to Katie C. This book developed through personal periods of health and illness, utmost joy and utter despair, and Katie helped a lot. Second: I’m just happy that *Trinity* is on paper. This book is mostly Mike’s work, as he’s been going at it since 2013, while I’m lowly executor first and designer second. Mike did a heck of a job and I hope I did it justice. Try running a European campaign! Remember: the Game Police does not know where you live. Our past is a strange land. Have fun with it.

-Paolo

Why go on a Pilgrimage?

1. As an ACT OF DEVOTION or faith for its own sake; to come into physical proximity with the divine, either by visiting places or things associated with Jesus or other biblical characters, or by approaching the physical remains and effects of saints closer to home. Sometimes a pilgrimage would be made to prepare for an expected ordeal such as going to war or making an even longer journey.

2. PRESTIGE. Many pilgrims proudly displayed the badges and souvenirs collected on their journeys, or enjoyed the attention they received when telling of their hardships or the marvels they saw. Going on a long pilgrimage could be rather expensive and indicated prosperity. Some pilgrims boasted of how many shrines they had visited, how far they had gone, and so on. As a display of wealth, devotion, or courage, a pilgrimage commanded attention. A record book of the saint's miracles was normally kept at each shrine, and the names of those who experienced visions, cures, and so on were dutifully added to the books, so some sought the small measure of fame that being added to the book would bring.

3. THANKSGIVING after surviving some ordeal like a storm at sea, a battle, an illness etc., or else in fulfillment of an oath (as many would make in the face of danger or in exchange for divine intervention). It was not uncommon for a pious knight to make a pilgrimage to prepare for a campaign and again afterwards to offer thanks for surviving it.

4. CURES. Pilgrims often visited shrines in hope of getting a cure. Some shrines specialized in specific complaints. In England, the most popular "medicinal" powers were at Canterbury and Walsingham.

5. PENANCE. A pilgrimage to a nearby shrine might be prescribed to humble a sinner (who would by necessity pass all their neighbors in this public display). More serious sins would require more distant destinations. The very worst sins might require a pilgrimage to the Holy Land itself. Such penitential pilgrimages were *de facto* exiles. The penitent would have to bring back a letter or other proof the pilgrimage was completed before they would be readmitted to their communities.

6. ESCAPE from daily life, debts, nagging spouses, or the law. Some took to pilgrimage as a sort of tourism and opportunity for licentious behavior away from home. The monks attending shrines and holy sites dutifully recorded the horrible things that might happen to such impious pilgrims. Sometimes merchants and artisans joined pilgrimages as a convenience, for they needed to travel anyway to sell goods or find work.

7. As a PROXY for someone else unable to complete a pilgrimage (usually because they have died before fulfilling the vow, though the wealthy often included in their wills funds and instructions for pilgrimages to be completed on their behalf ("post-obit").

8. As a POLITICAL STATEMENT. Some dissidents visited the graves, or sites of execution & display, of political criminals, labeling them saints. They did this to annoy the ruler, to build a movement, or just as protest. Attempts to suppress this kind of pilgrimage were never very effective, as persecution would beget more "martyrs."

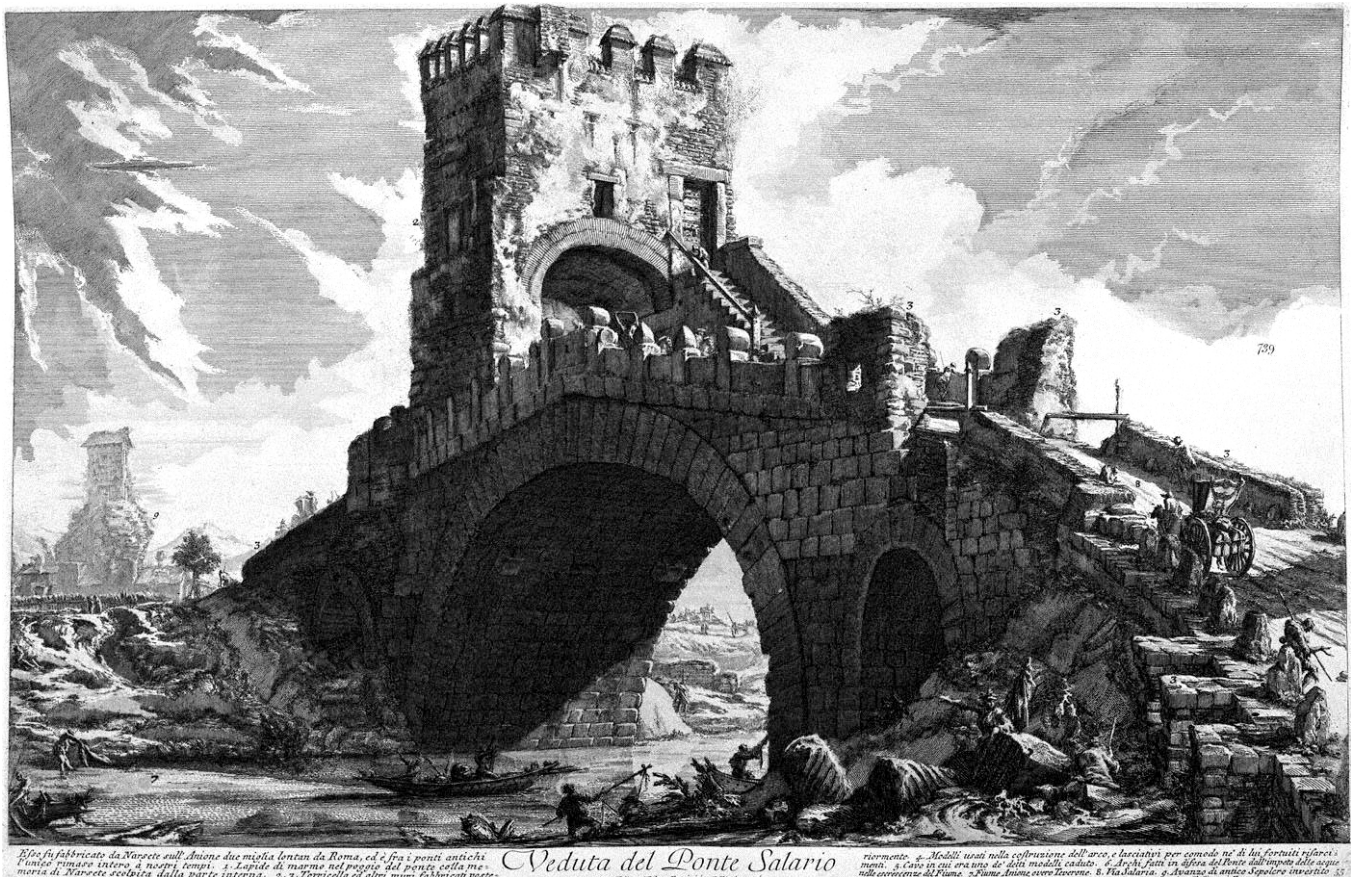
On the Road

We all know that in the Middle Ages, people were extremely parochial and benighted, and they never traveled more than 20 miles from their miserable huts, right? Well, not so much. The typical villager routinely traveled about 6 miles to market, and while most serfs and villeins were not free to leave the land they worked, in fact many people traveled rather extensively in the Middle Ages. Travel became much more common after the Black Death, as people moved to avoid the plague, leaving depopulated areas to find a market for their trade, or abandoned feudal obligations and sought work for pay.

The biggest travelers though fall into two broad categories: those who were compelled to travel because of their occupation, and pilgrims. The first category includes a range of people, from lepers, beggars, and outlaws at the bottom strata to merchants, various clergy, and idle young nobles at the top. The second category, pilgrims, could be of any social class, but the most far-traveling would be those with the means to pay their own way, whether they went as pious worshipers, bloodthirsty crusaders, or thrill-seeking tourists.

Ponte Salario, by Piranesi. Travelers to Rome crossing the Apennines on the Via Salaria would cross this bridge a few miles from their destination.

This chapter will attempt to outline the realities of travel in the Middle Ages in a manner that I hope will help spur interesting challenges and adventures on the road.



Travel and Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages

Roman roads were incredibly well-designed and some endured long into the Middle Ages — indeed some are still extant today. They were the best roads of the Middle Ages, and travelers used them when they could. The Roman road was normally 10 yards wide and built on a foundation 4 or 5 feet deep, made of layers of stone, concrete, and rammed earth, with a top layer of finished stone with drainage carefully provided by ditches and inclines. Roads created during the Middle Ages tended to be little more than clearings, and wheeled traffic left deep ruts in them. No effort was taken to provide for drainage, so rains and flooding could create serious delays. Signs and mile-markers, used in Roman times, fell out of use in the Middle Ages (not that the largely illiterate populace would care).

The roads in the West were no longer patrolled after the fall of Rome, but the Byzantines did maintain patrols for centuries. Robbery, wild animals, and other hazards were real problems, and most travelers in the West went in large groups, armed themselves if they could, and avoided staying outdoors at night.

One of the few precautions taken to keep the roads safe was a practice of keeping the shoulders of roads cleared. In England, the law required landholders to keep them cleared to 200 feet on either side. Large oaks could be left but bushes and smaller trees that could give cover to bandits had to be felled, and ditches or holes filled in. The width of roads was variable, but there were regulations from at least the 13th century. How well they were enforced is hard to say, but doubtful. The regulations regarding roads are interesting, though — different types were defined by how wide they must be, and what kind of traffic was allowed on them.

In England, the “royal road” was 30 to 34 feet wide; in Germany, just 13 feet. Presumably the French & English widths are including a shoulder or margin, and they might possibly be Roman roads.

Complex customs and regulations about right-of-way developed in some areas, but the guiding principle was that you yielded to the heavier load, whether on foot, horse, or cart. Thus an empty cart yields to a loaded cart, a rider yields to a cart, and pedestrian yields to all. Naturally nobles or knights would expect those of lower classes to yield to them regardless of conveyance.

Road, Bridges & Ferries

ROAD TYPES

According to a French law, there were five classes of roads:

Path	Width: 4'
Only pedestrians and pack animals	
Cart road	8'
... plus carts & cattle led by bridles	
Way	16'
... plus 2-way cart traffic, herded cattle	
Road	32'
... plus herds can legally graze by the way	
Royal road	64'
All traffic	

By the 14th century, England had regular carriage service between major towns, an indication that travel had become safer than in the past. Even so, bandits and robbers remained a danger. The danger of brigands meant that most travelers would still go armed. Even those ordinarily prohibited from carrying weapons (e.g. university students) were allowed to carry arms when traveling. However the fear of bandits also meant that any stranger out of doors was subject to arrest after dark.

Bridges, like roads, were often Roman leftovers, but during the Middle Ages bridge-building advanced significantly and bridges became impressive feats of architecture and fortification. London Bridge is still famous for its scale, but other bridges of the time had similar built-in towers, chapels, housing, and even gates. Bridges required a great deal of maintenance, though, and some were replaced with ferries.

The responsibility for the upkeep of roads and bridges fell on the local landowners, whether they were secular (lords and earls) or sectarian (churchmen, churches, or monasteries). As maintaining roads was seen as Christian duty (insofar as it helped pitiable travelers: strangers, the poor, and pilgrims), religious orders were even founded just to maintain roads and bridges. As early as the 12th century, “Bridge Friars” and “Pontife brothers” are recorded. Lay orders, called guilds, also formed to repair bridges and roads.

Bridges and ferries were usually defended — by the built-in fortifications of the bridges, and by companies of archers, crossbowmen, or other mercenaries. The maintenance and defense was paid for by charging tolls. Tolls were always levied on merchants, their goods, and their vehicles and animals. Nobles and the rich generally were exempt from tolls, though some might make donations at the chapels and shrines built into bridges. The very poor, clergy (including students) and pilgrims (including crusaders) were also, in principle, exempt from tolls. Sometimes merchants were accused of disguising themselves as pilgrims in order to avoid tolls, and on the other hand the lay servants of clergy did have to pay tolls. In some areas, brigands would extort “tolls” from all travelers, under threat of a savage beating or death. Despite the large sums of money collected, bridges and roads were habitually left in terrible disrepair, and only the passage of a king or bishop could shame the landholders into taking reasonable care of them. Even so, bridges really did “fall down” as in the nursery rhyme and posed a danger to boats attempting to pass beneath them. This was one reason ferries gradually gained popularity.

Horses were available in a wide range of qualities. Draft horses, suitable for pulling wagons and doing farm work, were the cheapest and most plentiful. A poor riding horse (often called a “rouncey”) was worth at least 20 draft horses; a high-quality riding horse (called a “palfrey”) might go for ten times what a rouncey was worth; while a warhorse (or “destrier”) was worth two or four palfreys (although much like modern race horses, there was really no limit to how much a truly top-class horse was worth). Long journeys often involved trading horses along the way. Renting a horse was nearly impossible, given the risk of theft.

Pack animals (collectively called “sumpters”) were used to carry supplies or pull wagons. Mules were most common on the continent, while in England draft horses were more commonly used. Oxen (valued at about 2-3 draft horses) were also used. The cost of feeding draft horses was greater than that of feeding an ox, because of a horse’s more discriminating diet. Riding and war horses were two or three times as expensive to feed than farm horses, as they were accustomed to eating mostly grain and high-quality fodder rather than foraging on grass. Destriers were not usually ridden over long distances; a man-at-arms or knight would generally ride another horse on campaign and switch for battle.

The vehicles available in the Middle Ages were surprisingly varied. The most common was the humble two-wheeled cart, which could be as simple as a platform on an axle or could be embellished with side rails, a seat for a driver, and a tail gate. Four-wheeled vehicles ranged from farm wagons for carrying produce to fancy carriages used to transport noble ladies. Generally speaking, noblemen and knights would always ride a horse unless so badly wounded or ill that they could not, but commoners felt no stigma against riding in vehicles. Two-horse “litters” were also used, consisting of a cabin supported between two horses, one in front and one behind. Because they lacked wheels, they would be slightly more maneuverable and better at fording streams, and some ladies favored them over carriages.

Wagons and carts were plentiful in the later Middle Ages, and in England, carts could be hired to carry cargo for 1 or 2 pennies per mile per ton. A medium horse could carry a load of perhaps 200 to 300 pounds, but pull a cart load of 800 pounds or more. Another advantage of using carts or wagons of course was that unhitching a horse was much faster than unloading a packed horse for the night.

Transportation

STEEDS & OTHER ANIMALS

The following table has some suggested costs for various animals. Various games use silver or gold pieces as the standard I see no reason to further complicate matters by using period currencies like florins, farthings, pence, etc. I assume a “silver standard,” that is, that silver coins are the usual exchange medium, rather than gold coins.

ANIMAL	COST (sp)	FEED (sp/d)
Donkey	10	.075
Draft horse	15	.15
Mule	20	.1
Ox [1]	30-45	.15
Rouncy/Nag	300	.3
Palfrey [2]	3000	.3
Destrier [3]	6-9000	.4
Camel	[4]	.3
Elephant	[5]	3

[1]: Oxen were not normally ridden or used as pack animals.

[2]: also for coursiers and riding horses.

[3]: also for warhorses.

[4]: Camels would not generally be available in Europe, but where they are available, their cost is comparable to a Palfrey. War-trained camels are not as highly prized by warriors as horses, simply owing to their higher intelligence and refusal to take the kinds of risks horses will.

[5]: Elephants obviously would be unobtainable outside of India, and are listed for comparison.

When the king or a major noble was moving his household (as many chose to do one or more times a year), he would commandeer all the available carts and wagons in the area. Even those of travelers were subject to seizure. By law, compensation would be due, but it was a perennial complaint that kings ignored such bills.

Carriages were used for travel by those who could not ride horses due to illness or infirmity, and by some women who preferred not to ride. Four-wheeled carriages could be very expensive and luxurious. Noble women competed to display their wealth in the lavish decorations and furnishings of their carriages.

Food & Shelter

Travelers faced many hardships in the Middle Ages but, as one might expect, food and shelter topped their concerns. It was always preferable to spend the night indoors, and if possible within the walls of a town, for security. Some provisions could be carried but most travelers expected to scrounge, buy, or beg for food along the way.

TENTS were only acceptable in the wilderness — in towns and cities, camping out would violate curfew laws. In the country, the nobles stayed at the castles or manors of their fiefs, or whatever monastery was convenient.

MONASTERIES were required to give hospitality to the very rich (their patrons), as well as the very poor (charity being a virtue). They might just offer floor space and simple food, like porridge, to common travelers, but some also had beds and better accommodations for the nobility and ranking clergy. Pilgrims and non-noble guests were expected to stay one night, or at most three, unless sick or injured. Nobles could abuse this hospitality for as long as they wished though, and sometimes even bankrupted the monks or exhausted their stores. A few monasteries were built specifically to assist travelers in places like the Alps or along pilgrimage routes, and called hospices.

Hospices would also keep the clothes and possessions of anyone who died there, to pay for their burial.

HOSPICES (or “xenodochia”) were guesthouses for the poor, travelers, and the sick which functioned as a sort of combination inn and hospital. They had the same three-day limit for healthy guests as monasteries. Some hospices were quite large, like the one outside of Paris which housed 16,690 guests in a single year. Free for the poor, they accepted donations from anyone able to pay. They rang bells in bad weather and the darkness of early evening and morning in winter to help travelers to find them. Staff would also patrol a perimeter to find lost travelers.

PRIVATE HOSPITALITY: while nobles could demand accommodation anywhere, and the poor might seek help from the Church, middle classes would have to rely on friends, relatives, or inns. Those lucky enough to belong to guilds might find hospitality through them. Guilds would only be found in towns, but philanthropic guilds would sponsor rural pilgrim inns.

From as far back as the barbarian days, there was a custom of affording hospitality to travelers, including strangers and foreigners. There was normally a three day limit, and guests would not be charged, but they might be expected to share stories and news. Charlemagne codified the three-day custom into law, though by the 12th century, this custom mostly died out except in the far north. Inns began to become more common and took over the role of providing shelter to travelers, though some travelers still found a room with relatives, friends, or friends-of-friends if they could get a letter of introduction.

Just as the royal entourage could commandeer vehicles for transport, they also commandeered housing when the king or nobles visited a town or city. The best housing would be marked out by a marshal (chalk marks would be made on doors) and the occupants would be forced to host as many of the entourage as they could, even if it meant being displaced entirely while their guests used their homes.

INNS provided food and lodging, and existed since Roman times in Europe. They were most common in Italy, and scarcer in the rest of Europe outside of cities. Many had truly terrible reputations — some deserved — as dens of prostitution, gambling, and crime. Travelers often complained of the terrible food, drink, and accommodations, and would bring their own food or eat at alehouses, taverns, or cookshops (the differences being that alehouses sold ale & beer, taverns sold wine, and cookshops sold only food). Alehouses were often located at crossroads, while taverns and inns were more likely to be located in town. Taverns generally had the best food but cookshops and bakeries were a good alternative, except that they sometimes sold “off” or spoiled items to strangers. A typical inn had 7 to 12 beds, accommodating 15 to 30 guests. The largest could have 20 beds in twelve rooms, accommodating up to 50 guests. Many simply offered a common room with all the beds in a single hall. Taverns and alehouses did not offer rooms, except in the case of those that had a side business as a brothel.

Roman guesthouses, which were operated by the state for official messengers and travelers, disappeared by the 5th century in most of the West though the Byzantines maintained them until the bitter end.

It was normal to share a bed with strangers while traveling, although this did carry the risk of being robbed, assaulted, or awakened in the middle of the night when a fellow traveler got into bed with you. This strikes the modern reader as especially uncomfortable in light of the medieval practice of sleeping in nothing but a hat. Still, an inn bed normally had 2-4 guests, and up to ten might squeeze in to a large one.

Ports of Call

SAMPLE TRAVEL TIMES

Crossing the English Channel: at the narrowest point (about 21 miles), with good winds, can be done in a single day, but 2-3 days would be reasonable amount of time to budget.

London to Naples: anything from 27-75 days; typically it took 32-54 days.

Venice to Constantinople: 34-46 days.

England to Holy Land, round trip: 11 months.

Galleys in the Mediterranean, by
Luyken, Voorstad, Ten Hoorn

After the Turks captured the Levant, pilgrimage by sea became more common because the land routes became more dangerous and inhospitable. The round trip to the Holy Land from England would consume an entire year, with land and sea legs of the trip. A travelogue of the time advised pilgrims to take the “direct” route from England: France, Burgundy, Lombardy, Venice, Cyprus, Jaffa, and onto Jerusalem. Some pilgrims went by way of Egypt to take in the sights there first.

The pilgrim traffic was consistent enough that several thousand pilgrims sailed to the Holy Land from Italy every year. Venice and Genoa were the two biggest ports for pilgrims, and the Venetians took this business seriously enough to enact safety regulations to protect pilgrims. A typical galley would carry 100 pilgrims and their gear; bigger ships could carry 1000.

Medieval ships might sail at 4 or 5 knots, and in the summer, with 12 hours of sailing time, could hope to cover up to 65 miles in a day. Naturally travel times often take much longer than you would expect from looking at a map, as the winds are variable, and more importantly most vessels did not sail the shortest route but hugged the coast and stayed in sight of land if possible.



Aside from peasants hauling their produce to market and occasional patrols of soldiers, travelers might run into a surprisingly wide range of folk who traveled extensively in the Middle Ages. We will consider in turn the lay or secular wayfarers and the religious wayfarers of the Middle Ages.

Wayfarers

the people you will meet on the road

PERFORMERS. Performers were a common sight on the road. Minstrels, buffoons, and jongleurs or storytellers might be hired to perform at festivals, fairs, and celebrations of all sorts. They also performed at inns, and so they were always on the move. The status of performers was relatively high at the beginning of the Middle Ages and slowly declined. At first performers could generally expect hospitality and gifts everywhere they went, from nobles and the wealthy who enjoyed their services.

Lay Wayfarers

Fashions changed over time and by the 14th century, when minstrels were “out” and jugglers, bear-trainers, conjurers, and ribalds were “in.” Minstrels were also falling out of favor with the ruling class because they began spreading songs of resistance and freedom, and they were even accused of fomenting rebellion. Their replacements — especially buffoons and ribalds, whose shocking and shameful antics Victorian historians like J.J. Jusserand would not even record — also began to lose favor as the moralist clergy railed against their sinful humor.

MESSENGERS. The only way to deliver letters, spread news of new laws or decrees, or send parcels of any kind was to send a messenger to do the job. Messengers would also procure items and deliver gifts. The king of England kept twelve messengers on hand, while lesser authorities might have had to hire messengers as needed rather than keeping them on retainer. Sometimes feudal obligations could be invoked, and knights might be sent. The clergy used their position to require lower ranking clerics to go on these errands. Messengers were allowed to shortcut through fields and generally had privileges on the road, but in time of war they were subject to being stopped and searched, and their letters or parcels opened.

PEDDLERS. Peddlers somehow escaped regulation and legal attention through most of the Middle Ages, despite the fact that they sold questionable, if not stolen, goods. Edward the VI was the first English king to require licenses of them, but that was in the 16th century. The typical peddler carried his wares or might have them loaded on a single sumpter. Few could afford horses or wagons.

MERCHANTS. Merchants preferred the somewhat safer and significantly faster water routes, but sometimes they had no choice but to travel by road. Though trade regulations were constantly changing in the Middle Ages, England and France both had fixed laws prohibiting the export of gold and silver, so foreign merchants had to trade their goods for other goods to take back. This meant that merchants were almost always burdened with inventory and therefore targets for thieves and robbers. Even knights found it hard to resist robbing merchants on the road.

Merchants had to bring their goods to “staples” — towns or ports which were, by law, the only point of entry for imported items, where they would be weighed or measured and a seal affixed to the containers certifying them. The goods could then be sold at fairs. In England, all other sales of goods were prohibited within seven leagues of the fair, so the fair was the only place to buy anything while it was in session. Shops closed and any goods offered for sale outside the fair were subject to seizure. Thus merchants had to travel the roads from fair to fair. The items merchants most often brought for sale at fairs were iron work, cloth, wool, leather, and books. Apart from books, which required so much specialization and specialized equipment to produce, most finished products were sold by the local artisans and craftsmen who made them, and merchants just traded in raw materials and things otherwise unobtainable locally, like spices.

DRUG-SELLERS. Disreputable doctors who sold quack remedies also traveled the roads, stopping to hawk their goods. Part of their sales pitch was to tell stories of their travels (often tall tales) and carry news from nearby towns. While they could sell their wares in the countryside, they risked being arrested and pilloried in towns, for even in the Middle Ages, doctors had to be licensed.

WORKERS. Laborers, skilled or unskilled, began appearing as travelers in the 14th century. After the Black Death (about 1350) sent labor costs soaring, many laborers found that they could make a better life as itinerant workers, taking jobs for short term at high pay wherever they were needed. The rulers were scandalized by the audacity of workers — who were demanding daily wages, often in coin, rather than the traditional year-round service with payment in grain. This led to efforts to control travel and restrain workers, but, at least in England, no measures seemed to work: workers suddenly had the power to refuse their masters. Technically a letter patent was required to show that a man had permission to leave his lord’s manor (and these specified a return date) but some took to the road under the pretext of pilgrimage. To be without such papers left one open to charges of vagrancy.

OUTLAWS. Outlaws and criminals could include organized brigands, thieves acting alone (including opportunistic criminals with other jobs), and outlaws in the strict sense of people cast out of civil society for some crime. All lived in the woods, on the margins of society. Outlaws literally had no recourse to the protection of the law and any goods or property they had was forfeit when they were outlawed. Under English law, even a fugitive who is later found innocent still forfeits all his property. Peasants or serfs who leave their lord's land without permission are also outlawed, but they could get back "in" by either asking the lord's mercy or passing a year and a day in a town. AWOL peasants were by far the most numerous of outlaws, but criminals were also sometimes given the 40 days to reach the nearest port and leave the country (or else face execution or worse).



Brigand, Holbein's *Danze Macabre*

Bandits preyed on travelers, especially in the more remote areas. Pilgrims crossing the Pyrenees, for example, had two passes they might use — one was at an altitude of 3000 feet, and the other 5000. They usually braved the higher pass because bandits were common at the lower one. Although many bandits were outlaws, others were out-of-work soldiers and mercenaries or even knights and nobles. Bandits could form small bands or comprise small armies. Whole towns were ransomed or sacked in the later Middle Ages. Some bandits were even abetted by the clergy. One archbishop of Cologne allowed bandits to use his castle as a base!

VAGABONDS AND BEGGARS. Those unable or unwilling to find work, including the crippled and infirm, resorted to begging, and this became a necessarily transient lifestyle as well. While the crippled were allowed to beg, they were also required to travel, so as not to place too great a burden on their neighbors. Usually they would be allowed to stay one night and then move on or face arrest. Kings often reminded their subjects to keep prisons, pillories, and stocks in good repair for the punishment of vagabonds who outstayed their welcome. The punishment for vagabonds was to be thrown into the stocks or prison indefinitely, and many prisoners died before facing a court. Students caught traveling without permission were also assumed to be beggars.

LEPERS. Unwelcome anywhere except for the "Lazar houses" maintained by some religious orders, lepers had to keep on the move. They were required to carry bells, rattles, or other noise-makers to give folk time to get out of their way.

Religious Wayfarers

WANDERING PREACHERS. Men with some university training, but from the lower classes and thus shut out of the best clerical jobs, might become wandering preachers. They could take up temporary residence at churches and chapels, or just preach in the open at fairs and markets. They were often accused of spreading discontent and had to have papers showing the Church's permission to preach or face arrest as beggars. John Ball was one famous upstart preacher who was eventually drawn and quartered for his seditious preaching. Much less frequently, preachers with no holy orders appeared, and they were actually more likely to focus on theology and evangelism than political preaching: for example Richard Rolle of Hampole.

PALMERS. Pilgrims in general were sometimes called "palmer" after the practice of bringing back a palm leaf stuck in one's hat after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but "palmer" can also refer specifically to homeless travelers who were constantly on pilgrimage from one shrine to the next. These professionals may or may not have Church sanction — indeed some were required to become palmers for a period as penance, while others were simply outlaws or criminals using pilgrimage as a cover. The professional pilgrims supported themselves by telling stories at the stops along their routes and collecting tips, and by collecting alms. Because so many pilgrims were or were suspected to be imposters, in 1388 the king of England began issuing official "letters of passage" without which one might be arrested as a vagrant.

PILGRIMS. People from all walks of life, and with all sorts of motives, went on pilgrimages. They ranged from the truly pious to swindlers (who sold fake souvenirs and relics, stole from shrines, and so on) and what we might call tourists (who take to life on the road for adventure, freedom, and consequence-free licentious behavior). Pilgrims generally had to support themselves on their trip and brought their own funds. Those who relied on charity to complete their pilgrimages were known as PALMERS (see above).

Women were discouraged from going on pilgrimages but could go with permission from their husband or guardian, but on the other hand nuns were expressly forbidden. Christians began going on pilgrimages as early as the 3rd century. Rabbis also went on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and Islam required the pilgrimage known as the Hajj of all who were able to make it.

Most pilgrimages were to shrines just a few days' walk from home, and even the trip from London to Canterbury was just a few overnight stops each way.

PARDONERS. Though there had long been tradition of converting or exchanging penances (for example, saying more prayers in lieu of saying them on one's knees, or fasting only from meat for 40 days rather than fasting completely for a week), by the 9th century cash payments were added to the complicated table of exchanges and the sale of indulgences was born. Pardoners were professionals who sold indulgences — often without Church sanction; again a letter patent was the license. They would also offer to release the faithful from burdensome vows, for a fee. Pardoners accepted money or goods. Many also exhibited relics they claimed to have collected on their travels — often very outrageous ones that strained the credulity of a credulous time (for example, ashes from Moses' burning bush). Pardoners sometimes offered kickbacks to the local priests if they would encourage their flocks to pay for indulgences. Pardoners were never terribly popular and were often criticized or lampooned by churchmen, poets, and even the common folk.

MONKS. Although we might think monks remained cloistered behind the walls of their monasteries, they were sometimes required to travel. Monks carried "mortuary rolls" — lists of the dead being prayed for at their monasteries, with a brief biography — to other monasteries. The monks would copy each other's lists onto their own, in order to maximize the number of prayers for each soul. Such journeys were regular but not terribly long, for in principle there was no need to go further than the nearest monastery in each direction, though some monks took these expeditions as excuses to travel more extensively.

HERMITS, surprisingly, often lived in cottages near the highways and crossroads. Some maintained bridges. They lived by begging and some did very well. The most respectable and legitimate hermits had testimonial letters from clergy, but many others were simply scoundrels who did not want to work honestly, or had been outlawed or exiled. The law usually treated hermits without testimonial letters exactly like other vagabonds and beggars.

STUDENTS. University students were almost always clergy. Some preferred school work to church work and travelled from school to school. They were often suspected (rightly) of being vagrants, beggars, and layabouts, so they had to carry letters of passage to maintain a pretense of propriety. Of course there were serious students too, and they might travel to consult libraries or experts in other cities.



Flaggellants, anon.

FLAGELLANTS. These pilgrims were the most grotesque and bizarre of the lot. They practiced extreme mortification: their name comes from their self-scourging, but they might also wear crowns of thorns, carry heavy burdens, pierce their skin with thorns or pins, and so forth, in addition to the more “mainstream” mortifications of going barefoot, wearing cilice (hair shirts), or going hatless and/or topless. Their shrieks and groans, and possibly bell-ringing, announced their coming, and all sensible folk would seek cover when they did, as flagellants would press anyone and everyone at hand to join them or else be beaten and scourged to death. For the flagellants were a heretical sect that believed in Baptism by blood — one’s own blood — as the only hope for salvation.

Flagellants were first recorded after the enthusiasm for crusading flagged (about 1260 CE) and enjoyed revivals after outbreaks of the Black Death and other disasters. The Teutonic Knights were particularly hostile to the flagellants, and in 1351 they massacred thousands of them and forced the survivors to be re-baptized.

DANCERS. The “Dancers” were another odd sect of pilgrims. They were palmers, but held heretical views and supposedly held secret, abominable initiations. They traveled in bands of 30 or 40, and their poverty, zeal, and earnestness made them popular with the common folk, who would gather to watch their performances. The Dancers shrieked and danced convulsively in prayer, and often their hysterical antics proved to be infectious, and many joined them at these performances, leaving their old lives behind. Dancers were persecuted by the authorities both because they held heretical views and because they sapped the workforce of peasants, and many were executed.

It is unclear if the Dancers were simply victims of St. Anthony’s Fire (or St. Vitus’ Dance; i.e. ergot poisoning) or under some other mass hysteria. Contemporaries reported that they could not see the color red (or: were enraged by the color red), that they forced others to join them (or: that their mania spread like a disease), and that they often came from far away — so far away that their clothes and manners were obviously foreign to the towns where they appeared.

MENDICANT FRIARS. Traveling friars typically came in one of two colors — grey (Franciscans) or black (Dominicans). Wandering friars were enormously popular with the common people, who saw them as their advocates in the Church. They took a vow of poverty, but as time went by they grew wealthy anyway, both because they were showered with gifts and because they began selling their habits to the dying, who thought they would preserve them from Hell. Some friars also moonlighted as peddlers.

Weather, road conditions, burdens, the condition of the travelers, and the length of the journey all make these numbers variable, so I give a range, based on a number of conflicting sources. Note that larger parties take longer to get organized and moving each day, so an army usually could only expect about 10 miles per day, except in special circumstances like the Mongols or ancient Romans (highly disciplined infantry could march 30 miles a day).

Travel Times by Land

MEANS OF TRAVEL	DISTANCE COVERED IN A DAY
walking on level land	15 to 25 miles
runner	30 to 40 miles
merchants/travelers	20 to 30 miles with horses and lightly loaded carts
able-bodied riders on horses	30 to 40 miles
mixed foot and riders	15 to 20 miles
an army	8 to 14 miles (including baggage wagons)
crossing mountains	2.5 to 3 miles
messengers	40 to 60 miles with change or relay of horses 95 to 125 miles if riding at night too
messenger on fast camel	70 miles
pack camel, reindeer, llama	18 to 20 miles
pack horses, mules, donkeys, dogs	25 to 30 miles
sleds or sleighs in the snow	25 to 40 miles, up to 100 for short periods, if properly cared for
pack yaks, goats, sheep	10 miles
pack water buffalo, elephants	15 miles
wagons or carts, horse/mule-drawn	15 to 25 miles (typical retinue of a bishop, lord, etc.)
wagons or carts, ox-drawn	10 to 12 miles, doubled with two animal shifts

The following chart has some of vehicles and what kind of animal or team would be required to draw them. The teams usually will suffice to pull a fully loaded vehicle in good conditions (level ground, on a dry road for wheeled vehicles, on snow for sleighs). Passengers is the number of human-sized passengers the vehicle can accommodate; mass is the mass in pounds of the vehicle; load is the total load the vehicle can accommodate — the mass of passengers should be included when calculating possible cargo.

TYPE	PASSENGERS	WEIGHT	LOAD	TYPICAL TEAM FOR A FULLY LOADED VEHICLE
Carriage (4 wheels)	5	1000	2000	2-4 light horses
Country cart (2 wheels)	2	400	1200	1 heavy horse or ox
Farm wagon (4 wheels)	2	800	3000	2 heavy horses, or 2 medium oxen
Caravan wagon (4 wheels)	2-5	1500	2000	2 heavy horses
Dog sled, basket	1	50	300	1-2 dogs
Dog sled, toboggan	1	150	2000	3+ dogs (5-10 dogs typical for redundancy)
Sleigh, small	2	300	600	One light horse
Sleigh, large	8	1000	2400	4 medium (or 8 tiny) reindeer, or 4 light horses
Howdah	10	200	2000	1 heavy elephant (fully-loaded only in battle)

Fellow Travelers and Road Hazards

Because every game's milieu is different, it is nearly impossible to create a random table of encounters on the road. However, for GMs who would like a simple chart with "spurs" for generating random wayfarers, the following is offered with no guarantee that the results will be "historically accurate" in terms of the frequency of results, though the types of encounters are fairly representative.

Some of these encounters could well turn violent, for strangers were often assumed to be robbers, especially if encountered at night. Positive reactions may indicate the travelers want to join with the PCs for company or safety in numbers.

D100 ENCOUNTER

- 1 Drug-seller. Drug is a fake but he has one true rumor to tell.
- 2 Drug-seller. Drug is a fake and he has one false rumor to tell.
- 3 Drug-seller. Drug works but he has one false rumor to tell.
- 4 Drug-seller. Drug works and he has one true rumor to tell.
- 5 Peddler. Sells stolen goods.
- 6 Peddler. Sells shoddy goods.
- 7 Peddler. Sells honest goods.
- 8 Merchants. 2d4. Transporting goods to a staple, so they can't sell anything yet.
- 9 Merchants. 2d4. Transporting goods for export back to homeland: can only barter, no cash sales.
- 10 Merchants. 2d6. Poorly disguised as pilgrims.
- 11 Merchants. 2d4. With an escort of 2d12 exceptionally armed guards, and especially valuable goods.
- 12 Pilgrims. 2d10. Locals going to a nearby shrine for cures etc.
- 13 Pilgrims. 2d4. Tourists on a very long journey.
- 14 Pilgrims. 2d4). Small group of nobles with large entourage (3d20).
- 15 Pilgrims. 2d6). Rowdy young people singing drinking songs and generally behaving impiously.
- 16 Pilgrims. d6 upper class tourists with an entourage of 5d6 servants, guards, etc.
- 17 Pilgrims. 2d6 middle class travelers, armed for protection.
- 18 Pilgrims. 2d6 lower class pilgrims, lightly armed.
- 19 Penitents. d4, traveling to the nearest shrine, barefoot, for some minor offense.
- 20 Penitents. 2d6, traveling to a shrine some days distant.
- 21 Penitents. d6 exiles, off to visit the Holy Land.
- 22 Serious students on their way to study under a famous teacher.
- 23 Students, on their way to enroll in another university and avoid work.
- 24 Students. 2d4. Rowdy, armed.
- 25 Beggars. 2d4. Cripples and elderly.
- 26 Beggars. 2d6. Layabouts and scoundrels. Armed with staves.
- 27 Beggars. Pitiful outlaws.
- 28 Vagabonds. 2d6 homeless, unemployed wanderers. Will beg, steal.
- 29 Troupe of minstrels. Professionals.

- 30 Troupe of minstrels. Inexperienced.
- 31 Troupe of minstrels. Sowing discontent with ballads of rebels and villainous nobles.
- 32 Bear-trainer, with 2d6 assistants/roadies and d6 performing bears.
- 33 Team of jugglers.
- 34 Team of acrobats.
- 35 Conjuror and his assistants.
- 36 Theatre troupe (including several wagons, hanger-ons, prostitutes, etc.)
- 37 Ribald telling scandalous and salacious stories.
- 38 Messenger carrying papal or royal decree.
- 39 Messenger carrying news of portents/monstrous birth/etc.
- 40 Messenger (roll on the sub-table below for errand)
- 41 Workers. 3d6 escaped serfs looking for work.
- 42 Workers. 2d6 freed serfs looking for work.
- 43 Workers. 2d6 free men looking for work.
- 44 Workers. 3d6 assorted laborers, armed, on their way to demand back wages and/or loot & burn manor.
- 45 Thieves/confidence men, disguised (roll again on this table for their appearance)
- 46 Brigands. 2d6 men with bows or crossbows and swords or spears.
- 47 Brigands. 2d6 mounted men with crossbows and swords.
- 48 Brigands. 4d6 retainers and d6 knights looking for easy pickings.
- 49 Brigands. 5d10 unemployed mercenaries with various arms.
- 50 Outlaws. A handful of men and women, outlawed for various misdeeds, living a feral life in the woods.
- 51 Outlaws. 2d6 desperate men, armed with longbows and staves.
- 52 Outlaws. d4 hardened criminals, traveling in disguise (roll again for appearance)
- 53 Palmers. 2d6 professional pilgrims, seeking alms from fellow travelers.
- 54 Flagellants. 5d6, armed with scourges, clubs, and flails, ready to press onlookers into their band.
- 55 Dancers. 3d20; onlookers must save as vs. a Charm spell or join in pilgrimage to next shrine.
- 56 Pardoner. Devout and serious.
- 57 Pardoner. Crafty rogue.
- 58 Monks. d4, carrying mortuary rolls to next monastery to make copies.
- 59 Monks. d6, on secret mission to steal relics from a rural monastery.
- 60 Monks. d6, on mission to recover stolen relics.
- 61 Itinerant preacher. Rabble-rouser.
- 62 Itinerant preacher. Rabble-rouser, and wanted by the local authorities.
- 63 Itinerant preacher. Evangelist, non-political.
- 64 Tinkers. 2d6.
- 65 Lepers. 2d6, ringing bells and holding signs.
- 66 Gypsies. Small band of 2d6 with d4 wagons.
- 67 Gypsies. Large band of 5d20 with 2d10 wagons.
- 68 Hermit, out begging.
- 69 Lone knight on a pilgrimage.
- 70 d6 knights on pilgrimage with squires.
- 71 Peasants taking produce to sell at fair/market.

- 72 Peasants taking animals to sell at fair/market. A small group of goats or pigs.
- 73 Peasants taking animals to sell at fair/market. A herd of their lord's cattle guarded by 2d6 armed guards.
- 74 Peasants taking handicrafts to sell at fair/ market.
- 75 Peasants on their way to buy at fair/market.
- 76 Assorted town folk on their way to buy at another town's market.
- 77 Patrol of 3d6 men looking for criminals.
- 78 Nobles. d4. Traveling with entourage (4d6) for pleasure.
- 79 Nobles traveling incognito (roll again for the disguise)
- 80 Nobles traveling to a wedding or funeral.
- 81 Nobles fleeing plague.
- 82 Townfolk travelling to a city on business.
- 83 Townfolk traveling to a wedding or funeral.
- 84 Townfolk fleeing plague.
- 85 A lone person looking for an item lost along the road by his party.
- 86 The road is flooded ahead from last night's storm.
- 87 A bridge must be crossed here.
- 88 A bridge must be crossed here.
- 89 A ferry must be used to cross a river here.
- 90 A ferry must be used to cross a river here.
- 91 A small gatehouse with toll-collectors.
- 92 A small gatehouse with toll-collectors who are suspicious and demand large bribes.
- 93 An alehouse. Side business in gambling.
- 94 An alehouse. Side business in gambling & prostitution.
- 95 An alehouse. Side business in gambling & prostitution, and lone travelers often disappear.
- 96 A roadside shrine maintained by a hermit.
- 97 A hermit's cottage is just visible from the road.
- 98 The next mile is poorly maintained, the margins overgrown with bushes, tall grass, etc. Perfect ambush!
- 99 A herd of cattle is being grazed along this section of road, creating a delay.
- 100 An army is on the move, heading this way. Better clear the road.



ON THE ROADSIDE. THE ALEHOUSE.
(From the MS. 10 E. IV. ; English ; Fourteenth Century.)

D20 PAYLOAD

Messenger's Errands

- 1 Gifts for a lady
- 2 Gifts for a lord
- 3 Gifts for a bishop
- 4 Taking greyhounds to a race or back to their owners
- 5 Delivering the "quarters" and/or head of a criminal for display
- 6 Parcel of personal letters
- 7 Summons to a meeting of guild masters
- 8 Summons to a meeting of major merchants
- 9 Summons to a meeting of the leading vassals of the local lord
- 10 Summons to a funeral
- 11 Summons to a wedding
- 12 News of a royal birth
- 13 News of a battle
- 14 A call for levies to be mustered
- 15 News of a death of an important person
- 16 News of the trial of an important person
- 17 Transmitting minor religious decrees (a ban on beards or codpieces over a certain length, a call for prayers to be offered for someone's health, etc.)
- 18 Transmitting minor legal edicts (announcing a list of those outlawed or of serfs released bondage, a new tax on some good, etc.)
- 19 Delivering a relic to a sovereign or collector
- 20 Taking an offering to shrine for someone else

D8 STATE OF THE BRIDGE

Bridges

- 1 Unguarded, possibly abandoned, and falling apart.
- 2 Unguarded, but a hostile recluse lives in the tower at one end.
- 3 Guarded by $d4+2$ men-at-arms and fortified with portcullis and towers.
- 4 Guarded by $2d6$ men-at-arms and fortified with portcullis and towers.
- 5 Guarded by $2d6$ men-at-arms but unfortified.
- 6 Includes a shrine to minor/obscure saint.
- 7 Includes a chapel to a saint with clerk/feretrar who asks for offering in addition to toll.
- 8 As #4 but the guards are actually bandits.

Death, Burial & Grave Goods

in Ancient and Medieval Times

This chapter is intended primarily to provide an overview of how the dead were disposed of in medieval times, from the death bed to the grave, both to provide ideas for adventures or events in a game and to assist the GM in creating historically plausible burial sites.

The Death Watch and the Wake

Contemporary Western society tends to keep death hidden away. The deathbed is considered a particularly private space, and only very close relatives and friends are likely to see us in our final hours. But in the Middle Ages, the drama of the death bed was a very public event. Relatives stayed in the room with the dying to watch for signs of death's onset. Last rites were performed whenever practical, and the pious would confess to lay persons if no priest were available. Priests coming to administer the last rites would announce their errand by ringing bells as they walked through the streets. Dead bodies were washed and placed in shrouds. On the Continent, these shrouds were left open over the face; in England, the face was covered too.

The wake was held at the deceased person's home. The Church always looked askance on wakes, suspicious of paganism, as these were accompanied by drinking, feasting, and numerous superstitions and pre-Christian customs. Wakes were held by the ancient Celts, with prescribed periods of waking depending on the status of the deceased — a king might be waked for twelve days, commoners for a single night. In the Middle Ages, professional “watchers” could be hired to pad attendance at wakes, but it seems that watchers would sometimes break the tedium by playing jokes or tricks with the corpse to frighten the mourners. This foolishness also elicited Church criticism and some guilds forbade their members to attend wakes. Perhaps this horseplay, known as “rousing the ghost,” hearkened back to pagan efforts to revive the corpse. Naturally this would border on black magic in the eyes of the Church. There are some accounts of the dead reviving at the wake, and in general there was some confusion about when death occurred and what dead bodies were capable of.

Peddler, Holbein's *Danze Macabre*



or: The Murderhobo's Guide to Graves and How to Rob Them

People did not believe that corpses were entirely dead. It was thought that they might be capable of some speech or motion, as indeed can be mimicked by some natural processes that dead bodies go through. However in the medieval imagination, the dead could sometimes even eat or perform other vital functions. For example Walter Map's *De nugis curialium* (a collection of tales and legends, unfortunately very hard to find in translation) mentions a shoe-maker who has sex with his dead wife; the corpse later gives birth to a monstrous head that kills with its gaze. It was also thought that the bodies of murder victims would bleed or show other responses like moving or emitting sounds in the presence of their killer - this was called "bier-right" and suspected murderers could be given a "trial by bier" where they had to touch a corpse's wounds.

More practically the dead could be sued after death. A man who failed to show for a judicial combat in 1400 - because he had died three months earlier - had a judgement issued against him that required his heirs to pay his fine. The dead could even be put on trial; the most infamous case being the exhumation, trial, and mutilation of the corpse of Pope Formosus in 897 CE. Posthumous punishment without benefit of trial was also carried out in more pragmatic times - from the exhumation and whipping of the Umayyad enemies of Caliph Abu Al-Abbas in the 8th century to the exhumation and hanging of the regicides of Charles I in 1661. However, these displays were largely done for propaganda purposes, rather than because of a belief that the corpse could feel pain.

Beginning about the middle of the 12th century, coroners examined the bodies of the dead before burial. Usually coroners did not dissect the bodies but simply looked for obvious signs of foul play and the cause of death: wounds bruises, discoloration from poisoning, and so on. Occasionally the subject of such an inquest revived: the limited medical knowledge of the period did not always reliably diagnose death.

A short history of the "bier right":
<http://thechirurgeonsapprentice.com/2011/03/30/crying-to-heaven-for-revenge-the-bleeding-corpse-and-its-significance-in-history/>

Coroners

Funerals

Funeral Customs, by Bertram S. Puckle, available online:
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/etc/fcod/fcodo6.htm>

Medieval funerals followed fairly regular conventions. The Church required five minimal conditions to be met for a proper Christian funeral:

- 1: That the body be decently laid out.
- 2: That lights be placed beside the body.
- 3: That a cross be laid upon the breast, or failing that, the hands laid on the breast in the form of a cross.
- 4: That the body be sprinkled with holy water and incensed at stated times.
- 5: That it be buried in consecrated ground.

Naturally, additional ornamentation was added for important persons, such as processions, additional masses, and other pomp and circumstance.

Generally speaking, the more attendees a funeral had, the better, for the mourners all offer prayers on the deceased's behalf. Guilds required that their members attend any funeral of a member within seven miles. Mourners might be asked to take a pilgrimage or even go on crusade, but usually offering prayers was enough.

The family of the decedent would be expected to provide the "doole" or black gown customarily worn to funerals (beginning sometime in the 13th century). Wearing black to funerals (and afterward during a period of mourning) has uncertain origins, but dates at least as far back as Roman times when a dark toga ("toga pulla") was worn for funerals. Most likely the dark colors are meant to show the wearer's somberness and grief, but some sources claim that the practice arose from a belief that the color black — especially coupled with a veil — rendered one invisible or unrecognizable to the spirits.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

In Europe, by the end of the Middle Ages, funeral bells were rung according to a "code" of uncertain origin which helped identify the subject of the funeral. For adults, a tenor bell was rung; for children, a treble. There would be three tolls for a man, and two for a woman; after a pause one stroke would be rung per year of age the decedent had attained. The ringing of bells was practiced as far back as Roman times and probably began as a measure to scare off evil spirits, but it also called the faithful to pray for the dead.

Death & Taxes

In England, during the Christian period, death was accompanied by two taxes: the heriot owed to one's feudal liege, or to the king, and the sawlscot (also called a "soul-scot" or "mortuary") owed to the Church. These were normally accounted in the wills of wealthy persons as if they were money and valuables. But even poorer folk would have to pay, and if they had no coin or precious metals, they would have to pay in other goods.

HERIOT originated in the return of any weapons, horses, or other equipment a lord had provided to his lieges. In the case of non-combatants, the lord of the manor could claim the best possession of a deceased tenant, usually a horse or set of clothes. If this left the estate with at least three head of animals, the Church could take what was judged to be his second best possession. If the possessions of the deceased were considered too poor to take, a tax in money would be levied. For the elite, the amounts paid out would be considerable: in 950 CE Bishop Theodred left 200 gold marks, 2 silver cups, 4 horses, 2 swords, 4 shields and spears, and some land to the king - not to mention his sawlscot to the Church, which would exclude weapons but would include more gold and land! By contrast a very poor commoner might be charged a hen and two pence.

The SAWLSCOT was considered payment for Church services and burial. A commoner's best possession would cover the cost of church services and perhaps a plot in the churchyard, but a noble's must cover more elaborate services and possibly a burial place in the crypt, or even in the church itself. The poorest decedents might be asked to pay for the candles only, but the wealthy were charged a percentage of their wealth over 20 marks in value. Both of these taxes were variable but 10 or 20% of the estate would be reasonable; greedy lords or bishops might claim more.

In cases of murder, the murder weapon or instrument of death was always forfeited to the crown. A jury would assign a value to these items, which might be paid to the item's owner, assuming he was not the killer.

"scot" meaning tax and hence the colloquialism "scot-free" — "scotfree" meaning exempt from royal taxes, and "scot-free" was generalized to mean "free of penalty"

Burial & Cremation

Burial and cremation were the two most common means of disposing of the dead for most of Europe's history. In pagan Rome, cremation was the preferred means for the wealthy and upper classes, and prestige was demonstrated by building elaborate pyres. The cremains (ashes and bone cinders) were then placed in urns which would be placed in a columbarium, a building with many niches (resembling a dovecote) where the urns would be kept. The Romans began burying their dead in the second century CE. Wealth was demonstrated with large tombs placed prominently along the roads outside of their cities. Cemeteries and catacombs beneath the city served the less affluent.

Outside of Rome, cremation was also practiced by various Germanic tribes, and the urns containing cremains were buried with funeral goods, but the burial of unburned corpses was also common. The burial of corpses was usually in specially devoted areas with barrows or tumuli built up over them. The Celts buried their dead lying down for most folks but standing upright in the case of warriors. In Britain, cremation and urn burials have been confirmed although relatively few grave sites have been discovered, leaving practices open to speculation. Perhaps exposure (leaving bodies unburied or hanging from trees to decay or be consumed by animals), cremation without burial (the ashes being perhaps dumped into rivers, lakes, or the ocean, or scattered), or other unknown methods were used.

Those Iron Age graves that have been found usually do not occur in dedicated "graveyards." Romanized Britons did however begin to adopt Roman customs, and Roman conscripts from Germany and further south brought their own customs. One of these customs was the use of dedicated graveyards. The Romans introduced the pouring of libations for the dead, and even put tubes into the ground to pour libations directly into graves. The Roman dead were buried with small tokens related to the journey to the afterlife; other pagans left more significant grave goods.

Cremation fell out of favor as Christianity took hold, and the body was expected to literally rise from the grave in the end times. Jewish law had also forbids cremation, as bodies must be buried, and this may have influenced early Christians. Ashes could be buried in sacks or urns. Bodies were buried in a fetal position until coffins began to appear in the Roman era. Cist burials were graves where ashes, urn, or corpse were buried inside a stone-lined chamber in the ground. The cist played the role of a coffin — keeping the remains together in one spot. Following Roman examples, coffins were introduced and became the main type of burial in the medieval period.

Criminals and other “evil” folk might be buried face-down to prevent them from rising from the grave. In Christian times, the bodies of criminals and heretics were often mutilated and/or humiliated in various ways both as a sort of posthumous punishment and to prevent the body from being possessed by evil spirits. Such “deviant burials” (as archaeologists now call them) might have the severed head placed between the legs, a large stone placed in the mouth, or one or both legs cut off, all in an effort to prevent the dead from getting up and causing trouble.

Christians preferred to bury their dead in sanctified places, and crypts were frequently located beneath churches; otherwise the grounds surrounding a church could be used for grave sites if there was space. As space ran out, the bones were disinterred and removed to charnel houses, where they were neatly stacked and stored. The old grave sites would then be re-used.

The Vikings adopted local practices, and in England many Vikings were buried in churchyards but with weapons as grave goods, while others kept to more traditional methods like barrows, boat burials, or cremation.

Mass burials in a common trench or pit were resorted to in times of war or plague. Such burials might be hasty, and there are accounts of open pits where bodies were dumped continuously, with only a few shovels-full of lime to cover them (and control the odor). But in some countries, like Spain, even mass burials were done on consecrated grounds or inside churches, with the bodies respectfully laid out with shrouds and crossed arms, even during the plague.

While theologians did not all agree about the importance of keeping the body intact, the common folk generally thought it necessary to at least keep the bones together. Coffins were usually of wood or stone, and some had a lead lining. A recent find in England had the body wrapped in a lead sheet inside a coffin, which a cheeky archaeologist called a “burrito burial.” Lead liners were meant to prevent or slow decay and were uncommon but might be used for churchmen or nobles that were likely to be translated (moved) later. The less well-off might simply be buried wrapped in a shroud. By the time of the Norman conquest, wooden coffins for the wealthy and shrouds for the commoners were the norms.

Church Burials

Burial in churchyards became popular following the example set by monastic orders, who buried their dead near the monastery's church. In 752 CE, St. Cuthbert is said to have obtained permission from the pope to add graveyards to churches (hereafter, churchyards). By the Middle Ages most lay persons were buried in churchyards, and were subject to removal to a charnel house when the yard was full. Churchyards were often used for other public events and even as a playground for the young, although as time went on the churchyards were more likely to be walled off and restricted for funerary use only.

The churchyard itself usually had no marked graves on the side north of the church. This was left open for future expansion of the church building, and because it was unconsecrated it might also have been a place for the unmarked graves of outcasts and criminals. Graves were almost always aligned east-west, with the heads pointing west. Medieval churchyards were usually fenced or walled. Towards the end of the period, as fears about supernatural perils like witchcraft and werewolves increased, graveyards would be walled, and the entrances locked at night. In some areas the sexton or groundskeeper would keep lanterns lit throughout the yard — all in order to keep out real or imaginary grave-robbers.

Abbot, Holbein's *Danze Macabre*



The elites, such as nobles and bishops, would be buried inside a church. Important families might be buried in parish churches, whereas the more prominent nobles could be buried in larger cathedrals. Indoor burials would be placed in sarcophagi that were sunk into the church's floor. A lid was mortared in place, level with the floor tiles. Or coffins could be buried in the floor and then covered with bricks or a marble slab. On the Continent, crypts or even ancient catacombs might help accommodate more bodies. Some clergy criticized indoor burials for common folks — space was at a premium, and some wrote that bodies tainted the sacred space. However the rich and powerful could override such concerns with their money and influence.

In any case the unbaptized (adults or infants), suicides, lunatics, and the excommunicated were usually denied burial in churchyards. The relatives of such persons might still try to sneak into the churchyard at night to bury them there. Murderers would be buried at cross-roads (to confuse their surey restless spirits) until the 19th century.

In the 13th century, several funeral customs were introduced. Mourners began to wear black gowns or *dooles*. Funeral brasses and effigies began to mark and decorate grave sites. These were not conventional portraits but iconic images of the role or status of the dead. Brasses were flat metal images, while effigies were carved out of wood or stone.

In the 14th century, morbid imagery became more common in medieval art (perhaps owing to the plague experience), and funeral brasses and effigies might depict skulls or cadavers. Manuals were written on the “craft of dying,” giving instructions on what to do before the priest arrives to administer last rites. In the 15th century, the theme of the “danse macabre” or dance of the dead was introduced, and a personified death appeared in all sorts of art. “Cadaver tombs” began to appear in churches, depicting the corpse, sometimes covered in vermin, sometimes accompanied by an effigy of the living person - in this case the monument would be a “double decker” with the life-like effigy on top and the cadaver effigy (or *transi*) below. These monuments would be ornately decorated structures placed over the floor grave.



Wolgemut's *Danze Macabre*

Burial & Reburial

Important persons who died far from home, such as warring kings, crusaders, or nobles, and others who would not be immediately buried, could be handled in two ways. Sometimes the body was butchered so that the flesh could be buried locally while the bones, after being boiled clean, were transported for burial elsewhere.

The other option was embalming. This was a lot like the manufacture of a mummy in Egypt. The body would be disemboweled, stuffed with salt and spices, wrapped in wax and bandages, and dressed in clothes. The first option — burying the flesh at the place of death and transporting the bones home — was only taken when an extremely long journey, such as the return of a fallen crusader, was to be taken. Embalming was more common. There are also incidents where bodies were transported in barrels of wine or vinegar as a preservative, presumably because the time or resources for traditional embalming were unavailable.

Clergy were often subject to reburial. Typically a churchman might be dug up after just a few days, and if the body was incorrupt (proving possibly saintly status), it could be moved to a more sanctified location. This process could be repeated after a few years as new tombs, churches, or shrines were completed. Often economic and political forces drove this; see “Furta Sacra.”

When nobles were moved, it was most often a political expedient that was being served - for example parts of a king might be buried in different places in order to help unify the lands under a crown. Richard the Lionheart had his heart buried in Rouen, while the rest of his body was buried at Fontevand. At other times, the person willed that their remains, or part of their remains, be left unburied until their heirs completed some task. King Edward I wanted his bones to be carried by the army against the Scots until they were vanquished - a request his executors did not carry out. The pieces and parts of rulers were transported in reliquaries similar to those used to house the relics of saints, and it would be more accurate to say these items were enshrined than buried. In particular, the hearts of rulers were venerated like relics, and placed in reliquaries. Richard the Lionheart's heart was enclosed in a fairly simple lead case. Robert the Bruce's heart was placed in a silver case, to be taken to the holy land for burial, but the custodian was killed in a fight with Moors in Spain and the heart was eventually returned to Scotland.

See, for example, the gold heart reliquary of Anne of Brittany:
<http://www.thehistoryblog.com/archives/29750>

Tomb Guardians

Graves could have a variety of protections. Burial howes and mounds present a physical barrier, as the burial chamber is usually a small area beneath a large mound of rock or earth, and could be hard to find. Burial sites were also hidden: by being placed in remote places, by being left unmarked, or even by being surrounded by many false graves, as was the case for the Abbasid caliph Al-Mansur, who had his body secretly placed in one of a hundred pits to prevent his body from being exhumed and defiled by political enemies. Prayers, curses, and talismans could be used to magically protect a grave from molestation, or to keep out evil spirits (or keep them in). As mentioned above, fences, walls, and lights were used in churchyards to deter grave-robbers. Watch dogs or human guards might be used in areas with grave-robbing problems.

Graves might also be protected by the spirits or animated corpses of the dead. In folklore, the ghosts of the dead are reported to manifest in a bewildering variety: as thorn bushes, as horses, dogs, and other animals, and in human form, appearing either as living persons or as shrouded corpses. The most wicked ghosts might appear as demons.

Though Christian writers attributed hauntings to pagan burials (due to the restless spirits of the unsaved, or demons hoping to ensnare more souls), they thought that Christian burials would not usually be haunted. The exceptions would be the graves of heretics or sinners, who for this reason were buried at cross roads, facing downward, or otherwise impeded from rising near good Christians.

Statues and sculpted architectural details might also be placed as protectors of graves, and in a fantasy game some might be able to animate if their fearsome visages alone did not suffice to ward off robbers. The motifs of the statuary are dependent on the culture, naturally, with monsters and angels being the most common. Sphinxes were used in Greece as well as Egypt, as were the figures of warriors and gods. Gargoyles were often used to protect the exteriors of Christian churches, and so would also have a view of the churchyard, while tombstones and mausoleums might incorporate angels. Viking rune stones might have serpents, wolves, or other animals incorporated into the designs, and could be placed on or near burial mounds, though in the sagas, the most fearsome protectors of mounds are the wights of the men buried in them.

Random Grave-Robbing

See “Furta Sacra” and “Into the Catacombs” for suggestions on robbing tombs for relics. This section provides some random tables for generating graves to rob and what is in them.

There are relatively few surviving tombs and graves from ancient times, especially in England. While historians and archaeologists debate the real reasons, we might imagine that so few ancient burials can be found in the present day because they have been ransacked by grave-robbers. So, GMs should feel free to place more graves than is supported by the current archaeological evidence in their milieu.

The promise of grave goods would naturally be the main motive for grave-robbing, although black magic also required a variety of objects from graves and corpses. There were also medicinal values ascribed to parts of corpses, for example a dead murderer’s hand was thought to cure scrofula. Grave goods would be placed in many pagan graves, ranging from the commonplace (a coin for Charon or hobnailed hiking sandals for the trip to the underworld) to the valuable (an effigy of a psychopomp or guide to the spirit realm might be placed in a grave, like the decorative bronze and enamel cockerels found in Roman graves as tribute to Hermes, valuables representing one’s status, and of course jewelry or finery for the next life).

The grave goods could be quite extravagant. The Celts buried warriors with horses and chariots, and the Vikings famously buried their dead with replica ships, on occasion. Muslims sometimes hung jugs outside of tombs, to offer water to the thirsty dead in accord with certain hadiths, but local practices varied widely, with some seeing even simple markers as idolatrous. Christians generally did not bury grave goods with the dead, although there could be exceptions. Rulers and clergy would have symbols of their office buried with them, and these were often very fine or ornate items. Converted Vikings were often buried with weapons, and saints might have personal possessions and shrine offerings added to their graves when their bodies were reburied. When St. Cuthbert was disinterred in the 19th century, his body was found to be accompanied by both personal belongings and a vast accumulation of shrine offerings.

The following charts provide for randomizing what grave goods, if any, are found in a given type of grave. Note that this table makes no attempt to provide an accurate distribution of types of graves - most Viking graves would not be ship burials, and most Christian graves would be in a churchyard, not inside the church itself. If you want to randomly determine the grave type for a given period roll:

Iron Age/Pre-roman	d4
Saxon/Dark Ages	d6
Roman	d4+1
Viking	d4+2
Christian	d4+5

D9 TYPE OF BURIAL	CHANCE OF GRAVE GOODS	#ROLLS ON GRAVE GOODS TABLE
1 Cremation, ashes buried	3 in 6	1
2 Cremation, urn burial	3 in 6	2
3 Cist burial	4 in 6	d3
4 Burial in Tumulus/ Barrow	4 in 6	d6
5 Ship burial	5 in 6	d8
6 Burial with stele/gravestone	1 in 6	1
7 Coffin burial with gravestone	1 in 6	2
8 Stone sarcophagus	2 in 6	d4
9 Church burial	1 in 10	d6

CHURCH BURIAL SUBTABLE (D6)

1. Crypt in basement
2. In floor with marble slab
3. In floor with funerary brass
4. In floor with effigy monument
5. In floor with cadaver monument
6. Sarcophagus in chapel or niche with elaborate monument

GRAVE GOODS (D20)

Personal effects were frequently gender-specific. Where two entries are given, the first is female, the second male.

1. Comb
2. Needles/Fish hooks
3. Weaving tools/Hand tools
4. Brooch/Belt buckle
5. Wine amphorae or clothes
6. Silver platter/cup
7. Mirror/Drinking vessel
8. Coin in mouth (Pagan); Hobnail shoes or effigy of a cockerel (Roman); cross, pendant, prayer beads (Christian)
9. Coins (3d6)
10. Lamp
11. Glass vessel
12. Game board and pieces or musical instrument
13. Horse/Chariot fittings
14. Precious metal rings, necklaces, etc.
15. Jewelry, Weapons, Shields
16. Beadwork item or garment/Armor
17. Fine chest, box, or other container
18. Slave/Horse: Dark Ages or earlier burial only; in later periods substitute a “burial plate” - an engraved plaque of silver or gold identifying the corpse, placed over the chest
19. Cart/Chariot
20. Special (magic item, relic, cache of scrolls or books, etc.)

Actually, archaeologists have used this assumption when sexing skeletons, but closer analysis has found that it is more complicated. Women were sometimes buried with “male” goods like swords and armor, and vice versa, and there is debate about what this means - do the goods represent status, occupation, or other things?

Furta Sacra

Relics in the Medieval Worldview

In this context some seemingly bizarre incidents like the exhumation, trial, and mutilation of the corpse of Pope Formosus in 897 A.D. make sense: the dead body is, in a way, still Formosus.

More specifically, bishops were threatened with loss of office if they consecrated altars without relics, according to the 787 CE 2nd Nicene Council. It was a measure intended to restrict or limit the number of new monasteries, shrines, and churches being built.

In the Middle Ages, the relics of saints were far more than mementos of dead holy people. The faithful believed that the dead would rise when Christ returns, and the relics would reassemble into complete persons. Although the saints were dead in one sense, they were also thought to be still alive in heaven, and in this way the relics were dormant but living things, awaiting the resurrection. This is perhaps the hardest part, for us moderns, to understand about relics: a relic was not a grisly souvenir, it was a treasured piece of a living saint. Small wonder then that relics were venerated and honored, paraded and celebrated, visited, and even stolen.

But what are relics good for? Relics in the Middle Ages had many uses, practical and liturgical. A relic was needed to build an altar, to swear a major oath, and to encourage lucrative pilgrim traffic. During much of the medieval period, Church law required that the altars of churches have some relic enshrined within them. In fact a decree in the early 9th century ordered relic-less altars destroyed! In order to erect a new church, a relic had to be procured. The relics might be hidden inside the altar, but many altars had windows (“confessios”) that allowed the remains to be viewed in the altar. The confessio eventually gave way to glass enclosures so that entire bodies might be on view beneath the altar table.

Oath-taking would ideally be done over a relic, and this practice is echoed to this day in courts that still “swear-in” witnesses over Bibles or other scriptures, and in the swearing-in of government office holders. Breaking an oath sworn over a relic could bring divine vengeance down on the oath-breaker.

Perhaps the most practical reason to acquire a relic, though, is that relics attract pilgrims, and pilgrims spend money and bring offerings. It was a big boost to any village’s economy to have relics worthy of pilgrimage, and monasteries often depended on the revenue relics could bring. Pilgrims frequently brought silver or gold effigies of the body parts they wanted healed, and merchants would even donate precious metal ship models to ask for protection for voyages. The very poor might offer a few coins, or a clay effigy. These votive offerings may begin to crowd a shrine and monks could discretely melt them down for ready cash. More humble and cheaper offerings that many brought or sent to shrines were made of wax.

or: Relic Theft for Piety & Profit

Wax models of body parts or animals in need of healing might be sent, or sometimes just candles (traditionally, one sent a taper as tall as the person to be healed, or the person's weight in wax, and these would represent very valuable offerings, as wax was costly). Wax models would periodically be melted down to make candles to light the shrine. Precious metal offerings would be melted down into ingots to use as money. There was a similar tradition of sending a quantity of bread or grain equaling the weight of an invalid as an offering in order to effect a cure and this would be consumed by the shrine-keepers.

There would also be political significance to the relics enshrined in a monastery or church, as the saint's relatives or other nobles particularly devoted to a given saint would want to help honor and protect the remains. In some cases the nationality of a saint or the saint's patronage of a particular class of people might also encourage people to aid or protect the monastery or town. For example the Venetians were said to have collected the relics of Norman saints in order to get Norman warlords to take their side in disputes.

Individuals sometimes prized relics as collectors, perhaps partly out of devotion and the practical reasons listed above, but it appears that some abbots, nobles, and merchants simply desired to have either complete specimens of a particular saint (all the body parts and associated items known to exist) or else they wanted complete collections of relics representing a group of saints, for example relics of all the bishops of a given city.

But relics were also valued for their supernatural potency, and in a fantasy game this would be a practical concern as well. Having a relic and properly venerating it could ensure protection, good harvests, and prosperity for a region, and relics would occasionally work miracles of healing or other effects. Relics might also be used to give supernatural potency to weapons and armies. Roland's sword Durandal had several relics contained in the hilt and was supposed to be the sharpest sword in existence. Armies sometimes included relics and shrines in their baggage trains, and they might be used as standards or rallying points. The carroccios (wagon-mounted army standards) of medieval Italy frequently included both a battle flag and some relic or altar, thus inspiring both civic and religious zeal. The famous Hussite war drum, made from the skin of Jan Žižka, echoes this tradition too.

Translationes & Theft

In the concise and obfuscatory language of medievalists: in the hagiographical literature, *translationes* are a common *topos*.

In the lives of saints written by monks, there is a recurring theme of saintly relics being moved in order to explain why a saint from some far-off land has his or her bits interred locally. While these movements usually occur in a respectable manner (bequests, discoveries, gifts, etc.) there are also many examples of relocations that occur under cover of night, by trickery or theft, and even by force. Monks of the period distinguished among *translationes* (ceremonial transfer under Church supervision), *furta sacra* (“holy thefts” — thefts justified by their divine guidance or pious motivation), and outright *theft* (which was generally kept quiet when successful).

Translations were most commonly called for when a martyr or holy person was canonized as a saint and an altar or shrine prepared for to receive their remains. In some cases canonized saints were translated when their relics were finally located. Less commonly a saint would be moved to a new location long after canonization. The anniversary of a saint’s death was normally the primary feast day of a saint’s cult, but the anniversary of his relics’ translation might have become an additional feast day as well.

Finding, acquiring, and selling relics became an important business in the Middle Ages, and it appears that there were dealers famous for their trade in relics. Monks and abbots would sometimes sell relics when strapped for cash; others did it out of avarice. The buyers might be monasteries, towns, rulers, or private individuals, lay or clerical.

According to Jonathan Sumption, in *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion*. Roman & Littlefield, 1975.

In an ironic twist, St. Hugh’s own reliquary was stolen in the 14th century, and the bones discarded by the thieves, but miraculously a crow stood guard over the skull until it was recovered.

While translations generally required prior permission from the Church, in practice an investigation after the fact was all that was needed to justify them. Occasionally, clerics would take outrageous liberties with relics, such as when Bishop (later, Saint) Hugh of Lincoln visited Fécamp Abbey and was shown the arm of Mary Magdalene. He tried to break off a piece, but was unable to until he resorted to biting off a finger. The outraged monks of Fécamp protested, but Hugh supposedly replied: “If a little while ago I handled the sacred body of the Lord with my fingers in spite of my unworthiness, and partook of it with my lips and my teeth, why should I not treat the bones of the saints in the same way - and without profanity acquire them whenever I can.”

Relics were often translated or stolen during invasions or looted in war. Economic hardship might force a community to sell its relics, and in some cases whole bodies were divided to be sold in parts. On occasion the discovery of a lost or forgotten tomb would initiate a translation; but these “discoveries” happened most often during some kind of unrest or turmoil.

Northern European Christians often targeted the tombs and catacombs of Rome for relics, and pilgrimages or commercial visits to Rome might include a side-trip to steal a relic. Western Christians would target the Byzantine Empire as a source of relics, both because relics had become less important to the Byzantines (who gave more veneration to icons) and because the Eastern church was a bit alien and heterodoxical. As “outsiders” the Easterners were less protected by the scruples that might restrain one in dealing with one’s neighbors.

A case of multiple translations and thefts is illustrated by the supposed bodies of the “three magi” of the Nativity story. St. Helen supposedly found their remains in the Holy Land, and transported them to the Hagia Sophia in Byzantium. Bishop Eustorgius then took them to Milan in 344 CE so that he might be buried with them when he died. This tomb was robbed in 1164 by Frederick Barbarossa’s minister Reinald van Dassel (later Archbishop of Cologne), who knew that relics could make a place a lucrative destination for pilgrimages. He brought the remains to a cathedral in Cologne, where the Shrine of the Magi still can be found, though some parts of the relics were returned to Milan in 1904.

The people who stole and traded in relics could come from all walks of life. Some were monks or other clerics, driven by piety, ambition, greed, or a combination of these, to acquire a relic for their own institution. Others were merchants, who would take the opportunity to loot a tomb while on a business trip. Still others were specialist relic dealers, who traveled Europe selling the relics they stole, “discovered,” or even manufactured.

The thefts themselves ranged from prolonged undercover affairs to spontaneous, even reckless acts. In some instances monks joined a foreign monastery, gained a position of trust, and after years of waiting made off with relics. At the other extreme, we read of pilgrims who, in the presence of a relic, were overcome with a desire to take it or some part of it home, and steal it on impulse.

As early as 726, Byzantine Emperor Leo III issued edicts against images, shrines, and relics, and under his son Constantine V, relics and the cult of saints were condemned as heresy.

This account is given by Umberto Eco in *The book of Legendary Lands*; a fictionalized account of the same events is given in his novel *Baudolino*.

The Relic Thieves

Defending Relics

There were several defenses against relic theft. Many stories mention monks assigned to stand vigil or guard duty to watch tombs, altars, and reliquaries, but these were really the last line of defense. Guard dogs were also used for some shrines, such as the Dalmatians of St. Anthony's shrine in Padua, or the pack of fierce bandogs (mastiffs) that guarded Canterbury in the winter months.

Monasteries and churches could usually depend on local nobles for protection, especially since they were employed in praying for the nobles and their ancestors. The dignity and wellbeing of the relics depended on the care taken by the monks and priests.

Saints who failed to perform miracles or to provide the protection from misfortune their custodians expect could also be punished through the humiliation of their relics. The Church, however, eventually outlawed this somewhat hubristic practice.

Indeed the clerical custodians of relics would sometimes use "humiliation" to exert pressure on the local powers. Humiliation was a ceremony where the relics were removed from their altar, the altar candles snuffed out, and the relics placed on the ground and heaped with thorns. The saint would work no more miracles, and harvests and prosperity were no longer guaranteed while this continued. Thus the earthly powers would be pressured to right whatever wrong the monks were protesting with the rite of humiliation.

The monks themselves might curse transgressors and would-be thieves, but agency was more commonly attributed to the saints acting through their relics. The punishments a saint or his relics can inflict are described later in the chapter.

Relics were generally housed in protected places, whether it be a publicly viewable area like an altar or beyond the sealed doors of a tomb, crypt, or maze-like catacomb. Shrines were often designed with barriers to hold pilgrims at arm's length (literally! they could just touch the relics or altar with their hands), and the larger shrines had balconies over the main gallery so the *feretrars* (shrine attendants) could watch visitors.

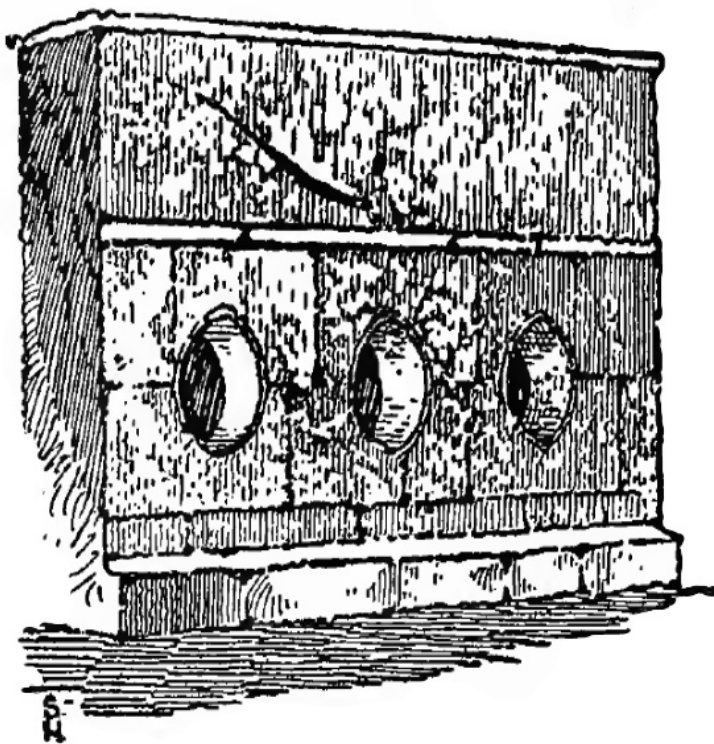
If thieves could get past the clerical community, the physical barriers, and any divine interventions meant to thwart the theft, they were still not quite in the clear. The citizens of an area might mobilize to retrieve a stolen relic, and relics stolen from Rome might be pursued by papal agents.

The relics placed in public view were often further concealed within a container called a reliquary. Reliquaries were often inlaid with gems and made of precious metals. Some reliquaries had convenient holes to allow oil, water, or other substances to be poured through the container, flowing over the relic, thus generating third-class relics in the form of infused liquids.

A common motif in reliquaries was to depict the body part the relic came from, so that a skull's reliquary might look like a bust, or a finger bone's reliquary might be a hand. Other reliquaries depicted the saint or an episode from his or her life. A specialized kind of reliquary called *feretrum* was sometimes used to carry relics to important events or in processions. Feretra were basically portable shrines, shaped like coffins and carried by poles or on a cart like a bier. Another special kind of reliquary was the personal reliquary: a brooch or amulet which carried some tiny relic like a finger bone, a few drops of blood, or some hair. These were believed to protect the wearer from harm, disease, and/or evil spirits, and would usually be decorated with precious stones, gold, and so on just like the larger reliquaries.

Reliquaries

The classes of relics are explained later on in this chapter.



Shrine of St. Candida, from Heat's *Pilgrim Life in the Middle Ages*. The holes allowed pilgrims to touch the relics inside.

The Drama of Holy Theft

Relic thieves often appealed to divine authority to justify or excuse their thefts, and in time a convention was established, by which many a theft was concealed or valorized. Such thefts were incorporated into histories and legends. The justified sacred thefts (*furta sacra*) recorded in hagiographies and monastic histories generally follow this pattern:

- the thief is inspired by a vision or dream and embarks on a quest
- the discovery of the relic might be accompanied by some miracle
- there is an “outsider” (such as a Moor, Jew, or Greek) who identifies the relic
- there are technical and logistical difficulties involved in moving the relic
- a joyful reception of the relic is held at a monastery, church, or court

These elements can easily be incorporated into your adventures for period flavor.

Some *furta sacra* are thought to have been “choreographed” so that a thief is “stopped” during his theft, but the relic decides to stay wherever it is detained rather than continuing to the final destination or return to the original home. At other times pilgrims were said to have “given” relics to travelers, and the reader can imagine many other circumstances where simple thefts might be embellished to hide or mitigate the crime involved.

Quite often, thefts were described as “discoveries” or even “rescues” of relics when they were brought to their new homes, and no one questioned these things too deeply - at least no one at the final resting place of the relics would. There was even a business of creating relics from anonymous bones and remains, and probably many beneficiaries of the pilgrim income did not ask too many questions. The reader is directed to Umberto Eco’s *Baudolino* for some amusing but well-researched fictional examples of manufactured relics.

In Roman times, it was forbidden to disinter the dead. Dead bodies were considered polluting and tombs would always be located outside the sacred boundaries of a city. Cremation was a common alternative to burial, at least until Christianity took a stronger hold over the culture, but most ancient peoples practiced some form of burial, and the remains were generally left intact and in place. As early as the fourth century, by decree of Christian Roman emperors, it was forbidden to steal, translate, or sell relics, so by then the relic trade must have already been a problem.

Furta Sacra, Translations and the Law

Codex Theodosius, IX,17,7, a decree first issued in February, 386 C.E. The decree did permit building shrines where saints were buried, though.

As attitudes toward death and the dead changed, it became acceptable to move dead bodies for re-interment, but only with the permission of the descendants, and in the case of saints, relics could be moved only with the Church's permission. As mentioned above, this requirement was sometimes skirted and permission might have been granted *ex post facto*, if the conditions of the move were deemed correct. The Church would excommunicate anyone who moved relics without authorization, but this sentence could be lifted if the relics were returned to their proper place.

When the Church began requiring that relics be included in all altars, the rules about translation became more permissive. Relics were needed all over Christendom for church foundation or rededication. The removal and transfer of relics could be justified when the intentions of the thief were pious or when there was evidence that the saint willed the move. Thefts would be judged unjustified when the thieves acted secretly or under the cover of night, when the relics were sold or purchased for money, and when there was evidence that the thieves were acting against, or in the absence of, the will of the saint. Of course the most important thing tended to be who the thief's patron or customer was, and many thefts were justified after the fact by influential men.

In cases of disputes about the proper home of a relic, ordeals might be held to settle them. After the death of St. Patrick, the churches of Saul and Armagh both claimed his body. To settle the dispute, two untamed bulls were yoked to the cart which bore his body and left to go where they would. They stopped at the spot where the church of Downpatrick was built and Patrick buried.

Relics were also used for secular legal matters including criminal cases. One tradition had a set of rods placed before an altar or touching a relic, and when the saint was invoked to reveal the guilty (in, say, a murder case), the rods pointed at the guilty party. Relics were also used as props in oath-taking, as mentioned above.

The Powers of Relics

Although they were frequently the mummified remains of dead bodies, or old cloths stained with blood, relics usually emanate pleasant odors, indicating their sacred nature. This is a supernatural feature of relics, if a very minor one.

Relics were most often invoked to heal the sick or injured, and many pilgrimages were undertaken by those seeking healing. Sometimes pilgrims would simply pray at an altar or shrine until they were healed or granted a vision. Sleeping near a saint's remains (incubation) could work a cure for an illness or provide a prophetic vision or dream. This sort of pilgrimage has antecedents in pre-Christian times, as certain pagan temples were visited to be slept at for oracular dreams. The Celts in particular thought that sleeping near a tomb could give a poet inspiration (and make one either a greater poet or a madman).

Less frequently, but perhaps more dramatically, relics could express the will of the saints. They might strike a would-be thief, paralyzing him or making him appear to be very drunk; in some cases the thief could even be struck dead. They could alter the weather to change a ship's course or keep it stranded in harbor, frustrating an effort to move the relic, or moving it somewhere else according to the saint's will. Relic translation stories often include such incidents to help demonstrate that the relic has chosen its current location, whether or not it was initially stolen or otherwise moved illicitly.

Relics were also thought to be capable of compelling the truth from a speaker, as when they were used to swear oaths. They could also point out a guilty party, and were used this way in trials and ordeals.

Some Beliefs about Relics

Real relics cannot be burned, so relics can be tested with fire for authenticity.

Relics emit a peculiar, pleasant aroma or perfume. Some relics oozed a scented oil (*myron*) which would be collected as a secondary relic. The odor was sometimes described as being the scent of paradise itself.

Saints (or their relics) were most potent on the feast days celebrating the anniversary of a saint's death and/or translation, and miracles were most likely to occur then. Miracles were also more likely to occur at the original grave site of a saint than at the new resting place.

The Church established a hierarchy of relics, with class I being the most sacred and class III being the least.

Class I relics are items directly associated with the life of Christ and the body parts of saints and martyrs. The most prized and potent relics would be body parts significant to the life, martyrdom, or sphere of patronage of the saint — for example the skull of a saint martyred by beheading, or the feet of a far-traveling saint.

Class II relics are items worn, owned, or frequently used by a saint, including religious items like prayer beads and psalm books, as well as mundane items like clothing. They have potency because of their contact with the saint, following the occult principle of contagion.

Class III relics are items that have touched or been associated with something that belonged to a saint, or are somehow associated indirectly with miracles, events in the life of the saint or biblical figures. Their potency, like the Class II relics, is through contagion, but is even more reduced as there is at least one more degree of separation between the saint and the relic than a Class II relic. Class III relics include containers that once held a relic, or substances that have been poured over the relic and collected.

Many reliquaries had special openings to allow the pious to pour oil or water over the relics inside and recover the liquid as a class III relic. Pope Leo IX famously steeped relics in wine to create a cure for the plague.

Classes of Relics

Many objects were also venerated that did not really fit the official classes. These include objects that belonged to biblical figures (including body parts) or that somehow figure into biblical events or places. Moreover, although the Church only recognized relics of Christ that were separated from his body (blood, sweat, foreskin, etc.), some collections of relics included supposed bones of Christ.

More Beliefs about Relics

The saints can illuminate their relics at certain times with a holy light. A pillar of light might appear over the relics of a forgotten saint, leading a pious person to discover the relics.

Relics can move on their own: St. Briocus the Great's jumped for joy when placed in a new shrine

Skeptics who find the large volume of some relics dubious - toenail clippings of certain saints were said to exist by the bagful, and it has often been noted that the pieces of the True Cross, if all assembled in one place, would hardly fit in a ship's hold - such skeptics would be assured that no less authority than the Pope established that true relics could even replicate themselves!

The Powers of Relics
in Your Game

It would be reasonable to allow Class III relics to work miracles up to clerical spells of level 3; Class II, level 4, and Class I, level 6. Only relics directly involved in the Christ story can work level 7 spells.

All relics should also have significant power against the unholy, whether undead or extra-planar, and all relics properly enshrined or honored should be considered to emanate a Protection from Evil, 10' radius (perhaps a larger area for more potent relics, covering the entire shrine or church). A humiliated relic has no protective aura. A cleric with an authentic relic in hand may turn undead and demons/devils as if he were 1-4 levels greater than his actual level. (Class III = 1, class II = 2, class I = 3 for most saints, 4 for the most potent saints and biblical relics like a nail from the True Cross).

See "Relic Clerics" for detailed suggestions on using relics as material components for clerical spells

Items with relics embedded in them would operate as magic items. Carroccios or standards could improve morale and provide an area protection from fear or evil; certainly if Holy Avengers and similar special swords exist, they should include some relic in the hilt or pommel (like Durandal).

If characters come into possession of a relic and hope to use it to work miracles, the rules for intelligent swords might be helpful. Assign intelligence according to your judgement, and a relatively high ego. All saintly relics will of course be aligned with Good and/or Law, and special purposes should also depend on the saint's life story. It is best to tailor miracles to the specific circumstances, but a table is provided to roll miracles and punishments, if desired. Simply choose a die according to the nature and severity of the offense, as well as the power of the relic. Class III relics may be capped at a d4; class II at d8, and class I at d12.

D12 BOON GRANTED TO PIOUS

- 1 Bless
- 2 Cure Light Wounds
- 3 Cure Blindness or Deafness
- 4 Cure Disease or Neutralize Poison
- 5 Grant a vision (as the Augury spell)
- 6 Cure Moderate Wounds or Exorcise
- 7 Grant a vision (as the Locate Object spell)
- 8 Remove Curse
- 9 Grant a vision (as the Commune spell)
- 10 Healed completely (as the Heal spell)
- 11 Raise Dead
- 12 Restoration or Regenerate

D12 PUNISHMENT FOR OFFENDER

- 1 Minor curse (as the Cleric spell Bless, reversed)
- 2 Panic (as the Remove Fear spell, reversed)
- 3 Temporary blindness
- 4 Boils and ulcers (d8 damage)
- 5 Paralysis (as Hold Person)
- 6 Feeble-minded (as spell)
- 7 Blasted (4d6 damage)
- 8 Quest (offender will see a vision)
- 9 Limb withered
- 10 Stricken (SAVE OR DIE, mute and deaf anyway)
- 11 Lightning strike (10d6, 10' radius, save for half)
- 12 Disintegrate

Powers & Piety

The GM should make relics potent but largely inscrutable - who can know why a saint might want to be moved, or who will be healed by the relic's power? A reaction roll would be a suitable mechanic. For lay people (and characters of classes unrelated to religious work), relics will work random miracles as outlined below on the chart. Ordained clergy (and characters of classes related to religious work, like Paladins, Clerics, and Pilgrims), may request specific miracles appropriate to the saint. The reaction roll is modified by the character's CHA as usual but also by the character's Piety and the appropriateness of the requested miracle to the saint's areas of favor.

PIETY should just be rated on a scale from 0 to 6 according to the GM's judgement. Players should not know what their Piety is, but might be reminded of misdeeds and moral failings by GM as they approach a relic. As a benchmark, the typical person might be a 2 if they attend to all religious observances (masses each Sunday and holy days of obligation, tithing, obedience to clergy, and so on, occasionally sinning but confessing promptly). A Paladin in good standing might be a 4 or 5. A 6 is reserved for the most saintly of characters: chaste, unselfish, faithful in every way and unstained by even the smallest sin. As different games use different systems for reactions, the modifier depends on the system:

2D6 REACTION: add Piety, +/-1 for favor, then subtract 3

D20 REACTION: add Piety x 2, +/-2 for favor, then subtract 6

1D100 REACTION: add Piety x 5, +/-10 for favor, then subtract 30

A strongly positive reaction indicates a miracle is performed; mildly positive will still result in a lesser miracle than requested, perhaps rolled on the table below; a neutral reaction means no miracle occurs; a negative reaction will bring punishment.

Over-use of a relic may try the saint's patience and cause additional negative modifiers, while special veneration (e.g. lavish masses or parades held, expensive new reliquaries made, or improvements to the saint's shrine) will give bonuses. If the player characters offend a saint or mishandle their relics, retribution may be swift and spectacular or subtle. The GM should carefully consider the intent of the offending act, the offender's prior behavior (Piety or, if used, alignment) and the saint's areas of influence and personality.

Random Relics

While the GM will want to carefully plan the nature, powers, and history of relics central to an adventure or quest, the following tables are provided to allow generation of relics on-the-fly.

D6 CLASS OF RELICS

- 1 Class I
- 2-3 Class II
- 4-6 Class III

DI2 CLASS I RELICS

- 1 Piece of the True Cross (splinter, nail)
- 2 Breast milk of the Blessed Virgin
- 3 Uncorrupted corpse of a Saint
- 4 Blood of a Saint (in vial or dried on cloth)
- 5 The Holy Prepuce (Foreskin of Jesus)
- 6 Hair or nail clippings of saint (or living holy person)
- 7 Entire mummy/skeleton/cremains
- 8 Object used to martyr a saint (sword, stake, wheel, arrow, etc)
- 9-12 Single bone or piece of a saint (optionally, roll on subtable:
PIECES PARTS OF THE HOLY, across)

D6 CLASS II RELICS

- 1 Prayer beads owned by a saint
- 2 Bible (or Psalms or scroll or part of a Bible) owned by a saint
- 3 Article of clothing of a saint
- 4 Comb, mirror, or other grooming utensil
- 5 Sandals or shoes of travelling saint
- 6 Chains, locks, or other accoutrements of a saint's imprisonment before his martyrdom

D6 CLASS III RELICS

- 1 Oil which has been poured over a genuine relic (roll on Class I table, optionally on subtable: PIECES PARTS OF THE HOLY, across)
- 2 Soil or stone from a saint's grave
- 3 Cobblestone from a street in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, etc.
- 4 Water from a spring created or used by a saint
- 5 Lamp oil from the lamps present at a saint's martyrdom
- 6 Box or container that once held a relic (roll on Class II table, optionally on subtable: PIECES PARTS OF THE HOLY, across)

The following is a list of relics: all actual items mentioned in sources. Pieces Parts of the Holy Roll id100 on the table. Most are Class I but some are Class II. To determine Class III relics, roll what they were once in contact with.

D100 RELIC

- 1 the head and chasuble of St. Vitalis of Assisi
- 2 the chasuble of St. Peter
- 3 a finger of St. Andrew
- 4 thumb of St. Thomas
- 5 hem of Joseph's coat of Many Colors
- 6 phial of sweat from St. Michael, collected after his struggle with Satan
- 7 slippers worn by Enoch before the Flood
- 8 pap-spoon used to feed baby Jesus
- 9 St. Landry of Paris's burial shroud
- 10 thorns from the Crown of Thorns
- 11 a finger of the Holy Ghost
- 12 a coal used to broil St. Lawrence
- 13 skull, arm, and fingers of St. Paul Aurelian
- 14 cloak of of St. Joseph the carpenter
- 15 walking stick of St. Joseph the carpenter
- 16 hammer of St. Joseph the carpenter
- 17 ring and cross of St. Colletta or St. Nicoletta (presented to her by an apparition of St. John the Evangelist)
- 18 breast milk of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 19 St. Peter's prison chains
- 20 leg of the ass ridden by Jesus
- 21 head of John the Baptist
- 22 a rib of Jesus
- 23 tear shed by Jesus over Lazarus' grave
- 24 a water pot from the wedding feast at Cana
- 25 flame from the Burning Bush
- 26 the face of a seraph, lacking only the nose
- 27 bloody stone thrown at St. Stephen
- 28 painting of Mary made by St. Luke
- 29 swaddling clothes and hay from the nativity manger
- 30 sword and shield of St. Michael the Archangel
- 31 St. Veronica's veil with Christ's image
- 32 a stone cast at St. Sebastian
- 33 the belt of St. Joseph the carpenter
- 34 a lock of St. Mary Magdalene's hair
- 35 a tooth of St. Paul the Apostle
- 36 a ray of the star of Bethlehem
- 37 some bones of St. Cosmas, martyr
- 38 some bones of St. Damian, martyr
- 39 a bone of St. Wandregesilus, abbot and confessor
- 40 bones of St. Augustine
- 41 bone of blessed Leo, pope and confessor
- 42 a tooth of St. Sampson, bishop
- 43 some dust of St. Discipulus
- 44 a bone of St. Honoratus
- 45 some bones of St. Remigius, bishop
- 46 some bones of St. Germanus, bishop
- 47 some bones of St. Machutus
- 48 some bones of St. Wulfran
- 49 some bones of St. Martinian
- 50 some bones of St. Anastasius, martyr
- 51 some bones of St. Margaret, virgin

RELIC

- 52 a bone of St. Opportuna, virgin
- 53 a bone of St. Amalburga, virgin
- 54 a bone of St. Satildis, queen
- 55 a bone of Keyneburga, virgin
- 56 some of the hairs of St. Alburga, virgin
- 57 some hairs of St. Barbara, virgin
- 58 pieces of clothes of St. Aldegunda, virgin
- 59 three fingers of St. Alban the Protomartyr of England
- 60 two teeth of St. Alban
- 61 some bones of St. Cyriacus, priest and martyr
- 62 three teeth of St. Cyriacus
- 63 some bones of St. Gervasius, martyr
- 64 some bones of St. Protasius, martyr
- 65 some dust of St. Pancras, martyr
- 66 some bones of St. Adrian, martyr
- 67 some bones of St. Christopher, martyr
- 68 some dust of St. Crispin, martyr
- 69 a bone of St. Pantaleon
- 70 some dust of St. Lambert, martyr
- 71 some vestments of of St. Lambert
- 72 a bone of St. Sixtus, pope
- 73 some of the beard of St. Cuthbert, bishop and confessor
- 74 some vestments of St. Cuthbert
- 75 some bones of St. Gregory the Great, pope
- 76 one tooth of of St. Gregory
- 77 some bones of St. Stephen, pope
- 78 some bones of St. Wyngunaloc, abbot and confessor
- 79 some dust of St. Sebastian, martyr
- 80 a rib of the blessed St. Apollinaris of Ravenna, martyr
- 81 some dust of St. Apollinaris of Ravenna
- 82 a bone of St. Firmin, martyr and bishop
- 83 a bone of St. Quintin, martyr
- 84 a piece of the Lord's sepulchre
- 85 a piece of the manger of the Lord
- 86 part of the column to which our Lord was bound when He was scourged
- 87 piece of the tomb upon which the angel sat upon
- 88 piece of the stone upon which Christ stood when He ascended into heaven
- 89 a piece of Moses' rod which budded
- 90 part of the stone upon which the Lord stood in Galilee
- 91 piece of the table at which the Lord ate the supper with an olive branch
- 92 a piece of the prison from which the angel of the lord delivered the blessed apostle Peter
- 93 some of the clothes made by St. Mary, the mother of our Lord
- 94 a piece of the pall which is over the Lord's sepulchre
- 95 some of the hair of St. Anne, the mother of St. Mary
- 96 some of the clothes of St. Elias
- 97 some of the clothes of St. Mary and Martha her sister
- 98 some of the clothes of St. Saphie, the virgin
- 99 some of the dust of St. Benedicta
- 100 St. Patrick's staff

More Possible Relics

The following are suitable relics, based on the areas of favor, martyrdom, and legends of saints, but are not in our sources.

D30 RELIC

- 1 St. Agatha’s severed breasts
- 2 St. Albertus Magnus’ head
- 3 St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s tongue
- 4 St. Brendan the Navigator’s oar
- 5 St. Canute’s knees
- 6 St. Cecilia’s lyre
- 7 St. Cuthbert’s incorrupt corpse
- 8 St. Daniel the Stylite’s crooked backbone
- 9 St. Dympna’s skull
- 10 St. Edmund’s incorrupt corpse
- 11 a stone cast at St. Sebastian
- 12 St. Egwin’s ankles
- 13 Chains used to confine St. Egwin
- 14 St. Genevieve’s candle
- 15 St. George’s sword-hand
- 16 Some coals from the furnace that could not burn Holy Youth Ananias
- 17 St. Hilarion’s begging bowl
- 18 Feathers of some of St. Hilda’s birds
- 19 St. Isidore of Seville’s psalm books
- 20 Thorns that pierced St. Jerome
- 21 St. Mungo/Kentigern’s ring
- 22 St. Nicholas’s shoes
- 23 St. Giles’s door
- 24 Bits of St. Oswald of Northumbria (he was dismembered in battle and scattered, so there are many relics)
- 25 Pelvis bone of St. Ursula
- 26 St. Thomas Becket’s skull (with gaping wound)
- 27 St. Lucia’s eyes
- 28 Arms of St. George
- 29 Scapula of Pope Marinus (or any pope)
- 30 Instruments from the martyrdom of St. Margaret of Antioch



HEAD RELIQUARY OF ST. EUSTACE
British Museum

When placing treasures in hoards, especially those held by men or intelligent monsters, you might substitute a reliquary for jewelry and/or secular magic items. Here are some actual reliquaries from history you might use:

Hoards & Reliquaries

- D8 RELIQUARY
- 1

Jeweled, silver-gilt reliquaries in the shape of an arm (e.g. the bones of SS. Simeon, Blase, Bartholomew, George, Wulfstan, Richard, Roman, Gregory the Pope, Hugh, Mildred, and Edburga all were so housed)
- 2

Gilded and/or enameled silver head (e.g. SS. Blasé, Furse, Austroberta)
- 3

Gold cross pendant containing a consecrated Host
- 4

Jeweled amulet containing class I relics (dust, teeth, or hair)
- 5

Silver cross pendant containing a class III relic
- 6

A stone coffer housing a class I relic and with openings to pour liquids through and create class III relics
- 7

A small box, carved from ivory and encrusted with semi-precious stones, to hold some small Class II object, such as a saint’s girdle-book or crucifix
- 8

A chest of ivory, decorated with a crucifix and containing many objects (roll 2d6 times on the PIECES PARTS OF THE HOLY table overleaf)

To generate a reliquary, use the following two tables. Roll once for shape and d4 times for decoration. To find the value, multiply the shape base value and each decoration value. Reliquaries shaped like body parts would presumably house remains of the same part.

Random Reliquaries

D8 RELIQUARY SHAPE (BASE VALUE)	D8 RELIQUARY DECORATION (MULTIPLIERS)
1 pendant (50)	1 garish paint (x .5)
2 cross (75)	2 inscriptions (x 1)
3 box (100)	3 relief carving or sculpture (x 1.5)
4 body part: extremity (120)	4 gilding (x 1.5)
5 body part: limb (150)	5 enamel (x 1.5)
6 orb (200)	6 silver (x2)
7 bust/head (300)	7 gold (x3)
8 feretrum (portable shrine) (400)	8 gems (x5)

For example: a simple stone ossuary with some inscriptions would be 100 (box) x 1 (inscriptions) = 100 SP in value; the Ark of the Magi, a feretrum (400) in gold (x3) with complex relief engraving (x1.5) and gems encrusting (x5) it is worth 400 x 1.5 x 3 x 5 = 9600 SP. These values of course are just the intrinsic value of the reliquaries as objets d’art; their extrinsic value as Class III relics will be much more, and if they still contain a relic would be equivalent to a magic item!

Shrine Booty: Ex-Voto

Apart from the reliquaries and relics themselves, shrines dedicated to saints, and the burial places of saints who have or have had shrines, may be filled with various objects left as votive offerings.

A popular shrine will have dozens or even hundreds of items. 3d6 x 10 of any item rolled, or 3d6 x 100 for the clay and wax items and coins, would be reasonable. Roll 10 items for an uncanonized or obscure holy person’s shrine; 20 for a popular local figure or a minor saint’s, and assume that a beloved local figure or major saint would have offerings of all the items below.

The table is based on a list of items inventoried by a papal delegation at the shrine of a not-yet canonized bishop in 1307: Thomas Cantilupe, bishop of Hereford and later canonized as a saint in 1320. The actual inventory had all of these types of items by the score or hundreds, some too numerous to count (including the ladies’ jewelry and the coins).

- D30 EX-VOTO
- 1

silver ships
- 2

wax ships
- 3

silver images of body parts and limbs
- 4

wax images of whole people
- 5

wax images of body parts and limbs
- 6

wax figures of horses, animals, and birds
- 7

clay figures of horses, animals, and birds
- 8

silver images of eyes, breasts, teeth, and ears
- 9

wax images of eyes, breasts, teeth, and ears
- 10

clay images of eyes, breasts, teeth, and ears
- 11

silk or linen children’s shifts
- 12

walking sticks left behind by cripples
- 13

silver figurines of carts or wheels
- 14

wax carts and wheels
- 15

large square candles
- 16

cloths of silk and gold
- 17

belts
- 18

gold rings
- 19

silver rings
- 20

gold brooches and pins
- 21

silver brooches and pins
- 22

precious stones
- 23

pieces of ladies’ jewelry
- 24

iron chains, locks, or shackles left by prisoners
- 25

anchors of ships
- 26

lances, spears, swords, and knives
- 27

shields and helmets
- 28

copper coins
- 29

silver coins
- 30

gold coins

Beyond the Levant: Relics in the Near East and Asia

Although the veneration of relics had pagan precedents, they became increasingly important in the Western or Roman Church in the 8th and 9th centuries, due to a number of factors including changes in Church law and an influx of refugees from the iconoclasm of the 8th century Eastern Church. Iconoclasm never completely rooted out the veneration of images and relics in the Eastern Church, but it did have a lasting suppression there.

But Christianity was not the only religion to save and honor relics. Islam - particularly the Sufi tradition - also has a tradition of keeping certain relics, such as the 600 items known as the “Sacred trust” in Istanbul, as well as honoring the tombs of certain relatives of the Prophet and of saints and visiting them in pilgrimage.

Relics associated with the Prophet Muhammad include his standard, mantle or coat, a seal, a large number of weapons and pieces of armor, sandals, a bowl, as well as two teeth and his beard. Hairs from the beard have at various times been separated and sent to different locations. Islamic relics also worked miracles. For example the scholar Ahmad ibn Hanbal had two hairs of the Prophet sewn into his garment, and this was enough to enable him to resist the torture intended to force him to recant certain doctrines in the 9th century.

More remotely, the Greco-Roman world had a number of relics associated with heroes and gods. However these were less important to the pagans than relics were to Christians and Muslims.

In addition, there is a vigorous tradition of keeping relics in Buddhism, so far-travelers might encounter relics in Eastern contexts as well. Buddhist shrines might house relics associated with the Buddha or various Bodhisattvas, and some monks went so far as to mummify themselves (in a now-banned process that begins before death and creates sokushinbutsu or “living mummies” that are thought to be in a deep and eternal state of meditation).

The incorrupt bodies of such monks are displayed in glass cases, or sealed inside statues, the rough equivalent of a whole-body reliquary. The Buddha’s tooth was venerated and considered a token of a king’s legitimacy, causing wars to be fought over it and noble families to convert to Buddhism.

Interestingly, the tooth also performed miracles whenever threatened with destruction by non-believers. Teeth, hairs, bone fragments, and items associated with the Buddha are scattered across the Buddhist world, mostly in Asia. Sarira are a special class of relics unique to Buddhism. These are pearl-like or crystalline beads retrieved from the cremains of Bodhisattvas, and reputed to ward off evil and perform minor miracles.

Hinduism has comparatively few relics, and pilgrimages in that religion are generally to sacred sites like Ganges or to temples and shrines dedicated to deities.

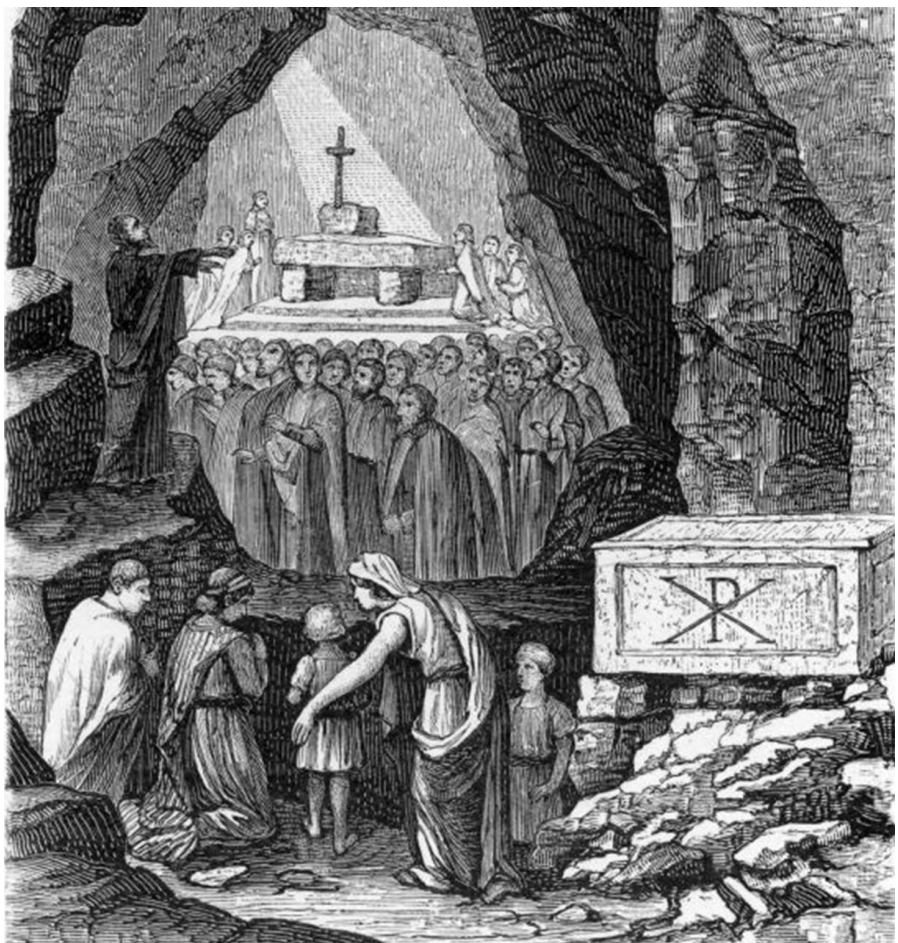
Into the

When I was a boy in Rome, and was being educated in liberal studies, I was accustomed, with others of like age and mind, to visit on Sundays the sepulchers of the apostles and martyrs. And often did I enter the crypts, deep dug in the earth, with their walls on either side lined with the bodies of the dead, where everything is so dark that it almost seems as if the psalmist's words were fulfilled: "Let them go down alive into Hell". Here and there the light, not entering through windows, but filtering down from above through shafts, relieves the horror of darkness. But again, as one cautiously moves forward, the black night closes round, and there comes to mind the line of Virgil: "Surrounding horrors all my soul affright / and more, the dreadful silence of the night."

- St. Jerome

Mausoleums, tumuli, crypts, and sepulchres... any of these might house relics and treasures waiting to be discovered or recovered by adventurers, or conceal other, darker secrets. However this chapter will focus on catacombs. In some cases crypts and ossuaries may be connected to catacombs, and mausoleums might conceivably be entrances to catacombs as well. Sepulchers would normally be much older than catacombs, while tumuli would be located in wilder areas that did not develop catacombs.

Christians worshipping in a catacomb, with an evident Chi Rho, a recurring motif symbol of the Christ. A romantic image inspired by persecution fantasies.



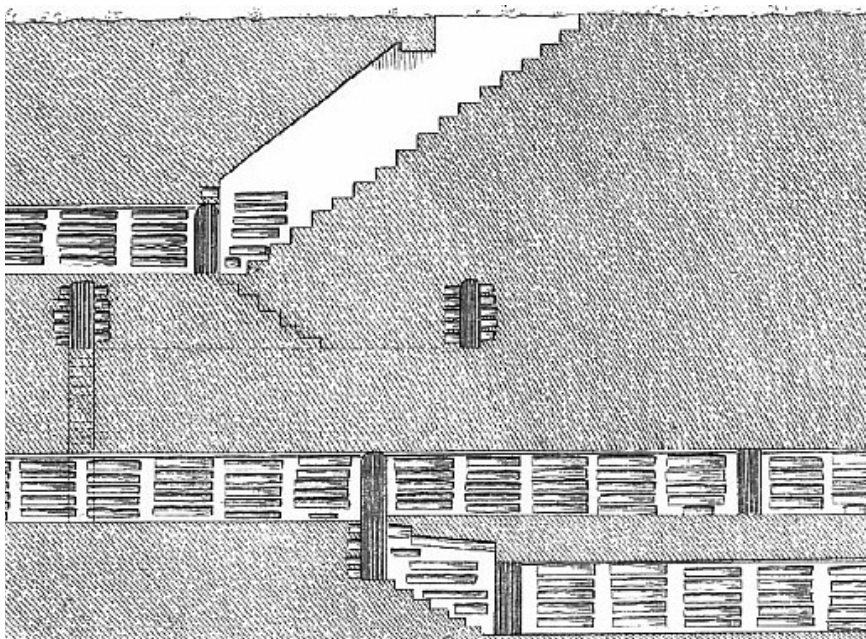
Catacombs

Throughout history, burials usually would be in holes dug in the ground (as we still do today) or use a cave. Extensive underground excavation purely for burial purposes is not practical, therefore burials would normally be the secondary use of existing excavations, or be down in natural cavern systems. The largest catacombs began as quarries.

The catacombs of Paris, which were not used as catacombs until the 18th century, were originally limestone quarries, twenty meters beneath the city. Similarly the Roman catacombs were originally cut to mine soft volcanic rock beds. These rocks were called tufo and pozzolano (the former being the harder type). Tufo was used for building stone, and pozzolano was mixed with lime to make cement. Both products were in high demand for the massive building programs of Rome and because they were conveniently located beneath the site of the city, the quarries were dug there.

The Romans unceremoniously dumped the bodies of slaves, criminals, and paupers into these quarry shafts, and added layers of lime to speed decomposition and reduce odor. These pits and wells would remain piled deep with dozens, scores, even hundreds of skeletons in disarray. Many of these remain open and the visitor to Roman-era catacombs will see a chaos of bones lying in heaps. Later on, the poor and religious minorities (including Jews and Christians) began to use other parts of the quarries for burial.

Origins of Catacombs



Cross section of part of the catacombs of St. Sebastian in Rome. The arrangement of tiers of loculi, typical of Roman catacombs, is clearly shown. Originally four levels deep, the first level has been destroyed by traffic and visitors.

The Rise & Decline of Catacombs

The Romans began burying rather than cremating their dead in the 2nd century CE. Most burials in the catacombs date from the 4th and 5th century CE - after Rome officially converted to Christianity. By the 6th century, use of catacombs for burials began to be supplanted by more conventional church and churchyard burials; the last catacomb burials were probably before 550 CE. From this time forward, the catacombs were pilgrimage destinations.

Early medieval pilgrim guidebooks called “itineraries” listed shrines and holy sites to visit, and included several Roman catacombs; however pilgrims would enter the catacombs only at entrances near the shrines and generally did not traverse the tunnels. Legends arose of pilgrims, adventurers, and thieves becoming lost in the catacombs, and there was even a *typos* (folkloric convention) that those lost in the catacombs were likely to have spiritual experiences, visions, or conversions. Pilgrimages to Rome’s catacombs peaked before 750 CE, and the translation of relics out of the catacombs and into church altars and other shrines in the 9th century contributed to the decline of catacombs as a destination. As the Middle Ages wore on, the catacombs became less and less popular among pilgrims.

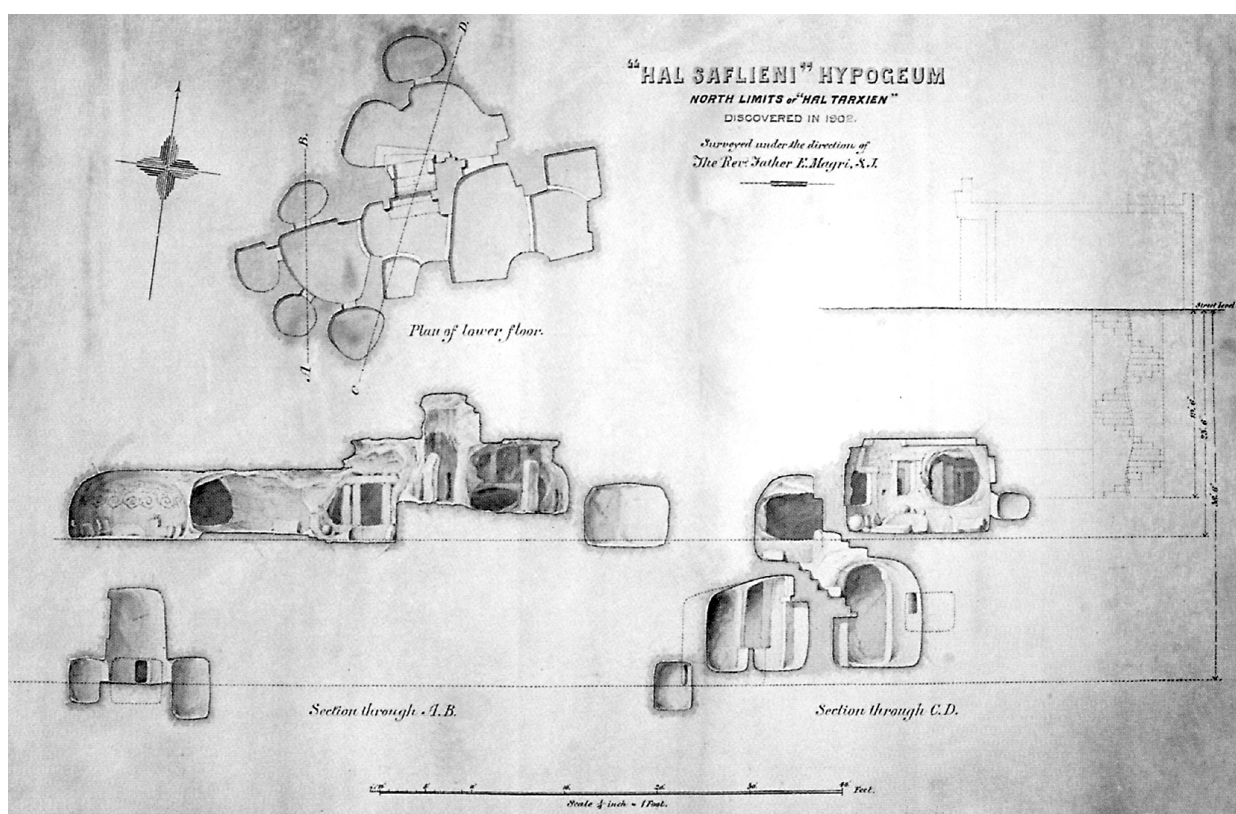
Rome had around sixty separate catacomb complexes, but after the relics of saints began to be translated out of the catacombs and into churches, the catacombs fell increasingly into disuse. Monks continued to visit and use the catacombs, but few others came. Only few were still known by the end of the medieval period, and only because those were directly connected to church basements or crypts. In the 14th century, the removal of the papacy to Avignon and the general decline in religious life in Rome led to the final “forgetting” of the catacombs. There were not enough priests in Rome to maintain all the shrines, cemeteries, and catacombs, and by 1450 only the catacomb of St. Domitilla was still known.

Occasionally a catacomb might be discovered by accident due to earthquakes, landslides, excavations, or collapses. Such discoveries might be explored by thrill-seekers, looted by treasure-hunters, or filled-in and forgotten. In times of plague, the catacombs of some Italian cities were re-opened to receive mass burials, which were dumped with little or no ceremony and covered with lime.

Over time areas collapsed or filled with debris; the soft rock crumbled into sand, blocking whole passages and sections for centuries. New construction might also close off older passages as debris and excavated rock were piled in old corridors. Some catacombs even have sections that are now underwater, such as the third level of catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa in Egypt.

The Catacombs of Malta

The island of Malta has a vast folklore for so small a place, and its catacombs have many strange legends as well. The catacombs of St. Agatha were cut from limestone in the second and third century CE and are known to cover a few thousand square yards, with a large refrigerum table and nearby underground basilica. Another large catacomb, called the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni, was discovered in modern times and according to legend, it held tens of thousands of skeletons. The catacombs were cut into natural caverns and described as consisting of at least three levels. It is rumored that these catacombs extend vast distances underground and even past the beaches of the island, under the sea-bed. Tales include a group of students supposedly disappeared in this complex, and were never found, but their wails and cries are still heard coming from the ground all over the island, and someone spotting a long file of large, hairy humanoids walking through the caves, and when they were noticed, they raised their palms and a wind snuffed out her candle. Then, in the darkness, some other creature, wet and slimy, brushed by.



Catacombs of the World

Extensive underground burial complexes similar to the Roman catacombs have been found in various regions of the world. An Egyptian tomb complex now simply called "KV5" has over 120 rooms and corridors, and is rather well documented. In North America, the catacombs of Casa Malpais, an ancient Pueblo site, were dug into existing caverns and caves. Chambers 100 feet long and 50 feet high have been found, housing tombs and graves. A massive Egyptian catacomb was reportedly found beneath the Grand Canyon in the early 20th century, with hundreds of rooms and corridors and various Egyptian artifacts and mummies. Though this is now discounted as a hoax, it might make a good adventure site!

The Architecture of Catacombs

Adventures involving catacombs should emphasize the unique features of catacombs, which differ significantly from standard fantasy “dungeons” in some ways but share commonalities with them. Because catacombs were often built in existing mine work, the layout is chaotic, with passages leading nowhere, shafts connecting levels and chambers.

Catacombs are unlike most “dungeons” though because they have relatively few rooms in proportion to hallways, frequently have shafts to the surface to let in light and fresh air, and are unlikely to contain conventional treasure hoards of gold and gems.

ENTRANCES. The entrances to the catacombs, and access to second or deeper levels, could be by stairs, ramps, or shafts. The ground-level entrances were often overgrown by weeds, bushes, or even trees after they fell into disuse and traffic became lighter. Many catacombs have multiple entrances from the surface. Some are entered from the basements of churches, mausoleums, or other buildings.

LOCULI. The most obvious and defining feature of a catacomb is of course the burial places which honeycomb the halls and rooms. The most common burial place was a *loculus* (plural, *loculi*) - a simple chamber, just large enough to hold a body, carved into the walls. There were usually three to five stacked layers of loculi carved into the walls of the hallways throughout. Each loculus was normally sealed or walled up and some inscription or decoration was left to memorialize those buried within.

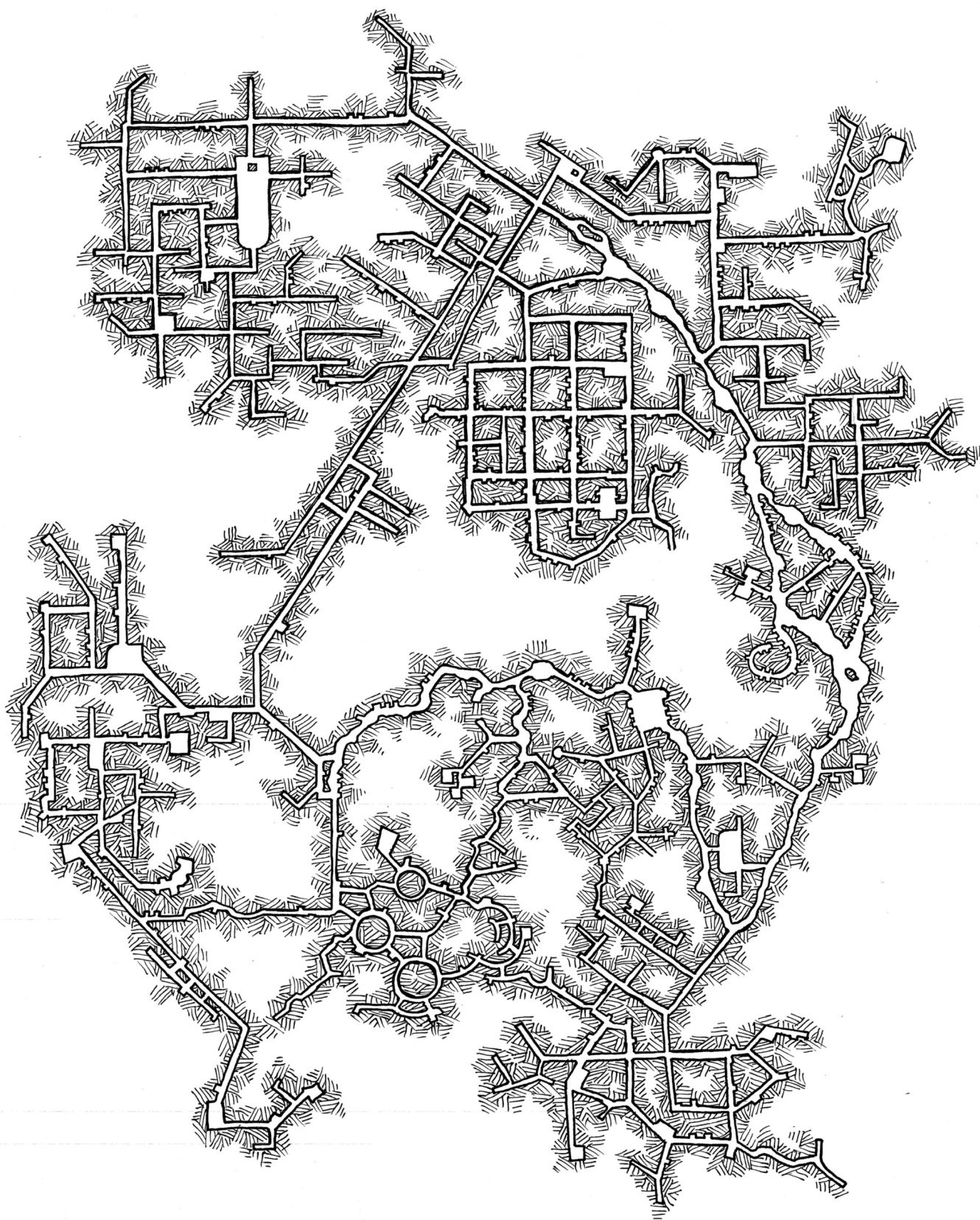
During the barbarian invasions, many Roman loculi were broken open and looted, but some are sealed even to this day. A loculus usually had one body in it, but sometimes couples or whole families were placed together in one. When dug into the floor rather than a wall, these simple graves were called *formae*.

The excavation of the catacomb passages was actually relatively easy and many passages were widened by successive users, and nooks or crypts for receiving bodies could be added to the walls as needed.

HALLWAYS. The hallways are usually less than five feet wide and perhaps as little as three feet wide. The passages, if long-neglected, might be so low that one must stoop or even crawl, but more typically they are high enough to walk upright, and the average would be 7 to 10 feet high. The tight confines of these hallways will often force adventurers to walk single file and make the use of some weapons difficult or impossible. Sometimes halls were expanded downward by excavating the floor to create more space for loculi and such halls could be over twenty feet from floor to ceiling. Most catacombs have larger central hallways or galleries that can be more than ten feet wide and often 150 or more yards long. Such galleries usually have many smaller hallways and chambers running out of them, often branching perpendicularly in a “fishbone” pattern.

CHAMBERS. The chambers, or cubicula, were square or rectangular rooms that might hold larger tombs, and were usually better decorated with paintings. Cubicula started to appear in the 3rd century and usually hold the wealthy or those with high rank in the Church. The walls could have simple loculi or more elaborate semicircular niches that hold sarcophagus-like bins for the body. Cubicula could be fairly large, perhaps fifteen feet across and with higher, vaulted ceilings. The more extravagant cubicula had luminare or skylights (openings to the surface to allow in light). As time went on, cubicula were made larger and more elaborately decorated. They also used more complicated shapes, such as circular, cruciform, or polygons.

LIGHTING. Most catacombs had shafts running to the surface, originally for removing excavated rock and left open for light. These would be widely spaced to create an effect of large areas of darkness punctuated by areas of light. Cubicula with luminare sometimes also had marble facades to help reflect and magnify light, as well as provide a space for decorative reliefs, inscriptions, and paintings. Windows and ventilation shafts may provide air and light in the topmost levels of the catacombs, but deeper levels are pitch dark and stifling. The narrowness of the hallways would make artificial lighting like torches difficult to exploit.



A catacomb combining various common features by Dyson Logos.

The Extent & Variety of Catacombs

The catacombs of larger cities could extend for miles and even stretch beyond the city limits. Private catacombs however might have to be limited by above-ground property lines (which is good news for mappers!) The layout could be very confusing, with few right angles and many intersections just slightly off of being square. Because they originated as mines, many passages show no plan at all and there are many dead ends. Later additions from the Christian era onward tend to be larger and better planned, and some catacombs were planned to be tombs from the start and show a high degree of organization, planning, and efficient use of space.

While the Roman catacombs are perhaps the best known, there were many catacombs in other places, mostly around the Mediterranean. Sicily, Naples, Tunisia, and Malta all have well-documented catacombs. These mostly lack the long galleries of Rome's catacombs, having larger open chambers instead. Rather than loculi, they may have deep niches called *arcosolium* which were slowly filled with up to twenty burials. However, some followed the Roman patterns and even exceeded them: the catacombs of Syracuse include galleries with up to fourteen layers of loculi from floor to ceiling.

To create a catacomb map, include some or all of these features:

- ✚ Multiple entrances from the surface, some concealed or blocked
- ✚ At least one and preferably 3-5 levels
- ✚ Quarry shafts connecting multiple levels
- ✚ Stairs connecting levels
- ✚ Networks of hallways, with multiple perpendicular hallways branching off them and a number of rooms, usually clustered at the ends of hallways
- ✚ Large hallways or galleries 10 to 15 feet wide, but most not more than 5 feet wide
- ✚ Rooms range from modest 10x10 cubacula to cavernous chambers including banquet areas, chapels, or other special features
- ✚ The wall space of most halls and rooms might be filled with loculi, each a potential trap, hazard, source of treasure, or hiding place for a monster! The floors of chambers might also have loculi embedded in them
- ✚ Some rooms and hallways have shafts or skylights to let in daylight
- ✚ The ceilings in halls and rooms range from 6 to 20 feet high (high hallways will have been dug deeper to make room for more loculi and these will reach the ceiling; rooms will have been given taller ceilings for important persons)
- ✚ Generally no doors (gates and doors were added later to keep visitors out of certain areas, so if the catacomb has them it would be because at some point they were places of pilgrimage or tourism)
- ✚ Halls and shafts might be blocked up and halls can end very abruptly
- ✚ On the other hand hallways might connect with other hallways to form circuits and loops
- ✚ The plan may not be square and despite the rough fishbone layout there may be few or no right angles

The People You Find in Catacombs

The FOSSORES were the special caste of workers who operated the catacombs. They dug loculi and burial chambers, added or extended hallways, sealed off full sections, interred the dead and sealed their loculi, and even added decorations like mosaics, frescos, inscriptions, and reliefs. Their work could range from crude to exquisite.

The fossores appear to have been clergy, at least in the sense that they were paid by the Church. Some may have also worked as above-ground grave diggers, and period sources also accuse some of robbing older graves. They seem to have a certain amount of power within the catacombs, possibly owning keys to some locked gates within, but they were also among the lowest classes in Rome, and at one point joined the gladiators and charioteers in a revolt.

The typical fossore would carry most of his job's gear on him and they may be identified in art and decorations in the catacomb by their trappings: a pick for digging, a basket to carry away debris, and a lantern on a chain (to hang from the iron spikes they placed throughout the hallways). They wore simple tunics, further identifying them as menial laborers. The profession saw its sunset in the 5th century when the catacombs began to be abandoned for good.

The persecution of HERETICS by medieval Christians did result in some sects using the catacombs as a base or hideout. The Joaneli, a brotherhood originally formed for pious devotions, met in the catacombs of St. Sebastian to plot against their enemies.

TOURISTS AND GUIDES as custodians of churches and shrines located near catacombs would offer their services as guides to pilgrims, the curious, and thrill-seekers. Later local peasants and merchants might do the same. Medieval visitors complained of the stench, darkness, and dangers of the catacombs. The stifling air was said to cause confusion and panic. Stories of explorers getting lost or disappearing forever were often told and the danger became part of the appeal for thrill-seekers.

TRESPASSERS AND REFUGEES, since the Romans (or at least Cicero) believed that sorcerers and witches worked black magic in the catacombs. Fugitives from justice might seek safety in the catacombs as well. There were also cases of people being kidnapped and brought to the catacombs to be murdered, which eventually led the Romans to seal off the catacombs to keep criminals and other undesirables from using them as bases of operations. Naturally the catacombs would be good places to meet such folks, and this could spark random encounters or whole adventures in your game. The catacombs of Naples were reputed to be the haunt of robbers who preyed on pilgrims during the Middle Ages.

Because of these disreputable users of the catacombs, the Christians who used them later acquired some of the same taint. (They were accused by pagans of despising humanity, blaspheming the gods, and being disloyal to the emperor; the Eucharist was sensationalized as cannibalism and blood-drinking.) However the evidence suggests that the catacombs were not used as a refuge or place of worship by the Christians but simply as cemeteries. The chapels and baptismal fonts were used on occasion for memorial services and funerals but did not serve as replacements for above-ground worship. The myth of Christians hiding in the catacombs is an invention of much later writers.

LIVESTOCK AND LOOTERS: from the fifth century onward, the catacombs of Rome fell into disuse. Barbarians looted them in the 5th century; by the 6th the building of catacombs was in steep decline. The Visigoths, when they looted Rome, stabled animals in the catacombs. In the year 609 CE, 28 wagon-loads of relics were removed to the Parthenon at the order of the pope. In the mid-8th century the Lombards conducted a major sacking of the Roman catacombs. This marked the beginning of large-scale translations of relics to churches and shrines that continued into the 9th century, in part because the catacombs were simply not defensible. By the late 9th century the catacombs were being abandoned and the saints' relics were mostly to be found in churches.

The Traps You Find in Catacombs

Traps in underground complexes are of course a trope of fantasy games, and one might think that ancient tombs would have been trapped in real life, but generally speaking this is not so. The pyramids were supposed to have a number of perils — falling blocks, rooms filling with sand, and pitfalls. The reality is that the massive blocks and sand-filled chambers were not traps that were set to “go off” on robbers. The portcullis blocks and sand were put in place to seal the tombs, and would be already sprung before anyone entered the tombs to rob them. The pit traps were actually wells to redirect storm runoff and prevent chambers and halls from being flooded in the rare but occasional flooding of the desert. They might pose a hazard, of course, as a tomb robber could stumble into one and fall to his death. Other hazards real tomb-robbers, er, archaeologists, did encounter included bat droppings (which accumulate and provide a habitat for fungi whose spores did cause disease and death) and layers of hematite dust (which if disturbed and breathed in would damage the lungs). The bat droppings were not planned, and whether the hematite was purposefully placed as trap or residue from disintegrated decorations is unclear. The tomb of the Chinese emperor Qin is reputed to have hair-trigger crossbow traps, but even if they really were put in place the likelihood of them working is probably nil: the bows would lose tension, the bow strings would deteriorate, and the mechanisms would corrode or fail after a time. There were also said to be rivers of mercury in his tomb, and the mercury levels in the soil around the tomb really is elevated so that might be a hazard, but the rivers were meant to be decorations, not traps. Indeed the main defenses in place, in real word tombs, were just propaganda warning that there were traps, and curses/taboo placed on the tombs.

Many loculi were sealed with what we might call indirect curses: prayers and warnings appealing to the viewer’s piety, begging that they leave the tombs alone lest they endanger their souls. Pre-Christian burials frequently had more direct threats, the most famous of which being those laid on the Egyptian pharaohs’ tombs. Some of the magical protections were directed against supernatural threats rather than tomb-robbers. In medieval Sudan archaeologists recently opened some sealed crypts in a monastery that had been protected by having the loculi covered with plaster, and the plaster inscribed with Coptic prayers, amulets, and cryptograms invoking various angels and spirits, as well a spell for banishing evil spirits.

In a fantasy game, curses and spells would be obvious defenses for tombs. They can add some anxiety (“winged death will strike you”), time constraints (“in one hour the tomb will be sealed forever”), and panic. Perhaps specific actions, like opening a loculus, will trigger portcullises or doors to close; there could be a delay of some small interval to make escape possible. Curse inscriptions can give clues to other traps. Or conceal them.

In campaigns set in the Middle Ages, the opportunities for tomb-robbing are varied, and would focus on treasure-hunting and relic “recovery.” Adventurers might disturb barrows or other pagan tumuli for treasure or to search for the relics of early missionaries in northern lands. Crusaders were reputed to have excavated tombs and temples in the Holy Land — the Knights Templar famously were rumored to have found King Solomon’s treasures under the site of his temple. Relic-hunters made a business of robbing sepulchers in the holy land, the catacombs of Rome, and other burial sites. It’s not unreasonable to suppose tomb-robbers might set up traps and alarms at these places too.

In places like Egypt where tombs were routinely robbed, the robbers set alarms and traps to ward off the competition. Simple deadfalls of rocks placed over doorways and triggered by wires would be practical, as would lightly covering wells, shafts, or other holes to turn them into real traps. Supposedly, razor sharp wires would be placed in passages at neck-level to cut or even decapitate the unwary; the effectiveness of these might seem dubious, unless they were coupled with alarms or other devices that might panic someone into running blindly down the passages. All of these devices were reputed to be placed in ancient Egyptian tombs by robbers, since a single tomb might be robbed repeatedly over time. It took a lot of labor to reopen the sealed passages and some tombs were filled with far too much to be completely looted in a single expedition. Much later, in early modern times, grave-robbers were warded off with special guns triggered by tripwires. These were adaptations of illegal traps used to keep poachers out of private parks. Iron grates and heavy slabs of stone placed over grave sites were used to discourage grave-robbers, and alarms were sometimes rigged on important or wealthy people’s graves in churchyards by running a wire from the grave site to the bell tower of a church.

The tables later in this chapter assume that a tomb-robbing subculture exists and catacombs are sometimes defended by robbers, much like the tomb-robbing subculture of ancient Egypt.

The Decor You Find in Catacombs



The Chi-Rho

A variety of decorations were used in ancient tombs, and catacombs were usually well-decorated too. Wall paintings, frescos, carved reliefs, and mosaics were frequently used to depict the deceased, their journey to the afterlife, and the gods and other religious motifs.

The walls of halls and chambers were often plastered to provide a foundation for painting, and sometimes the frescoes and paintings were defaced when fossores cut new loculi into them. When Christians began to make pilgrimages to the catacombs, additional decorations were added, and renovations made.

The Christian catacombs were decorated with various religious images and inscriptions. They also had nooks for oil lamps to provide light. Less-used burial places would not, of course, have light sources readily available. The loculi might have no decoration, or maybe just a name and hopes eternal repose, in marked and intentional contrast to pagan tombs and loculi, often giving biographical details, portraits, and so on. Sometimes coins, portraits painted on glass, or other items (such as children’s dolls) were pressed into the mortar that sealed the loculi. Other seals had lamps cemented to them, presumably for devotional lighting.

As time went on more elaborate inscriptions were used, with pious statements and prayers accompanying names. Images of fish and anchors, and other Christian images such as trees, leaves, and doves, were fairly common, as was the Chi Rho (a fused capital Chi and Rho, from the Greek ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, Christos), Christograms (combinations of IHS, JHS, or IHC to represent Jesus’ name), and so on. Pagan and Christian loculi alike might have admonitions not to disturb the tomb. Pagan inscriptions were more likely to threaten a direct curse while Christian inscriptions would usually just appeal Christian fellowship (“Good brothers, in the name of God, do not disturb this stone”).

Priests and monks began to decorate catacombs and build shrines dedicated to particular saints buried there. This helped attract pilgrims, which generated income and increased the locality’s prestige. Priests also wrote graffiti on the walls to record or tally the masses and memorials held in the catacombs, or just to leave a mark and relieve boredom like all graffitists.

The criminals, magicians, and other underworld types who used the catacombs would also leave inscriptions or graffiti, paintings, and other decorations, possibly in code.

Extremely crowded burial places might have decorative assemblies of bones, like the famous walls of bones in Paris’s catacombs. Skulls and the ends of leg bones form a front facade, while smaller bones are piled in disarray behind them, out of sight. There are famous ossuaries in eastern Europe where the bones have been assembled into gates, chandeliers, and other intricate designs by the monks charged with tending them.



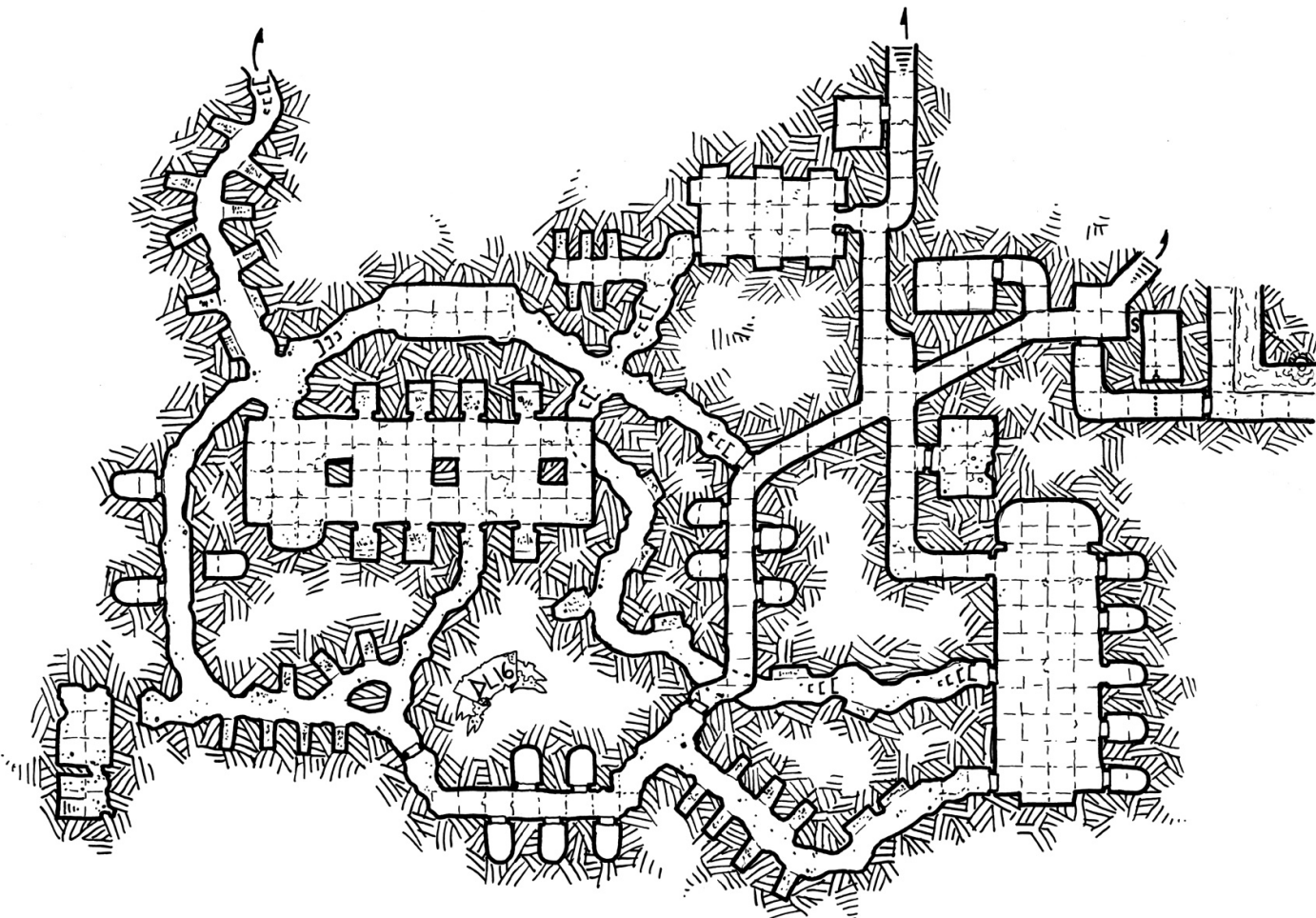
A reconstruction by De Rossi of the Crypt of the Popes, with evident loculi and luminare, Catacombs of Saint Callisto, Rome.

Catacomb Tables
Section I
Catacomb Layout

The following tables could be used to create and fill rooms and passages randomly, but are meant more as a spur to your own imagination.

I am not including obvious underground features like dripping water or vermin, nor standard dungeon dressing and traps. Likewise I see no point in placing the undead and things that feed on corpses in the encounter suggestions; that goes without saying.

Since catacombs generally have dozens or hundreds of loculi in a given passage, it doesn't make a lot of sense to try to stock each one. Instead, roll for interesting finds once per turn (for more or less undisturbed areas) or once per hour (for frequented, disturbed, or looted areas) on the tables for Traps and Encounters in section II.



A catacomb by Dyson Logos. Three entrances lead to the surface, and in the upper right sewers or an aquaduct are visible. There is a mixture of natural caves with side cubicola and crypts and more structured, dug chambers and rooms.

Use this table to spur your own designs. This can also be used when new areas of the catacombs are discovered.

Neighbourhoods in the Catacombs

D8 NEIGHBOURHOOD

- 1 Repurposed mines: narrow passages in herringbone pattern
- 2 Repurposed mines: wide central passage with narrow side passages
- 3 Repurposed mines: many short intersecting passages with no patterns
- 4 Repurposed mines: including shaft to the surface, and one or more large pits
- 5 Purposely dug crypts: passages with multiple burial chambers
- 6 Purposely dug crypts: special chambers (table overleaf) and funerary chapel, with entryway from the surface or level above
- 7 Basement of nearby church, temple, or cathedral
- 8 Natural caves

DI2 HALLWAY DECORATIONS

- 1 Oil lamps, some still filled, in nooks
- 2 Painting of pagan mythology
- 3 Paintings of gladiatorial fighters
- 4 Painting of Biblical scenes
- 5 Occult decorations - showing pagan, heresy, or secular design
- 6 Inscription (see table overleaf)
- 7 Crystal phials (used in pagan times to catch the tears of mourners and left in the crypts, but reinterpreted as saint's tears in Christian times)
- 8 Pendant with portrait stuck in the mortar of a loculus
- 9 Loculi with items pressed into the mortar sealing the tomb (roll on Offerings chart)
- 10 Crypts in floor (formae)
- 11 Hallway ends abruptly
- 12 Hallway fully bricked over, closing off full, disused, or dangerous gallery

Catacomb Dressing:
Decorations for
Hallways,
Chambers,
Cubicola
et al.

D8 CHAMBERS & CUBICULA DECORATION

- 1 Carved benches, stools, table, and throne
- 2 Formae in the floor
- 3 Extensive frescos
- 4 Ceiling opens to a shaft to the surface (*luminare*)
- 5 Well carved into floor, which opens to lower level
- 6 Inscriptions (see table overleaf)
- 7 Bas relief scenes on the walls
- 8 Sconces for lighting

Special Chambers

By far the majority of cubicula would simply have multiple burials, but this table provides for the more unusual chambers.

D30 CHAMBER DESCRIPTION

- 1 Simple chapel with small altar and nooks for lamps or candles
- 2 Grand chapel with altar, small chandelier, and pews carved from the rock
- 3 Treasury with various valuables including a reliquary
- 4 Storage room used by fossori (contains picks, candles, hammer and chisel, buckets)
- 5 Storage room used by miners, now just debris and junk
- 6 Storage room used by robbers - entrance is trapped or barred, contains hammers, bags, and debris
- 7 Ossuary chamber with old bones in crates
- 8 Ossuary chamber with old bones carefully stacked
- 9 Ossuary chamber with old bones carelessly piled up
- 10 Embalming room for allowing corpses to drain/dry out on counters along the walls
- 11 Embalming room with tables for processing & dressing corpses
- 12 Burial room of a pious noble, lavishly decorated
- 13 Burial room of a church official
- 14 Burial room for a saint, with many votive offerings in nooks
- 15 Baptismal chamber, with fonts filled by piped-in water
- 16 Modest banquet chamber (for refrigerium and commemorations) with small table and stools carved from the rock)
- 17 Banquet chamber with benches, table, and a well, all carved from the rock
- 18 Grand banquet room with tables, benches, and a throne-like seat for the deceased
- 19 Hall of statues - commemorative figures of local notables
- 20 Hall of statues - idols from pagan times
- 21 Shrine for a saint, with relics and offerings
- 22 Communal burial room with multiple crypts/formae/loculi for local noble family
- 23 Communal burial room with multiple crypts/formae/loculi for the masters of a guild
- 24 Communal burial room with multiple crypts/formae/loculi for an order of friars
- 25 Room desecrated by some cult, coven, or heretical sect - stains, graffiti, debris, etc.
- 26 Room apparently used by teenagers for partying - stains, graffiti, debris, etc.
- 27 Unfinished cubicula
- 28 Heavily frescoed funeral chamber from pagan times
- 29 Collapsed cubicula, opening to the surface or a deeper level
- 30 Chamber inhabited by a hermit

D20 SCRIPTA MANENT

- 1 Religious declaration, Christian
- 2 Religious declaration, Jewish
- 3 Religious declaration, Christian heresy
- 4 Religious declaration, pagan
- 5 Coded message (identifying the corpse as a martyr, heretic, etc.)
- 6 Vulgar graffiti written by criminal passing through
- 7 Graffiti (“[name] was here”, “Rebibbia Regna” or simile)
- 8 Graffiti declaring love/undying devotion
- 9 Extensive biography of a gladiator, slave, or commoner
- 10 RIP [name]
- 11 Curse for any who disturb the grave
- 12 Series of messages left by a loved one over many visits
- 13 Illiterate scribbles that defy deciphering
- 14 Number or letter inscribed by a fossori for reference
- 15 Graffiti indicating that this is the meeting place
- 16 Left by visitor, mentioning name and the date he became lost
- 17 Curse laid upon any who steal from the catacombs
- 18 Warning! (monster, bandits, ghosts, etc.)
- 19 Danger, unstable rock ahead!
- 20 Danger, [faded or redacted words]!

Inscriptions



A gallery (wide hall with branching passages) in S. Callisto.

Catacomb Tables
Section II
Catacomb Hazards
and Encounters

The following tables are meant to spur the DM’s creativity for developing challenges in the catacombs.

- D10 ENCOUNTERS: WHO (ALIVE) IS IN THE CATACOMBS?
- 1 Robbers meeting to divide loot
 - 2 Necromancer, offering his services of contacting the dead
 - 3 Poisoner, selling his wares
 - 4 Kidnapping victim, bound and gagged, waiting for the kidnappers to return
 - 5 Heretics meeting in secret
 - 6 Tomb robbers, looking for relics
 - 7 Witch, retrieving components
 - 8 Pilgrim, visiting supposed saint
 - 9 Thrill-seekers, poking around where they shouldn’t
 - 10 A fossori digging loculi, burying the dead, or maintaining the passages

- D8 ENCOUNTERS: ANIMALS & MONSTERS
- 1 Rats - a large colony has overtaken much of this level
 - 2 Livestock - being sheltered illegally, or else lost
 - 3 Bats - roosting in a chamber with access to the surface; their guano is potentially dangerous if disturbed due to fungi, and they might transmit rabies, by bite or respiration
 - 4 Feral dogs
 - 5 Bear or other large predator
 - 6 Monster - manifestation of some sin committed in the crypts
 - 7 Monster - corpse-eaters
 - 8 Monster - subterranean race or denizens of the underworld which have found an entrance to the catacombs

Section of a *cubiculum* showing a *luminare*.

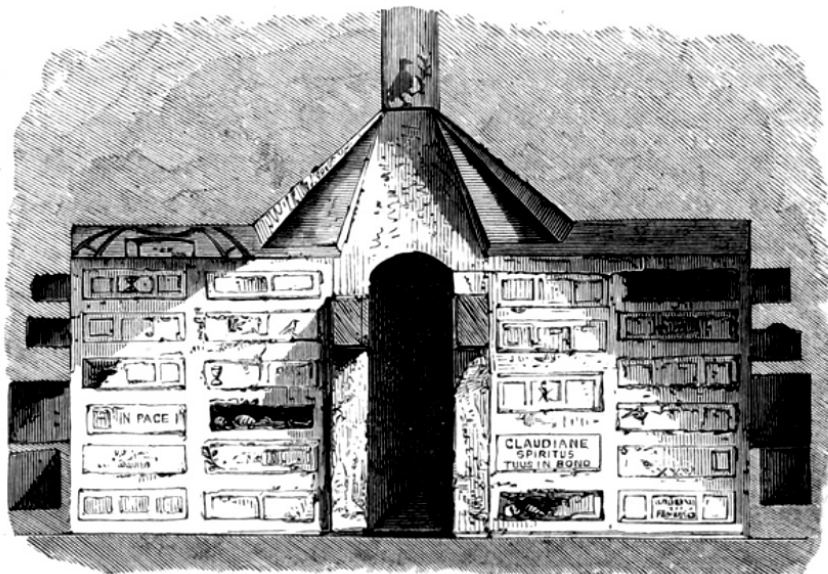


FIG. 7.- Section of Chambers in Catacomb of Saints Marcellino and Pietro, showing lower end of the skof of the luminare, with dove painted on it.

D10 TRAPS & HAZARDS, NATURAL OR ACCIDENTAL

- 1 The stacked bones lining a wall of a hallway or ossuary chamber are loose and fall easily, creating a racket and tripping hazard
- 2 Support beams have decayed; ceiling may fall
- 3 Drainage well concealed by light debris
- 4 Curse
- 5 Labyrinth/Maze of passages from the entrance
- 6 Passage blocked by tumble of rocks which falls if disturbed
- 7 Chamber or passage on the level above was filled in with sand by miners; lower chambers at risk of avalanche of sand
- 8 Hematite dust; save vs. poison every round inhaling the dust, failure means d4 damage plus 1 point/turn from lung damage; save every turn at -4 until a save is made
- 9 Bat/rat/other vermin droppings have sprouted fungus with poisonous spores
- 10 The soft volcanic rock out of which the catacombs are carved is unsound and walls, ceilings, or floors collapse

D6 TRAPS & HAZARDS, SET BY TOMB ROBBERS OR GUARDIANS

- 1 Phony curse or rumors to scare off potential or rival robbers
- 2 Head wires (neck-level, thin, sharp wires cut the unwary - d6 damage if walked into, 2d6 if running; metal armor reduces this damage by d6 if it covers the neck)
- 3 Deadfall of rock set up over a doorway
- 4 Alarm (bells, rattles, etc.), possibly sounding in some other room for sentries
- 5 Snakes or other venomous creatures in coffins, chests, etc.
- 6 Shaft hidden by debris; if someone falls into it, they land in the deepest level (normal falling damage applies)

All these traps can be activated by all the traditional means, like tripwires, opening doors, etc.

D10 CATACOMBS RUMOURS

- 1 The catacombs are haunted by evil pagan spirits
- 2 The catacombs are protected by a particular saint
- 3 The relics of a saint are still in the catacomb, in a lost crypt
- 4 A fossore robbed many graves, kept the loot in a secret chamber
- 5 A strange call can be heard in the catacombs - doubtless a terrible monster
- 6 The cries of a long-lost child still haunt the hallways
- 7 A group of reckless young nobles were lost in the catacombs long ago
- 8 A secretive group meets every month in the catacombs, clearly up to no good
- 9 A vast treasure was hidden in the catacomb by a wealthy Christian during the persecution
- 10 The catacombs extend for miles and miles, and eventually lead to caverns that go far below the earth

Catacomb Tables

Section III

Filling Loculi & Crypts

After the 5th century, all Christians in the catacombs are assumed to be martyrs. The legends about the persecution of Christians in Rome continue to grow as time goes on, and when the bulk of the catacombs are rediscovered in the 16th century onward, chambers are reinterpreted as meeting places or hideouts. Chapels used exclusively for burial rites were reinterpreted as the sites of weekly masses, and by the 18th century most Church histories were claiming that persecutions drove early Christians into the catacombs for safety. The evidence does not support this picture, but it makes a great story.

Overleaf are some examples of what the PCs might find in sealed loculi. Unsealed loculi would probably have some loose bones, debris, etc. and likely have been looted. Italicized text are fantastic and supernatural possibilities for fantasy games.

D20 WHO IS BURIED IN THIS CRYPT?

- 1-4 Pre-Christian slave or pauper
- 5 Martyred Christian
- 6 Christian cleric
- 7-10 Other non-martyred Christian
- 11-12 Jew
 - 13 Murder victim stuffed into older crypt
- 14-16 Post-persecution Christian buried here as a testament to their faith
 - 17 Post-persecution Christian buried here because of their influence (nobility, high official, etc.)
 - 18 The unburied corpse of a lost pilgrim or fugitive lies nearby, roll again
- 19-20 Multiple burial - a family, a couple, parent & child, etc.

DI2 OFFERINGS & EX-VOTO

- 1 jewelry
- 2 lamp
- 3 toys or figurines carved of ivory
- 4 d6 coins
- 5 glass container of perfume (a precursor to the modern practice of leaving flowers)
- 6 ceramic container of food
- 7 glass paste gems
- 8 costume jewelry
- 9 real jewels/gems
- 10 other personal effects - comb, mirror, razor, etc.
- 11 small marble slab with inscription
- 12 mosaic picture embedded in plaster

D30 THIRTY SEALED LOCULI

- 1 Desiccated corpse in fancy clothes. This was a minor noble, and has a gold cross pendant.
- 2 Partial skeleton, a martyr killed in the arena. *Jackpot! Relics!*
- 3 Skeleton with manacles still evident on ankles, a slave or prisoner.
- 4 Just dust, but hidden in the dust is a gold chain necklace of some value. *The dust is also poisonous.*
- 5 Skeleton of a gladiator, buried with now-rusted sword. *The sword is cursed.*
- 6 Skeleton of a cleric, buried with a relic from some unknown saint clasped in his hands. *The relic wants to be removed from this site and properly honored. The saint will haunt the dreams of the first person to find it, ordering them to take it somewhere far away.*
- 7 Mummified corpse with canopic jars, perhaps an Egyptian emigre? Curses inscribed on parchment sheet laying across the waist. *The parchment is a magical trap.*
- 8 Dessicated corpse that apparently spent some time trying to claw its way out of premature burial, as there are bloody smears on the slab that was mortared in place. *One day after the crypt is opened the body reanimates.*
- 9 A pair of bodies, probably lovers or a married couple. *Any attempt to separate the corpses to search them for booty will cause them to animate and attack.*
- 10 Empty. *The loculus has been tunnelled into from below. This is an entrance to the underworld.*
- 11 Skeleton of a child, with some clay toys. *Disturbing the remains in any way will cause the spirit of the deceased to follow the transgressor around, tugging at their clothes, giggling, knocking things over, and generally behaving as a playful but annoying poltergeist.*
- 12 Beetles pour out; creepy but harmless.
- 13 A surprisingly fresh corpse, perhaps a week old; evidently the catacombs are not forgotten.
- 14 Skeleton in partial armor, probably a soldier.
- 15 Remains of a merchant or banker with a small coffer of coins, meant to take it along.
- 16 Skeleton of a mother and child who died about the same time of plague.
- 17 Toga-clad skeleton, Roman era.
- 18 Cremains/bone cinders/ashes. The burnt remains of a body, possibly a martyr or criminal.
- 19 The partial skeleton of a dismembered gladiator.
- 20 Bishop in full regalia. *The vestments would be worth a fair bit to the right buyer. But why is he buried here, anonymously, rather than in a lavish crypt? Was he hidden from tomb-robbers, a heretic denied burial in a more prominent crypt, or an imposter?*
- 21 Mummified body of a monk. *Not dead; deep in meditation and you just interrupted him.*
- 22 Mummified body of a baboon. Not unusual in Egyptian tombs, but it's pretty unsettling to find one here.
- 23 Stuffed to capacity with bones; this was an economy job, or maybe grave-robbers hid evidence here. *Bones pour out and assemble into 2d6 skeletons. En garde!*
- 24 Incorrupt corpse... possibly a saint. *Or a vampire.*
- 25 Toga-clad skeleton, Roman era, includes several pieces of jewelry.
- 26 Toga-clad skeleton, Roman era, with small Christian pendant. *Actually it was a pagan and is very unhappy with Christian burial, so the spirit haunts the area.*
- 27 Later era skeleton, with a ring that is valuable but stuck on arthritic finger.
- 28 Later era skeleton, apparently a noble, buried with scroll detailing accomplishments.
- 29 Later era skeleton, unremarkable, but if searched thoroughly a valuable gem is hidden in the torso, probably swallowed long before death.
- 30 Bare skeleton, unremarkable. *But the foul air in the loculus is poisonous.*

Whither Pilgrim?

PILGRIMAGES IN HISTORY

The ancients certainly made a point of visiting sites of religious or ritual significance, and so pilgrimage has pagan antecedents. Within Christian tradition, pilgrimages probably started with visits to the holy land as the religion spread through Rome.

Etheria's memoirs of 400 CE refer to professional tour-guides in the holy land and it seems their trade had been established for some time. Pilgrimages undertaken for penance probably arose later. The first crusade (1095) marked the first "plenary indulgence" (group forgiveness) as crusaders were granted absolution for their sins for taking up the cross; by 1277 the Franciscans were offering indulgences for those who visited their Portiuncula shrine on the first or second day of August. Other shrine-keepers followed suit, though they had to pay the Holy See for this great privilege.

This chapter is a catalogue of pilgrimage sites. The following catalog is but a sampling, and admittedly Anglo-centric, but a little research will turn up hundreds of shrines, cathedrals, tombs, and other sites that pilgrims might visit.

Each site has an entry giving its details:

LOCATION, which is self-explanatory.

SAINT, the saint or saints venerated at the site, if this is not obvious from the place's name; in some cases no specific saint is associated with a place.

MIRACLES, the miracles most associated with a place; these are suggestions and not exhaustive. The miracles are given as spells from "the world's most popular FRPG", but these are often a near-miss. While the list of cleric spells in that game and the various games derived from it are largely based on Bible stories and saint legends, not all are a perfect match and I picked what I thought best reflected the particular shrine; some non-clerical spells are included.

In some cases, I could not find specific miracles associated with a shrine or saint; the GM can assign miracles at discretion or use the tables in "Furta Sacra" for a random miracle. Pilgrims might reasonably expect the miracle to be cast when they visit the shrine with pure intent and an appropriate offering. Clerics (if using the optional Relic Clerics rules) could use badges or other secondary relics from the shrines for casting those spells (in the most extreme cases, of course, the actual relics might be taken for this). The bracketed items are possible long-term benefits for Palmers who visit the shrine.

RESTRICTIONS. These are restrictions on using the shrine or site, such times of year, special rituals, and so on. Most wells require partial or total immersion in the waters, though some springs and wells merely require the waters to be touched or sipped. Whether well or spring water can be carried away for later use is up to the shrine-keepers' permission (and on the GM's ruling about its efficacy away from the source).

The Poor Pilgrim's Itinerary: a tour of pilgrimages

Glastonbury Tor

Location: Glastonbury, Somerset

Miracles: Holy Word, Commune

Restrictions: Must approach with peas in shoes (-2 to Dex for a week afterward); possibly guarded by fairies or knights

This mound was the site of an ancient monastery, but in the 12th century, in legend it grew into "ground-zero" of Christianity in England. So in 63 CE, Joseph of Arimathea arrived with the Grail. The CHALICE WELL provides healing waters. His staff grew into a hawthorn tree: the HOLY THORN TREE or GLASTONBURY THORN. The Thorn blooms every Christmas. Many minor saints, as well as King Arthur, Guinevere, and St. Patrick are said to be buried here, and Christ spent some of his missing years here, building a church. Pilgrims used to walk the 512-foot-high Glastonbury Tor with peas lining their shoes for penance.

The tor or hill also has pagan associations (as a fairy mound and entrance to the Otherworld, and abode of the king of the fairies) and later with the Arthur legends: the tor was known to be the Isle of Avalon to the Britons and the final resting place of King Arthur.

St. Richard the Bishop's Tomb

Location: Chichester

Miracles: Raise Dead, Continual Light, Create Food and Water

The tomb of the famously merciful Richard of Chichester (who gave even criminals decent burials and was so gentle that he ate no meat) in Chichester Cathedral was second only to St. Thomas Beckett's in terms of popularity as a destination. The tomb is always laden with coin offerings ("St. Richard's pence").

Canterbury Cathedral

Location: Canterbury

Miracles: Raise Dead, Regeneration, Cure Disease

St. Thomas Beckett's shrine is here, one of the most famous and most visited shrines in all of Great Britain. The saint is credited with raising the dead, curing all manner of disease and ills, and allowing a repentant criminal to regrow the eyes and testicles that he'd had cut out as punishment for theft.

Pilgrimages in England

Pilgrims to Canterbury, from Heath.



HOW MANY PILGRIMS?

While some shrine record books and chronicles attempt to give round numbers, there is really no reliable data on the numbers of visitors shrines received. One reasonable conjecture has been made by assuming the typical pilgrim left one pence as an offering; the record books have detailed statistics on the total amounts collected in various years.

Using this method, we find that a smaller, secluded shrine like Ethelreda's in Ely had about 21 visitors a day; a bigger shrine like St. Edmond's in Bury had 79 per day; a major shrine like Walsingham had 170 per day; and the most popular of English shrines, St. Beckett's in Canterbury, had 274 per day - though in 1219, when a new shrine was added, it had almost 500 per day. These are all just averages, dividing the total loot by 365.

In reality, feast days would have much higher volumes of traffic. Indeed, there are accounts of pilgrims being squeezed together so badly that no-one could move in or out of the building, and even cases of pilgrims being trampled or crushed to death. Some monks bragged about the careful attention their architects paid to allowing ample room for pilgrims to come and go in an orderly manner, and some shrines were enlarged or completely rebuilt for crowd control.

St. Paul's Cathedral (now Westminster Abbey)

Location: London

This cathedral is home to several important shrines and relics.

ST. ERKENWALD: (Anglo-Saxon bishop translated here in the 14th c.) Erkenwald revived a corpse just long enough for it to be baptized and the soul saved. Miracles: Animate Dead

CRUX BOREALIS or ROOD OF NORTHDOOR: A cross said to have been carved by Joseph of Arimathea and found by King Lucius. This relic has some association with funeral rites and possibly marks a portal to the afterlife. Miracles: Plane Shift

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR: Edward's relics were credited with seven healings even before his canonization. This shrine is a favorite for English kings to visit and send offerings to, making it one of the richest in England. Eventually the Scottish royal regalia, the Stone of Destiny, and other relics were offered here. Edward was translated several times. Miracles: Prayer, Divination

A STONE WITH CHRIST'S FOOTPRINT, A PHIAL OF HIS BLOOD, AND THE VIRGIN'S GIRDLE: The last is worn by queens as protection from difficult deliveries. Miracles: Protection from Evil 10' Radius, Wind Walk

A CHAPEL DEDICATED TO ST. WILGEFORTIS: It is hard to miss - it depicts the female saint, holding a cross and wearing a very long beard. Wilgefortis can be offered some oats, and in return will send a horse to carry the pilgrim's husband to Hell. She is sometimes called "St. Uncumber" for releasing women from their husbands. Miracles: Gate

Black marble cross

Location: Waltham

Miracles: Glyph of Warding

Found in St. Cnut's day, this curious object became an object of pilgrimage.

St. George's Chapel

Location: Windsor

TOMB OF HENRY VI: His incorrupt body is enshrined, and his hat miraculously transformed to red velvet. If worn, the hat cures headaches. Henry is also said to have appeared to a wounded sailor at sea, and repaired and re-filled a burst wine-cask. Miracles: Cure Light Wounds, Create Food and Water

TOMB OF JOHN SCHORNE: (d. 1314, translated to Windsor 1475). Shorne raised an ox from the dead, ended a drought, cured auge and gout, and forced the Devil into his boot (supposedly thereby inventing the Jack-in-the-box!) Miracles: Control Weather, Dispel Evil

St. Michael's Mount

Location: Cornwall

Miracles: Divination, Blade Barrier

Restrictions: Possibly guarded by a giant

The arch-angel appeared to some fishermen on this small tidal island in Mount's Bay, Cornwall. Cormoran the giant made his home here before being slain by Jack the Giant Killer, and the Norman-era castle on the mount is said to include Cormoran's stone heart in its walls. Pilgrims may call on St. Michael for aid here (in game terms this could take the form of a divinatory vision or an avenging angel).

St. Cado's Spring

Location: St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall

Miracles: Snake Charm.

On St. Michael's Mount, St. Cado created a spring, and turned adders to ammonites (fossilized mollusks similar to nautiluses).

St. Michael's Chair or the Holy Vaunt

Location: St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall

Miracles: Command, Quest

Restrictions: Must climb to the seat and sit there; it is a quite difficult climb

Also on the Mount is St. Michael's Chair or the Holy Vaunt. This is a stone "seat" located precariously in the crags (later, at the top of a lighthouse). To sit here before one's wedding grants "mastery" much like the waters of St. Keyne's well.

St. Edmund The Martyr's Shrine

Location: Bury St. Edmunds, East Anglia

Miracles: Symbol, Control Weather, Conjure Animals

This Saxon king was martyred in 869 by Vikings, who threw his head into a forest to keep from being buried. However it called out to the Christian searchers who found it being guarded by a wolf. The tame wolf followed the head as it was taken to the church for burial, and is still among Edmund's symbols. The relics are credited with killing the Danish king Sweyn in 1014, and driving another Danish noble mad. Edmund is also credited with bringing good winds and fertility. The Oblation of the White Bull is performed at his shrine on November 20th to ensure pregnancy.

ST. EDMUND OF EAST ANGLIA,

AND HIS AMAZING SEVERED HEAD

After King Edmund was martyred by vikings in a St. Sebastian-style beating followed by archery practice, they tossed his severed head into the woods to deny him a decent burial. However, some loyal Saxons went searching for it and heard it calling out "here, here" so they could find it. It was being guarded against woodland scavengers by a wolf, who tamely followed them back to the church where the head was buried with the rest of his remains. Wolves would later adorn decorations in his shrine, a sort of saintly mascot.

After he was canonized and the body was "translated" to a proper shrine in 903 AD, the head was found to be miraculously re-attached! King Sweyn, who doubted the sainthood of Edmund, was killed by a blast from the relics, and later a Danish noble named Osgoth was driven insane for expressing doubts about the story, so Edmund had his revenge from beyond the grave. The shrine would be visited by sailors hoping for good winds and by ladies hoping for fertility, who would perform the "Oblation of the White Bull" to ensure pregnancy. The oblation is not quite as kinky as it sounds; it mostly involves petting a white bull and then taking an offering to the shrine. It is probably a pagan survival of some older rite.

Various shrines at Walsingham

Location: Walsingham, Norfolk

Miracles: Alter Reality, Cure Serious Wounds, Word of Recall

Restrictions: Remove shoes 1 mile outside town before visiting any shrines; Alter Reality: wish must not be mentioned for a full year before it is granted

Walsingham was one of England’s most important pilgrimage destinations, along with Canterbury and Chicester, and attracted pilgrims from the Continent. A statue of the virgin Mary, and a phial of her milk are kept in the “House of Mary” — a house supposedly built according to the vision of a Saxon noble lady in 1061, who was told to build a replica of the holy family’s house in Nazareth.

Many minor relics are also in the vicinity of Walsingham. Pilgrims usually removed their shoes a full mile outside of town, in order to show proper respect.

There were also two cold wells that could heal bathers and grant wishes. These wishes had the condition that the wisher must not say his or her wish for a full year before it would be granted.

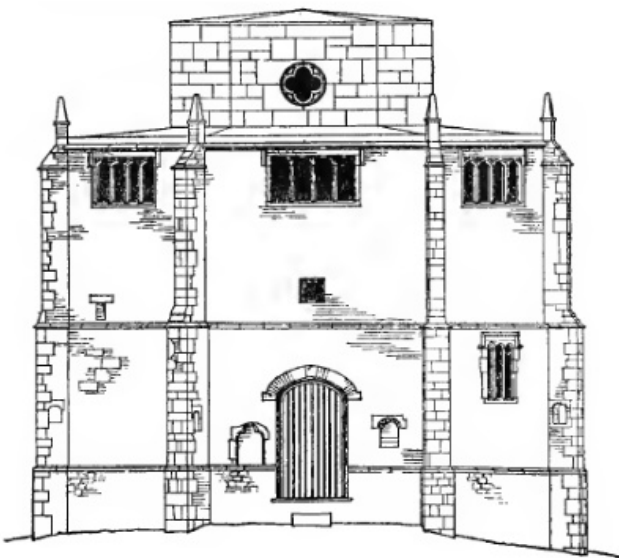
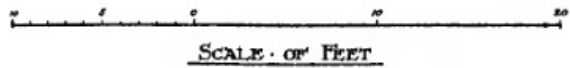
Sir Ralph Boutetourt, a knight in full armor, was pursued by enemies and managed to ride into a shrine through a postern gate. This was counted as a miracle for the gate was no more than one ell (45 inches) high and three-quarters of an ell wide!

Chapel of the Red Mount at King’s Lynn

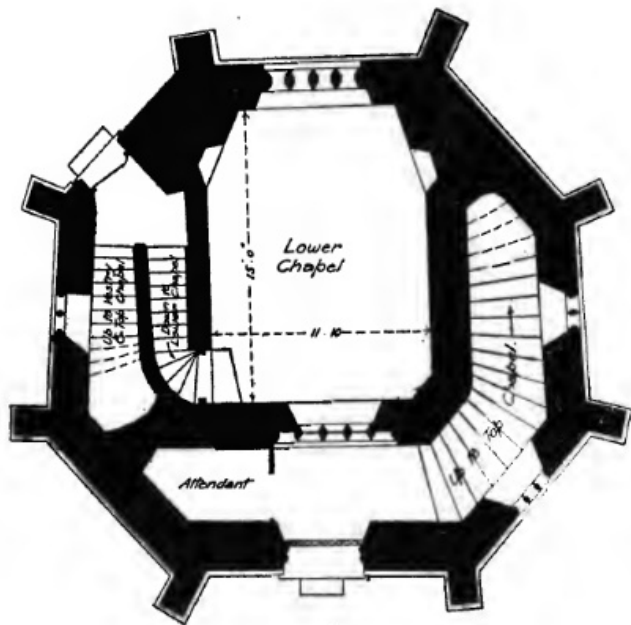
Location: King’s Lynn, Norfolk

Built to host a relic of the virgin Mary, and also used as a station by pilgrims on the way to Walsingham.

CHAPEL OF THE RED MOUNT
KING’S LYNN



WEST ELEVATION



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

By permission of "The Builder."

Drawn by Ralph Surridge

St. Frideswide's Shrine

Location: Oxford

Miracles: Cause Blindness, Cure Blindness, Curse, Create Water

An 8th century saint, largely forgotten after a fire in 1002 destroyed her dedicated convent but restored to proper enshrinement in 1122; her cult flourished after her 1180 translation — in which year over 100 miracles were reported. The saint's first miracle was to strike blind a prince who had been besieging her town, averting her own threatened gang rape at the hands of him and his army. Though she eventually restored his sight, this legend made all kings of England fear to enter Oxford lest some curse befall them, and when King Henry III broke this taboo, all his misfortunes were attributed to Frideswide's power. The saint is also credited with creating a spring with healing properties. This spring attracted so many pilgrims that at one point 22 inns operated in the vicinity, just for pilgrims.

St. Alban's Shrine

Location: St. Albans, Hertfordshire

Miracles: Part Water, Raise Dead, Locate Object

St. Alban was a very early martyr, England's first. His martyrdom was the occasion of two miracles: first, a swollen river dried up to allow the execution to proceed (Alban had been scourged already and asked for a swift end); the Roman soldier who beheaded him had his own eyes drop out of his head as the head hit the ground. The head rolled downhill and caused a spring to form (which was another holy well). Albans' relics were hidden in the 8th century, and a false set of bones sent to Ely for "safekeeping". When the monks returned a different skeleton, the ruse was revealed. In the 13th century, his relics raised a man from the dead. The hilltop chapel dedicated to him was built some time around the 7th or 8th Century BCE. A shrine was there at least from the 6th century; before that veneration of the relics were simply held outdoors on the hill top.

Tomb of St. Chad

Location: Lichfield

Miracles: Heal

This tomb has a handy opening into which one can reach and get a handful of dust. Mixed with water, this makes a cure-all for man and beast. Note that this would be a ready source of components for brewing healing and extra-healing potions.

Tomb of Bishop Wulfstan

Location: Worcester

Miracles: Exorcism, Dispel Evil

This tomb is visited for the exorcism of demons, though the bishop was never formally canonized and is technically not a saint.

IMAGE-SHRINES.

Some shrines, especially in the later Middle Ages, were visited because of the images they held — crucifixes, statues, or even paintings. One church commissioned a realistic crucifix based on a nude model. It attracted many visitors, especially women. These images sometimes had powers imputed to them just like relics. A statue at St. Paul-extra-muros in Rome was said to have slain a blasphemous man who threatened to steal its sword. Some statues of the Virgin were said to have the power to intercede on a pilgrim's behalf or produce myron (like a relic), real tears, or even holy breast milk. Similarly some paintings were said to cry real tears, crucifixes to bleed real blood, and so on.

There were also some images alleged to have been created miraculously, like the portrait of Christ on the handkerchief of Veronica. There is reason to believe that St. Veronica never actually existed, and her name is a corruption of "vera icon", "a true image"! Some images were even ascribed to the artistic talents of saints or apostles, as for example the portrait of the Virgin said to have been made by St. Luke.

THE PATRON SAINT OF WHAT?

A cursory examination of any list of saints and their areas of patronage will likely strike the reader as odd. Some areas of patronage seem logical - St. Brendan, who traveled extensively in a boat, is the patron saint of navigators, for example. However others may seem less obvious - for example Saint Barbara is a patron saint of miners and artillerists, among other things. The Church over time has assigned various occupations, places, and ailments to particular saints. St. Barbara's patronage of miners and artillerists can be traced to incidents in her martyrdom. Her father, who carried out her death sentence, was struck by lightning and burst into flame, thus indirectly making Barbara a patron of explosions, and so of miners and artillerists who use explosives. Saint Agatha, whose breasts were torn from her during her martyrdom, has in modern times become a patron of breast cancer patients. But other areas of patronage arose out of folkloric associations and even misinterpretations of icons and art. St. Agatha was often depicted holding her severed breasts on a tray. The breasts were mistaken for small loaves of bread or bells, and so eventually she became a patron of bakers and bell-forgers. Similarly Saint Bartholomew, who was flayed in his martyrdom, was depicted holding his own skin and a skinning knife. Because the knife looked like a tool cheesemakers use in one of the images, cheesemakers took him as a patron

Tomb of St. Osmund

Location: Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury

Miracles: Word of Recall

St. Osmund's influence extended far beyond his shrine. He is credited with causing a pilgrim in the Holy Land to be transported (teleported?) to his Salisbury shrine, from Jerusalem, to deliver a handwritten letter from the Virgin herself.

Shrine of St. Alkmund

Location: Derby

Miracles: Chant, Blade Barrier, Freedom of Movement, Sanctuary
Alkmund was a warrior who fought the Danes. He fled after losing a battle, and was killed by Danes while under the protection of the king of Mercia. This murder sparked another war. Centuries later his descendants established a shrine to honor the dubious warrior-saint. (I haven't found any particulars about his miracles but warrior-saints are rare enough to merit embellishment.)

Shrine of St. Cuthbert the Confessor

Location: Lindesfarne, Durham, and various other sites

Miracles: Spiritual Hammer, Chant, Speak to Animals

Restrictions: Cuthbert performs no miracles for women

St. Cuthbert was translated many times to avoid the Danes. Among the relics to be found here are Cuthbert's ever-victorious banner (which was taken on campaign and was at the famous Battle of the Standards, and carried against the Scots until the Reformation). The banner was actually his winding sheet, affixed to a spear, according to instructions a monk received in a vision. (Any army carrying this banner is assured victory, provided the saint is not offended.)

Cuthbert is reputed to have made many appearances to kings, clergy, and commoners in visions. Cuthbert's cathedral (Durham Cathedral) hosts a great feast on his feast day, March 20.

Shrine of St. John of Beverley

Location: Beverley

Miracles: Speak with Animals, Speak with Monsters, Flame Strike

An impressive silver and gold gilded shrine, the Shrine of St. John of Beverley (bishop of York, d. 721) holds the Banner of St. John (one of the standards carried against the Scots and among those at the Battle of the Standard). St. John's relics also pacified all kinds of animals, as did the water from his well at Harpham. His tomb ran with blood and oil during the battle of Agincourt, and the saint was said to have contributed to that victory.

Pilgrimages in Wales

Shrine of St. Werburgh

Location: Chester, Powys

Miracles: Speak with Animals, Speak with Monsters, Raise Dead

St. Werburgh (d. 699) was an Anglo-Saxon princess credited with speaking to animals and raising a goose from the dead. Her shrine's badge, given to pilgrims as proof of their visit, was a basket of geese. Her shrine was moved from Hanbury to Chester in 875 to keep it safer from Viking attacks.

Chapel of St. Govan

Location: Pembrokeshire

Miracles: Plane Shift, Bless, Prayer, Alter Reality

Restrictions: Difficult approach

The tiny chapel of St. Govan (d. 586) is wedged into the side of a cliff. The location is said to be Govan's hiding place, used to avoid Irish pirates, and later his hermit home. It can be reached only by a set of small stone steps, the number of which vary depending on whether one is ascending or descending. The chapel has a small niche, and those who turn about in the niche are granted luck. A well in the vicinity is also a holy site, for his footprints can still be seen near it, and a cave near the well is said to grant wishes.

Pilgrimages in Scotland

Isle of Iona

Location: Inner Hebrides

Though St. Columba's relics have long been lost - probably in a Viking raid - Iona has many pilgrimage sites:

THE WELL OF THE NORTH WIND: Those who bring an offering here can conjure up a north wind. Sailors are especially fond of this shrine.

Miracles: Control Weather, Wind Walk

THE WELL OF THE SOUTH WIND: It works just like the Well of the North Wind, but for south winds. Miracles: Control Weather, Wind Walk

THE HILL: This hill has no name but is the only one on the small island! Those who climb it seven times gain good luck. Miracles: Bless, Prayer; good luck (+1 to all d20 rolls for one week)

THE WELL OF THE AGE: near the Hill, this well is said to heal bathers, and also to restore youth. Miracles: Restoration; also, drinking the waters is equivalent to drinking a Potion of Longevity, with the usual 1% cumulative chance of negating all anti-aging effects

ANGEL'S HILL (AKA SITHEAN MOR): This fairy mound is a place where one might have a vision of St. Michael the Archangel.

Miracles: Divination, Find The Path, True Seeing, Detect Magic

Holy Wells in Britain

In pagan times, natural wells or pools were often venerated, and became the objects of rituals and worship. Just as pagan holy days and other holy sites were incorporated into Christian worship in order to make conversion a smoother transition, so the wells were adopted into Christian legends. A number of holy wells became associated with saints, and churches were built near or on them. Some wells had small buildings built over them, while others became the centers of churchyards and eventually spas were built to more fully exploit their waters. The holy wells usually can be approached only on certain days, but those who throw offerings in the wells may experience divinatory visions or dreams. The locals are usually able to interpret the visions for a fee.

Chalice Well or Red Spring

Location: Glastonbury Tor, Glastonbury

Miracles: Cure Critical Wounds

When Joseph of Arimathea hid the chalice which caught Christ's blood in the waters here, the waters turned blood-like (red, warm, and coagulating). The waters are said to heal visitors. One source says the waters ran alternately red and blue.

Gulwell

Location: Ashburton, Devon

Saint(s): St. Gudwal or St. Gudula of Flanders

Miracles: Cure Blindness

Restrictions: Must bathe in the water

This holy well's waters were said to cure weak eyes. Dedicated to either St. Gudula of Flanders (d. 714) or St. Gudwal (fl. 650). The locals believe Gudula is a patron saint of the blind (though the Church has never said this) because one of her symbols is a lantern. An ancient stone cross is also to be found here.

Leechwell

Location: Tontes, Devon

Saints: none

Miracles: Cure Blindness, Cure Disease, Neutralize Poison

Restrictions: Must bathe in the waters

This site has three troughs (known as Toad, Long Crippler, and Snake) fed by a spring. The waters of the first cure eye diseases; the second either cures lameness or snake bites (stories vary); and the third cures skin diseases and leprosy. A lazar-house (home for lepers) is nearby, as is a church dedicated to St. Mary.

Lidwell or Ladywell

Location: Dawlish, Devon

Saints: Mary Magdalene and/or Virgin Mary

Miracles: Speak with the Dead

Restrictions: The site may host evil spirits and/or a serial killer.

In the 13th century a chapel was built, incorporating the well into a corner. This site is infamous because a monk who tended the chapel in the 14th century was a serial murderer, who lulled visitors with his hospitality but drugged and stabbed them before dumping their stripped bodies into the well! Eventually a sailor, who was an intended victim, threw the monk down the well when he saw him draw a knife. Some versions of the story that St. Mary Magdalene appeared to the sailor to warn him of the danger. The site is also reputed to be haunted.

St. Blaise's Well

Location: Bromley, Kent

Miracles: Atonement, Tongues

Restrictions: Atonement on Pentecost and two days following it only

This well visited at Pentecost for penance. At other times of the year, people gather to hear oratory.

St. Keyne's Well

Location: Cornwall

Miracles: Command

The first to drink of it (husband or wife) is said to gain the upper hand ("mastery") for the rest of the marriage.

St. Cleer's Well

Location: Cornwall

Miracles: Exorcism, Cure Insanity

Restrictions: Total immersion required

The well, located in a chapel, cures insanity of those forcibly submerged in it.

Elder Well

Location: Blymhill Marsh, Blymhill, Staffordshire

Saint: none

Miracles: Cure Blindness, Detect Magic, True Seeing

This ancient well is reputed to cure all manner of eye and vision-related ailments.

St. Cuthbert's Well

Location: Bellingham, Northumberland

Miracles: Spiritual Weapon, Cure Light Wounds, Animate Object

Restrictions: Men only

Saint Cuthbert is credited with miracles - removing paralysis, protecting a stolen cow from lightning that destroyed the thief's barn, and animating an axe to kill the man who stole it (a dancing weapon!). It is worth noting that only men are granted miracles by Cuthbert, never women. Women are allowed to place offerings at a secondary shrine, but for some reason the worship portrays him as misogynistic.

Holywell

Location: Flintshire, Wales

Saint: St. Winifred

Miracles: Create Water, Neutralize Poison, Alter Reality, Hold Person

Restrictions: 50% chance of failure when working Alter Reality

St. Winifred was a maiden who was beheaded by prince Caradoc when she refused his advances.

Miraculously, the head rolled down a hill and where it came to rest a spring gushed out from the ground, forming the well. Winifred was restored to life by her uncle, St. Benno, immediately, and the well worked miracles afterward. Water taken from the wells saved a man who had been bitten on the neck by an "atturcoppe" or large spider; one might expect the water to be efficacious against Ettercaps. The well is also said to grant wishes - though 2 or 3 attempts are sometimes needed. In addition to healing, the waters could paralyze the sacrilegious.

Pilgrimages in Ireland

St. Patrick's Tomb

Location: Downpatrick

Miracles: Sticks to Snakes, Snake Charm, Speak with the Dead, Dispel Magic

Downpatrick is the most likely of the many claimants to St. Patrick's tomb; he is also said to be buried with St. Briget and St. Columba. When Downpatrick wasn't being looted and burned by Vikings (as happened at least seven times), it was one of Ireland's most popular pilgrimage spots. But since most of Ireland was usually being looted and burned by invaders anyway, it was still a top attraction even in the "off season".

Croagh Patrick (Mount Patrick, also called The Reek)

Location: County Mayo

Miracles: Dispel Magic, Silence 15' Radius

This was a pagan pilgrimage site for the summer solstice for thousands of years. But as a Christian site, it is said to be where the Saint fasted for 40 days. The best time to visit was the last Sunday in July (Reek Sunday), when the pious celebrated the time Patrick killed a witch by repelling her spell back onto her. Pilgrims, usually bare-foot, circle the mount clockwise seven times saying seven prayers.

St. Patrick's Purgatory

Location: Lough Derg (a lake island, also called Station Island)

Miracles: Detect Magic, True Seeing, Plane Shift, Speak with Monsters, Resist Fire

Restrictions: Visitors must convince the shrine keepers to unlock the door over the cave, and then spend a night inside. They will face various demons and devils inside. Supposedly the cave was created when Patrick asked for a visual aid to convince sinners of the reality of Hell.

Lady's Island Lake

Location: County Wexford, Ireland

Saint: Virgin Mary, St. Abban, St. Ibar, St. Vaugh

Miracles: Atonement, Heal

Restrictions: Normally receives pilgrims only in August

Lady's Island Lake is a holy well on Our Lady's Island, a small islet projecting from the mainland. Several early saints are associated with the island, and their tombs may be visited here, but the main attractions are a well dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which grants plenary indulgences in August and September, and a larger well that is said to heal all ills.

Glendalough

Location: County Wicklow, Ireland

Saint: St. Kevin

Miracles: Charm Mammal, Animal Summoning, Create Food & Water, Raise Dead

Restrictions: Difficult climb to St. Kevin's Cell and Bed

Glendalough is actually an entire valley where a settlement, founded by St. Kevin, lay. This monastic settlement was surrounded by a wall and had a large gate, defended by a tower. Several churches and shrines lie within the settlement's walls, and two notable sites lie outside.

ST. KEVIN'S CELL, in a rocky outcropping near the settlement, was supposedly St. Kevin's hermetic residence, where he wrote that he "battled knights" (temptation?).

ST. KEVIN'S BED is a nearby tomb, dating to the Bronze Age, which an angel led the saint to and he used for prayer and meditation. Getting to the bed is an arduous climb. St. Kevin's miracles mostly had to do with animals (taming them and/or summoning them) and creating food. He also restored a dead friend to life, albeit only for a short time.

Lastly, ST. KEVIN'S CROSS, a large stone cross in the settlement, is said to grant the wish of any pilgrim who embraces it.

Monasterboice

Location: County Louth, Ireland

Saint: St. Buithe

Miracles: Plane Shift

St. Buithe is said to have ascended to heaven here, via a ladder that was lowered out of the sky. Several huge stone crosses mark the spot - The High Cross, a five meter tall Celtic cross, being the most prominent. A 35 meter tall tower here was a refuge for monks in times of invasion.

Jerpoint Abbey

Location: Kilkenny, Ireland

Saint: Virgin Mary, St. Nicholas

A Cistercian abbey founded in the 12th century, this site is near a supposed tomb of St. Nicholas (although the presence of half his relics in Bari, and another half of them in Venice, not to mention a grave in Myrna, seem to contradict this, but the legend had Norman crusaders returning with some relics, perhaps from Venice or Myrna). The church here boasts many intricate stone carvings.

Pilgrimages in Germany

THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

- ST. AGATHIUS,
against headache
- ST. BARBARA,
against fever and sudden death
- ST. BLAISE,
against illness of the throat
- ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA,
against sudden death
- ST. CHRISTOPHER,
against bubonic plague
- ST. CYRIACUS,
against temptation on the deathbed
- ST. DENIS,
against headache
- ST. ELMO,
against intestinal ailments
- ST. EUSTACHIUS,
against family discord
- ST. GEORGE,
for the health of domestic animals
- ST. GILES,
against plague, for a good confession
- ST. MARGARET OF ANTIOCH,
invoked in childbirth
- ST. PANTALEON,
for physicians
- ST. VITUS,
against epilepsy

The Seamless Garment

Location: Trier, Germany
Miracles: Atonement
This is the very piece of clothing Jesus wore when he was crucified. It is only displayed at intervals of 5, 10, or 20 years; later on only once in 100 years! In 1514 Pope Leo X provided an astonishing indulgence to any pilgrim who visited the relic and offered money to help build and decorate a new cathedral: they would be forgiven all past AND FUTURE sins. In six weeks, it is said, over a million visitors left offerings.

Chapel of the Fourteen Holy Helpers

Location: Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria
Saints: See sidebar
Miracles: Cure Disease, others
The Fourteen Holy Helpers are a grouping of saints believed to be especially effective for healing diseases. Their collective cult was established in the time of the Black Death in Germany.

St. Ursula’s Church

Location: Cologne, Germany
St. Ursula was martyred by the Huns along with some companions (the legend eventually grew from 1 to 10 to 10,000) in the 5th century, and is associated with several locations, but the church dedicated to her in Cologne claims to house the tombs of all 10,001. The shrine’s considerable revenue was controlled by an abbess and six canonesses, which was an unusual arrangement. The saint is of particular interest to adventurers because her pilgrimage from Britain to Rome was a three year voyage involving stops at many strange and unknown islands.

Tomb of the Three Magi

Location: Cologne, Germany
The relics of the three magi were taken to Cologne by Frederick the Great. They attract large numbers of pilgrims, many ex-voto and vast sums in offerings.

Cathedral of San Salvador

Location: Oviedo, Spain

The *Sudarium* of Oviedo is supposed to be the sweat-cloth that wrapped the head of Jesus after he was taken down from the cross and is flecked with dirt and bloodstains.

Camino de Santiago

Also known as the Way of St. James, St. James's Way, St. James's Path, St. James's Trail, and the Road to Santiago, the Camino is not a pilgrimage site itself but is a network of routes all leading to The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The route is marked by scallop shells, a symbol of St. James, and there are dozens of minor shrines to be visited along the way, as well as hospitals. In France, royal protection was extended to all pilgrims along the route, albeit bandits and thieves were always a problem. The Camino de Santiago was so heavily travelled that a legend grew that the Milky Way itself was composed of the dust stirred up by travellers.

Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Location: Galicia, Spain

Saints: St. James the Great (apostle), St. Theodorus, St. Athanasius
Strange lights in the sky revealed the tomb of the apostle James to the hermit Pelagius in the 9th century, and this miracle soon led the king of Spain to erect a church on the spot, which eventually grew into the most important pilgrimage site outside of Jerusalem or Rome. After the Moors sacked and burned the church, a cathedral was built in the 11th century which stands to this day, although it has been added to considerably in the intervening years. James and two of his disciples (SS. Theodorus and Athanasius) have relics in the crypts below the cathedral. Eight red-robed attendants operate a huge incense censer that swings from a dome, which was supposedly meant to mask the odor of the unwashed masses of pilgrims. Pilgrims could buy a scallop-shaped badge of proof of their pilgrimage, but most just collected scallop shells along the shore near the cathedral as mementoes. Indeed these scallop shells are probably the inspiration for the badges created at other shrines.

Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos

Location: Santo Domingo de la Calzaba

Saint: St. Dominic

St. Dominic raised a man from the dead after he'd been unjustly executed; he also raised two cooked birds from the dead. This abbey was built by him and his followers to replace a monastery on the site that had fallen into disrepair. The scriptorium was responsible for preserving Visigothic script, and the library housed a great collection of liturgical works in that language, the Mozarabic Rite.

Pilgrimages in France

Abbey of St. Denis

Location: St. Denis, France

The Abbey, north of Paris, houses many relics of St. Denis. The most notable is the *Oriflamme*, his personal standard that became the sacred banner of France. The Abbey also has a shrine to St. Louis, as well as relics and treasures from various kings from the dark ages onward; notably there is a nail from the True Cross, Charlemagne's sword, and a range of jeweled crosses and even crowns given by French kings. Denis is a notable celaphore — a saint depicted as carrying his own severed head, because after his martyrdom he carried his head to his grave, preaching all the way.

Castle Montségur

Location: Pyrenees Mountains, France

Saint: Dagobart II

The last Cathar citadel supposedly held relics of St. Dagobart II (one of the Merovingian Kings of France) and even the Holy Grail.

Church of St. Croix

Location: Provins

Saint: St. Lawrence

One of many sites with a fragment of the True Cross, the Church of St. Croix (Holy Cross) is dedicated to St. Lawrence.

Troyes Cathedral

Location: Troyes

Saints: St. Bernard de Clairvaux, and his closest friend St. Malachy of Ireland.

This cathedral is especially famous for its impressive stained glass windows. In addition to the reliquary with parts of SS. Bernard and Malachy, it also has the basin in which Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and the skull of St. Philip.

Saint Denis carrying his own head, anon



Laon Cathedral

Location: Picardy, France

Miracles: Conjure Animals, Remove Curse, Cure Disease, Flame Strike

Home to lavish *feretrum* for relics including a fragment of the Virgin's garments, a fragment of the sponge used to give Jesus a drink at Calvary, relics of St. Beat, and so on. These were often taken on tour to raise money, and went as far away as England in 1112. Besides many healings, they caused an ox to magically appear and help a cleric finish plowing a field, and by lightning strikes punished sinners, as well as turning aside pirates who menaced the relics' transport in the English Channel.

Our Lady of Rocamadour (Church)

Location: Guyene, France

Saints: St. Amadour or Amator, and see below

Restrictions: Perilous climb up flights of stone stairs to the church, built into a cliff

The church is dedicated to St. Amadour, a spurious saint, and includes a famous carved Black Madonna. This was the site of the pilgrimage of the hero Roland, who visited before his final battle with the Moors. Visiting here filled pilgrims with fervor. It now displays a piece of Durandal, Roland's holy sword (the whole sword is said to be embedded in the wall of a cliff nearby). The sword is said to contain within its hilt a tooth from Saint Peter, some blood of Saint Basil, hair from Saint Denis, and a bit of the clothes of the Virgin Mary. It is also the sharpest sword in all existence (a sword of sharpness, or vorpai sword).

Basilica of St. Madeleine

Location: Vezelay, Burgundy

Saints: Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist

A piece of Christ's robe, hairs from Mary's head; a bone of St. John the Baptist; mummified body of Mary Magdalene.

Tree of St. Guinefort

Location: Villar-de-Dombes, Lyons

Miracles: Cure Disease, Restoration

Restrictions: Only applies to infants, and see below

An ancient tree is St. Guinefort's altar. Infants left on a straw bed at the foot of the tree, next to two burning candles, will be cured if left alone until the candles burn out. The parents must then dunk the child seven times in a local stream. Many infants are said to have died by being accidentally burned or drown, and the Inquisition shut the operation down in the 13th century: St. Guinefort was a greyhound, not a human, and never recognized as a saint.

THE WELL-DRESSED PILGRIM

Pilgrims are usually easy to identify by their characteristic walking sticks

(which often had a knobby handle and spike at the end), hoods or broad-brimmed hats, a canteen (called a costrel) and shoulder-slung bags for provisions (called a wallet or scrip).

Their hats or cloaks might have small lead, pewter, or wooden medals or badges sewn to them. These ornaments were bought at shrines, and each would be distinctive to, and representative of, the saint whose shrine was visited. For example: St. James's shrine had a shell-shaped medal, John the Baptist's shrine at Amiens sold badges shaped like a head, and Thomas of Canterbury's medal was a flask or ampule.

Other shrines used more generic designs, like the crosses at St. Magnus's shrine. These medals were sold under licenses, usually granted exclusively to a family, monastery, or convent, although counterfeits and unauthorized medals were available too.

Whether going on a pilgrimage for penance or devotion, the pilgrimage can be enhanced by additional hardships such as making the journey barefoot (in its entirety or just the last leg of it), wearing a cilice (a hairshirt, sometimes with twigs, metal barbs, or wire woven in for added discomfort) or going shirtless, or even with pebbles or dried peas in the shoes.

Pilgrimages in Rome

Rome was home to more than 300 churches and a wide range of relics, in addition to the catacombs. Thousands of people, many of them pilgrims, entered or exited the city each day. Locals depended on the pilgrim trade, renting them rooms and selling them all manner of goods and services. During Lent the city could be crowded up to a peak of one million pilgrims. Highlights include:

St. Peter's

Location: Rome

The pope's main basilica, St. Peter's boasts the Spear of Longinus, St. Veronica's veil, and pieces of the True Cross, as well as relics of St. Peter and various popes and saints who were buried or translated here, including St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great and St. John Chrysostom.

Basilica of St. John the Lateran

Location: Rome

Saints: Peter, Paul, John the Lateran

Before St. Peter's Basilica was constructed, this was the pope's primary church. The heads of SS. Peter and Paul are enshrined in gold reliquaries. In addition the Holy Umbilical Cord and wood from the table used in the Last Supper are here. The Holy Steps, supposedly the stairs from Pontius Pilate's house, are adjacent, outdoors. Pilgrims climb this stone staircase on their knees.

St. Peter's, from Piranesi's *Vedute*



Santa Maria Maggiore

Location: Rome

Saint: Virgin Mary, Thomas Becket

This very ancient basilica is the most important site dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and houses La Sacra Crulla, the manger in which the infant Jesus was placed. Local wags often joke about the Sacra Crola — the Holy Arse — because foreigners often mispronounce this phrase.

The altar here is lavishly gilded in silver and gold, and a two kilogram statue of the Madonna and child, in solid gold, was on display until the 1527 sack of Rome. It also has a blood-stained tunic said to have been worn by St. Thomas Becket during his martyrdom.

Santa Prassede

Location: Rome

Saint: SS. Prassede and Pudentiana

This minor basilica, dedicated to St. Praxedes (or Prassede). SS. Prassede and Pudentiana are supposedly virgin martyrs; St. Valentine's body (but probably not his head, which is found elsewhere) and relics of St. Zeno are also to be found here.

Santa Croce in Gerusalemme

Location: Rome

Most of the relics from the Passion of Christ are represented here: thorns from the crown, the Titulus Crucis (the "INRI" sign that hung over Jesus on the cross), a number of pieces of the True Cross, and even a finger of St. Thomas, who skeptically probed the risen Christ's wounds.

Santa Maria in Cosmedin

Location: Rome

Saint: St. Valentine

Miracles: Detect Lies, Charm Person

In addition to many relic heads, including a reliquary with St. Valentine's skull, this church has the Bocca della Verità — an ancient stone carving of a face with an open mouth. The brave and truthful can place their hand in its mouth and speak. If they tell the truth the face will remain stone, but a liar's hand will be bitten off.

PILGRIM TRICKS

Some unscrupulous pilgrims made a habit of stealing from shrines. There were a number of ways to slip a few coins past the watchful eyes of the shrine's warders. One was to place a small coin — or nothing at all — onto the offering plate and take a sum of coins from it in one swift motion.

Another trick was to pretend to kiss the ground or some part of a shrine while secretly snatching a coin or gem in one's mouth.

One anecdote tells of a pilgrim who pretended to kiss the lid of a sarcophagus that was littered with coin offerings. He licked a coin into his mouth, but the vengeful saint buried there struck him dumb until he repented and confessed his crime. A similar miscreant got off much, much worse — after slurping several coins for drinking money, a visitor to Laon Cathedral in France went and drank all night, then hanged himself on the way home, his suicide being credited to the power of the offended relics.

Shrines inside buildings often had balconies above them from which feretrars or shrine-keepers could watch below.

Roman Catacombs

Location: Rome, Italy

Saints: various, see below

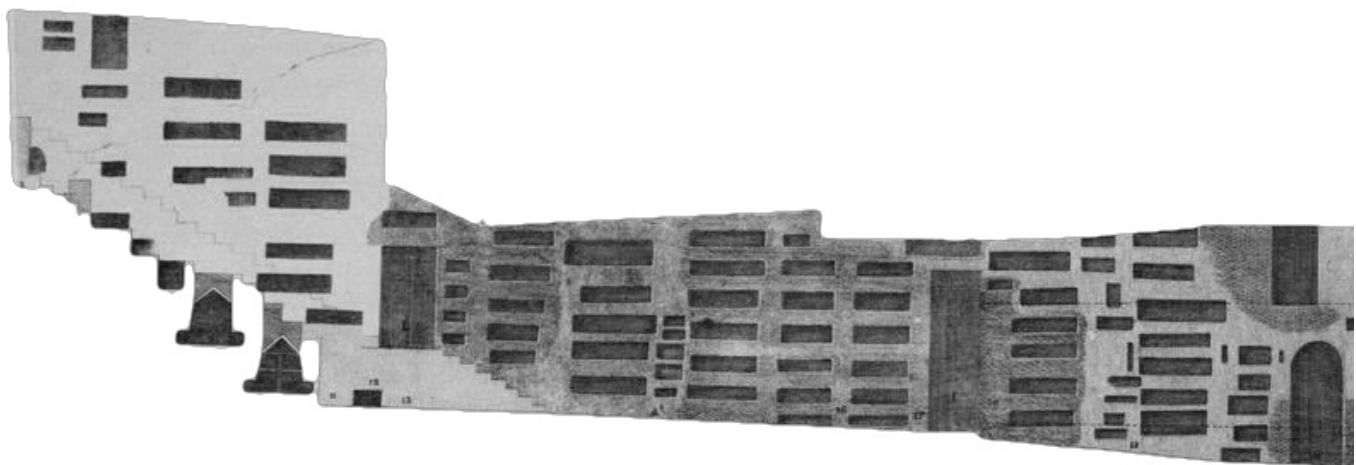
Miracles: see below

Restrictions: The catacombs may be guarded by keepers or squatters, occupied by monsters, and are in any case usually inherently dangerous

There were many holy sites in Rome, of course. The churches, chapels and shrines in and around the city are too numerous to list, and the GM might want to just use the random tables in “Furta Sacra” or else assign shrines for whatever miracles are preferred. One kind of pilgrimage site that was especially popular in Rome was the catacomb. There were many catacombs in and around Rome, ranging from small crypts confined to a single lot in the city to sprawling complexes reputed to continue for miles. Some of the major catacombs of Rome were:

THE CATACOMB OF ST. CALLIXTUS. These catacombs, which are over 12 miles long, had many early popes buried in them. St. Cecilia’s crypt, with an elaborate shrine, is here, as are those of many other saints. The catacombs were enlarged by the Pope Callixtus I, however he was not buried there but at the catacomb of Calepodius.

THE CATACOMB OF ST. SEBASTIAN. This was one of, if not the, oldest catacomb. It was reputed to be a meeting place of conspirators and fanatics. It is not very large but originally had four levels.



A cross-section of the catacombs of St. Callixtus, by Rossi. Notice the uneven ceiling and floor and the vast number of *cubicula*.

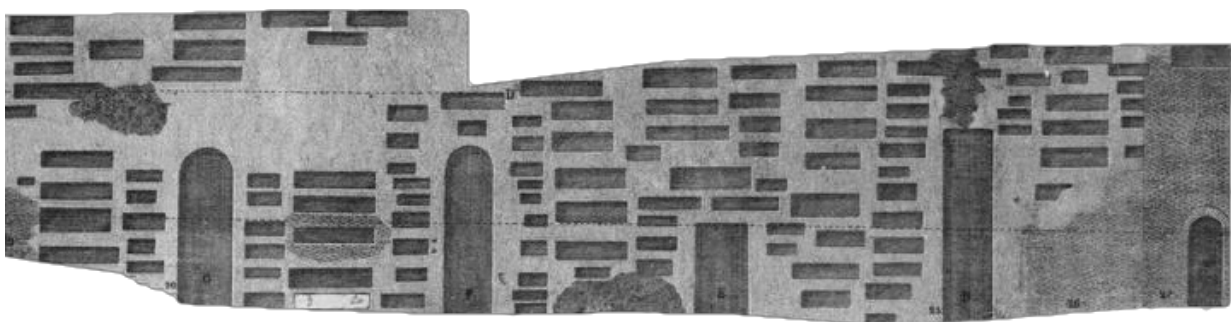
THE CATACOMB OF ST. DOMITILLA. These catacombs are among the oldest and largest in Rome, extending over 9 miles. They include an underground basilica and connect to natural caves. They were forgotten in the 9th century and only rediscovered in the 16th, making them one of the best preserved catacombs as well since they avoided the worst of medieval looting.

THE CATACOMB OF ST. VALENTINE. Unusually, this catacomb was not dug down into the ground but into the side of a hill, and was technically not underground. This catacomb was entered via a vestibule with elaborate murals of saints painted on the walls. A cemetery with mausoleums and tombs was added later.

THE CATACOMB OF COMMODILLA. Many significant crypts and tombs were connected to or built into this catacomb. SS. Felix and Adauctus had crypts there, and the tombs of SS. Luke and Turtura were there.

THE CATACOMBS OF ST. HERMES. Many saints were buried here, including two martyrs, SS. Protus and Hyacinth, who shared a crypt. A vast domed basilica was added to the catacomb and the dome was visible above ground.

THE CATACOMBS OF PRISCILLA. These catacombs were mines later used for pagan and then Christian burials. There are many saints and popes buried here, and they connect to a large crypt of a noble Roman family.



Pilgrimages in Venice

Venice, the “Queen of the Adriatic”, was the most frequent stopping point for pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, and home to many important relics: one of the jars in which Jesus turned the water to wine for the wedding in Canaan; St. George’s arm; St. Nicholas’ staff; St. Paul’s severed ear; and a tooth of Goliath, all in various shrines and chapels.

Basilica of St. Mark

Location: Venice

Saints: St. Mark, St. Isidor

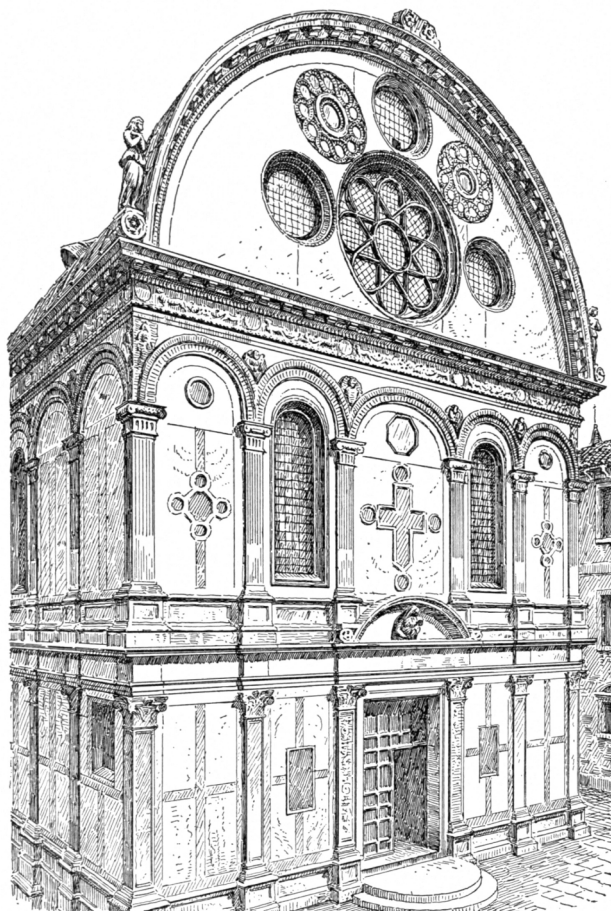
The body of St. Mark was brought here from Alexandria (a *furta sacra*) in the 9th century. Many treasures looted from Constantinople are also here. The interior is lavishly decorated, and it is the burial place of many doges and the ruling families of Venice. It is situated next door to the palace of the doge of Venice. A chapel devoted to St. Isidor (translated here in the 12th century) was added in the 14th century.

Santa Maria dei Miracoli

Location: Venice

Built in the 15th century to house a miraculous painting of Mary, object of worship by Venetians who came to it in great numbers to implore graces through the intercession of the Virgin.

Facade of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, by
Charles Herbert Moore



Santa Maria delle Grazie

Location: Cocullo

Saints: Virgin Mary, St. Domenico Abate

Miracles: Control Weather, Cure Disease, Neutralize Poison, Snake Charm

St. Domenico Abate (or Domenico di Sora) is credited with many miracles: calming storms, curing rabies and fevers, and curing animal bites. He is celebrated the first Thursday of May with the Feast of Snakes, where snake-breeders bring in piles of non-venomous snakes, adorn his stature with them, and parade it through town, finally releasing the snakes into the woods — repeating an ancient pagan rite from antiquity.

Abbey of San Galgano

Location: Siena

Miracles: Conjure Animals, Sanctuary, Glyph of Warding

Restrictions: Possible dismemberment if you touch the sword

This abbey is home to a sword in a stone (St. Galgano's) which predates the Excalibur story; additional legends tie the chapel to the Grail quest, and suggest that St. Galgano's canonization papers (the "book") contain the secret of the grail; alternatively the chapel itself is the "book" to those who can read it. St. Galgano was a knight who, after a visit from St. Michael, became a hermit. He abandoned his betrothed and knighthood, and drove his sword into the rock to form a cross. Anyone who has tried to remove the sword has had their arms ripped off, but perhaps someone is worthy of the sword. Apart from the sword in the stone, his other miracle is being saved from an assassin by a pack of wolves who gnawed the assassin's arms off. The arm bones are enshrined here, as is Galgano's incorrupt head. The rest of his body is possibly entombed beneath the rock with the sword.

Catacombs of San Gennaro

Location: Naples

Saints: St. Januarius, others

Restrictions: Often occupied by bandits, see Roman Catacombs

The burial site of St. Januarius and many bishops, these catacombs were in use from the 5th to 11th centuries, and afterward became the haunt of robbers. From the 13th century onward the catacombs were looted repeatedly.

Pilgrimages in the Mediterranean and the Levant

Although there are many potential pilgrimage sites beyond Europe, the following sites were generally known to Westerners or stops on chartered pilgrimage voyages.

Island of St. Nicholas

Location: Gemile Island, Lycia, Turkey

Miracles: Find the Path

Famous for a set of tools that never lost their edge, thanks to a miracle from the saint. This island was a common “excursion” stop for pilgrims.

Islands of Rhodes

Mandeville reports that one of the seven islands of Rhodes had a daughter of Hippocrates, who had been transformed into a dragon, and only the kiss of a soldier who was a virgin could release her from the spell. Pilgrims did not let the obviously pagan origin of this legend stop them from trying to get a look.

Relics in the Holy Land

A number of relics were displayed for pilgrims in the Holy Land and could be seen if one paid a guide:

- Aaron's rod
- a pillar of salt (Lot's wife)
- the table from the last supper
- bits of the fishes and loaves from the miracle
- hay from the nativity manger
- a portrait, made by St. Luke, of the Virgin
- the burden of St. Nicholas
- a water-pot from the wedding feast at Cana
- the ear of St. Paul
- three stones thrown at St. Sebastian
- a molar of Goliath, six inches long and weighing 12 pounds

Biblical relics and locations would be a source of the obviously biblical miracles in the cleric spell list: Insect Plague, Sticks to Snakes, Part Water, Darkness, Purify Food and Drink, Create Food and Water, Flame Strike, Earthquake, etc.

Other places in the Holy Land

Places mentioned in the Bible were all identified with uncanny precision by tour-guides, as were a number of spurious sites like:

- the schoolhouse attended by the Virgin as a child
- where Jesus warmed the water for washing his disciples' feet
- a cave or well where King Herod threw victims of his spite
- where Mary stopped to nurse during the flight into Egypt

Historical monuments were also misidentified; for example the pyramids in Egypt were said to be Pharaoh's granaries.

Shrine of St. George/Shrine of Khidr

Location: Beit Jala, near Bethlehem

Miracles: Cure Insanity

Restrictions: Must spend 20 days shackled at the shrine

The shrine of St. George is notable because for centuries it was used as a sort of interfaith insane asylum. Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike brought the insane to the shrine to be healed. The sufferer was shackled to the floor, and kept at the shrine until cured. Eventually a ritual evolved where one simply had a shackle affixed to one's neck three times and then the cure would be requested of the saint. Although St. George was revered as a militant, crusader saint in England (and as a dragon-slayer, his banner was carried against Wales, which had a wyvern or dragon on its banner), Muslims revered St. George as "Khidr" or "Khadr," ("the Green One"), and as a patron of agriculture and fertility.

The Cave of St. Nicholas

Location: Beit Jala, near Bethlehem

Miracles: Blade Barrier, Hallucinatory Terrain, Knock, Sanctuary

The saint reportedly lived in the cave for several years, and occasionally manifests as a spear-armed specter who defends the town against invaders. Another time, he created a temporary sea around the village to keep out raiders. In modern times, he has been seen catching bombs that might have fallen on the village during the World Wars and the Arab-Israeli conflict. He also appeared at various times to perform more conventional and even mundane miracles, such as unlocking the church's doors to release a worshipper who had accidentally been locked in one night. At Beit Jala, at least, the saint intercedes for Christian, Muslim, and Jew alike, protecting all from harm.

CAIRO

By the 14th century, the cemeteries of Cairo were popular tourist/pilgrimage sites for various sects of Islam, and guidebooks were published pointing out various shrines with specific benefits. One shrine cured horses of constipation, for example. The devout might recite scriptures or prayers, or leave written prayer requests on the site, squeezed between blocks or bricks to request the baraka (or blessings) of the saints. Some reformers would challenge visiting tombs and shrines as idolatry, but such things continued until the rise of the Wahabbi Saudis in 1806, when pilgrimage sites began to be systematically demolished, though these devotions have never been completely extirpated.

Clerics & Relics

Although most of the “Cleric” spells in older FRPGs are loosely based on the religious miracles of folklore and scriptures, the cleric class doesn’t do a very good job of depicting medieval miracle-workers. Miracles were generally worked through the agency of saints, who themselves were conduits for God’s power, so miracle-workers would necessarily be saints themselves or else appealing to the saints for intercession, either indirectly in prayer or directly by touching or speaking to relics. So one way to rationalize the cleric class might be to say that the PC is in fact an uncanonized saint. Among the drawbacks to this would be that saints didn’t usually have lives that fit well with adventuring. In the Middle Ages most were clergy tied to a particular parish or diocese and there would be very few opportunities to travel. The following optional modifications of the Cleric class jibe better with a medieval-inspired setting, where miracles are worked mostly through the agency of deceased, canonized saints and their relics. I call this modified cleric class the “Relic cleric”. But really there are two approaches that we could take: Relics are material components, or Clerics must utilize relics and/or shrines to add spells to their repertoires and to gain their daily spells.

OPTION I. The basic idea is that the material component for most clerical spells is a relic. We can assume that for first level spells, the holy symbol and/or holy water would suffice. However, for higher level spells, some sort of relic must be used to channel the divine power that works a miracle. The relic is not necessarily consumed by the spell — the exception being Class III oils and waters that have merely touched another relic. The minimal relic required for spellcasting is: Class III for 2nd and 3rd level spells; Class II for 3rd and 4th; Class I for 5th and up, while 7th level spells require Class I relics from Christ, other biblical figures and apostles, or the most potent saints. The size and awkwardness of a relic might increase its potency too: a feretrum with most of an incorrupt saint’s body would serve for 7th level spells even if the saint was minor; the lance of a major saint like Saint George could work 5th level spells even though it is technically just a Class II relic.

As relics are accumulated by a cleric, spells may be added to his list of those available for casting. It may be helpful to keep a list of relics that have been obtained, and the spells they provide access to, in case a relic is lost.

Cleric & Miraculous Options for Your Games

OPTION 2. Ordinarily clerics in most versions of the most popular FRPG automatically “know” all the spells available to them by level — that is, a cleric that can cast second level clerical spells would have all the spells in his or her repertoire and simply chooses from them when memorizing spells. Under this option, clerics learn spells (that is, add them to their repertoire) by going on pilgrimages or obtaining relics. As in option 1, first level spells are “exempt” from these requirements but all higher level spells must be “learned” by actually visiting the shrine of an associated saint or otherwise visiting a holy site (wells, caves, rocks, etc.) reputed to work the miracle. The itinerary given in “Whither Pilgrim” outlines the miracles associated with some famous holy sites; the saints associated with particular miracles is given below.

Once a given spell is learned, the cleric retains access to it for memorization. However memorizing spells requires prayer before a shrine or altar. Any shrine or altar will do, and for first level spells, the cleric’s holy symbol will stand in for a shrine. However this will mean that the cleric will not be able to pray for spells while on adventures unless he or she can get to some kind of altar or shrine. Portable shrines or feretrum would allow regaining spells on the march, but these are expensive and usually rather delicate.

Owning a relic would also allow the cleric to “spontaneously” cast the spells associated with the relic. For example, if a cleric owns a tooth of St. Dunstan, he can use any memorized second level spell to cast a Spiritual Hammer. For this reason a cleric may want to keep a number of relics on hand, even though he does not need them to memorize or cast spells already known.

As a cleric visits pilgrimage sites, he should record the spells they add to his repertoire. Grave sins, and offenses against the saint involved, may cause the cleric to lose access to these spells, but normally there is no need to revisit a pilgrimage site once it has been visited.

Item Creation and Turning

ITEM CREATION: Clerical scrolls should be removed from the game and replaced with holy oil/chrism, incense infused with Class III relics, consecrated wafers, and specially blessed candles, any of which will be consumed in the process of releasing a stored spell. Instead of scribing scrolls or brewing potions, clerics would be able to create such items, at an equal cost in time and treasure per standard item creation rules, though relics of various sorts would replace the usual monster parts and rare reagents normally called for.

TURNING: Turning Undead requires either a holy symbol or a relic; a holy symbol with a relic embedded in it will increase the efficacy of the cleric's Turning (+1 level for Class III, +2 for Class II, and +3 or +4 for Class I, depending on the nature of the relic). However relics added to a symbol for this purpose will not provide for other miracles (either as components or for spontaneous casting). Relics to be used for spellcasting may be carried in special reliquaries of a suitable size, ranging from tiny amulets to massive *feretra*.

Spells associated with Saints & Relics

Miracles often mimic the events of the Bible, as when St. Perin turned a whip into a snake in imitation of Aaron's trick with his rod, or take some turn of phrase in the Bible extremely literally, as when St. Francis preached to the birds.

The following guidelines are suggested for the spells most frequently included in old school fantasy role playing games.

Because the miracles attributed to saints almost always had some biblical precedent, it is usually possible to identify both a saint and some biblical character or object that might serve as a focus for the miracle. Though relics had many different miracles attributed to them, saints and biblical figures can be particularly associated with miracles similar to those in the clerical spell list. The biographical details, method of martyrdom, and reputed miracles after death are used below to suggest particular saints that a cleric would need relics of to perform miracles — that is, to cast clerical spells.

Curing and healing miracles are extremely common and most relics should be suitable, regardless of the particular saint's areas of patronage or biography. Likewise certain other miracles are generic appeals for divine intervention that could reasonably be ascribed to almost any relic, either in the form of visions (AUGURY, LOCATE OBJECT, DIVINATION) or simply the awesome power of the divine (PRAYER, PROTECTION FROM EVIL 10', HOLY WORD). Other saints may of course be added according to the GM's whim. Some of the recommended saints, below, have parenthetical notes to help explain my thinking in the assignments and the GM can use these to help determine miracles appropriate to other saints — apocryphal, historical, or invented just for the game.

Level 1 Spells

A holy symbol is all that is required for first level spells, except BLESS and PROTECTION FROM EVIL, which also require Holy Water.

Level 2 Spells

AUGURY: Many shrines and relics grant prophetic visions or dreams. St. Gregory the Great (mother had vision of the future).

CHANT: As this is a combat-oriented spell, saints who were soldiers in their earlier life are appropriate. St. Martin, St. Victor of Milan, St. Alkmund.

DETECT CHARM: Detection spells in general would be the domain of scholar-saints, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and so on. CONCEAL CHARM: Deception is usually sinful and the reversal of DETECTION spells would be rarely granted.

ENTHRALL: Saints known for their oratory, such as St. Yves of Bretagne (who was a lawyer).

FIND TRAPS: Some saints miraculously noticed attempts on their lives, or other dangers. For example, St. Benedict noticed poisoned loaf of bread that was offered to him by assassins.

HOLD PERSON: Though really a combat-oriented spell and not well attested in legend, relics did occasionally stay or paralyze people, and St. Brigit made a host of men pursuing a maiden freeze immobile, while St. Odilo immobilized a thief. St. Lawrence (patron of laziness) might do too.

KNOW ALIGNMENT: Many saints could discern one's true nature at a glance. St. Longinus (who recognized Christ's divinity).

UNDETECTABLE ALIGNMENT: Christians would rarely want to conceal their alignment, but it might serve some purpose, for example as part of a test of another, which was the only analogy I found. St. Alexis (who hid his identity).

RESIST FIRE: Many saints resisted being burned by fire or being dipped in boiling pitch: St. Cecilia, St. Boniface, St. Erasmus, SS. Cyprian and Justina, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis of Paula, St. Peter Gonzalez, etc. Saints martyred by fire could also be effective: St. Agatha (martyred by fire, later invoked against volcanoes), St. Apollonia of Alexandria, St. Florian, St. Victor of Milan.

SILENCE, 15' RADIUS: Apart from St. John Nepomuck (patron of silence), there were many saints famous for their vows of silence (St. Arsenius, St. Euthymius, St. Poma, etc).

SLOW POISON: I've always thought this was an underpowered and hard to use spell, but like all curative spells any relic would do.

SNAKE CHARM: Saints frequently dealt with serpents, the most famous being St. Patrick, St. Cadoc.

SPEAK WITH ANIMALS: St. Anthony of Padua (preached to fishes), St. Francis of Assisi (preached to animals), St. Euphemia (calmed lions), St. Cuthbert.

SPIRITUAL HAMMER: Another “flashy” spell tailored for the game, the best bets are St. Dunstan (a smith), militant saints like St. Martin and St. Mennas, and St. Adrian (martyred with blacksmith’s anvil and hammer).

Level 3 Spells

ANIMATE DEAD: The creation of skeleton-men and zombies may seem like a poor fit for Christian saints, but there were some miracles where the dead were raised for temporarily, and I would also include saints who restored dead animals here. Ezekiel (the valley of dry bones), St. Erkenwald (temporarily raised the Pagan dead so they could be baptized), John Schorne.

CONTINUAL LIGHT: Some saints had miraculous illumination, for example St. Genevieve whose vigil candles could not be extinguished by demons. Many saints have lamps or torches associated with them in iconography and so are also thought to bring light. For example, St. Brigit’s symbol is a lamp. And some saints were so luminous that their faces cast shadows or they seemed to be crowned with fire or light (St. Aelred, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Africus, St. Arsenius, many others). **CONTINUAL DARKNESS:** Moses (one of the plagues), St. Cadoc (repelled robbers by bathing them in darkness).

CREATE FOOD AND WATER: Miraculous feasts are not uncommon, and food provided to the faithful in the wilderness is frequently mentioned. The Old Testament prophets wrought such miracles (Elijah had food brought by ravens during a drought; Moses produced manna in the wilderness), and of course the New Testament has a few examples from Jesus and relics from those miracles were often displayed or sold in the Middle Ages, like jugs from Cana and leftovers from the loaves and fishes. Some saints were actually given food by angels like St. Avoya, St. Clara, St. Aibert, and some saints repeated biblical food production (St. Agnes, St. Brigid, St. Austregisil, St. Clara, St. Euthymius, many others)

CURE BLINDNESS: A host of saints cured blindness, eye ailments, or injuries to the eyes. St. Amandus, St. Frodobert, St. Bernard, and dozens of others. **CAUSE BLINDNESS:** St. Alban (caused a soldier’s eyes to fall out), St. Paul (blinded a wizard at Paphos), St. Catherine of Sweden (a man who tried to lay hand on her was struck blind)

CURE DISEASE: Curing diseases was one of the most frequent miracles, both in the New Testament and among saints and their relics, so really any relic should work, but a few saints were particularly invoked against disease: St. Sebastian, St. Barnabas.

CAUSE DISEASE: Likewise many Old Testament prophets inflicted diseases on various persons, not to mention several plagues and pestilences among Moses' 10 plagues; the saints likewise inflicted diseases up on their tormentors or enemies, though none stand out as particularly notorious for inflicting them. Some saints also inflicted diseases or other maladies and then immediately cured them (for example St. Vitus, who withered and then regenerated a Roman's arms).

DISPEL MAGIC: SS. Cyprian and Justina (Justina foiled and converted the wizard Cyprian), St. Patrick (foiled a witch's spells), St. Columba (foiled pagan sorcerers)

FEIGN DEATH: This spell corresponds most closely to the stylites' ability to spend time motionless and without food and water on top of pillars, but one might stretch the concept to include St. Alexis (who hid his identity from even his parents) and other saints who were miraculously not recognized.

GLYPH OF WARDING: This spell, as presented in the player's handbook, is not a great fit, but a protective aura was occasionally achieved by saints. St. Clare (kept infidel raiders at bay)

LOCATE OBJECT: St. Helena (found the true cross), St. Anthony (patron saint of lost items). **CONCEAL OBJECT:** St. Alban (whose relics were hidden away)

PRAYER: This is another miracle suitable to many saints who were soldiers, like St. Martin, or defenders of the faith. St. George (and other dragon-slayers: St. Domitian, St. Ilerius, St. Marcel, St. Bernard of Menthon, etc.)

REMOVE CURSE: Crosses, holy water, and relics all were effective, at times, at removing curses placed by witches or fairies, so any relic could work this miracle. **CURSE:** various Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles in Acts use curses, as did Jesus in the fig tree incident

REMOVE PARALYSIS: Another common curative miracle. **CAUSE PARALYSIS:** St. Winifred (her well punishes the impious with this), see also Hold Person.

SPEAK WITH DEAD: Many saints speak after death to help others find their bodies: St. Edmund (his head called out after his death) or plan their funerals (St. Angelis) or about their relics (St. Eleutherius, St. Fructuosus, St. Hilary). Some contact the living to issue warnings (Mary Magdalene at Lidwell). And some saints spoke with souls in purgatory, heaven, or hell (St. Patrick).

Level 4 Spells

DETECT LIE: Relics famously were used in oaths and trials, and might smite someone for lying in their presence. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Pancras (hated infidels). **UNDETECTABLE LIE:** The reversed spell would be an unlikely miracle, although in extreme cases there might be justification.

DIVINATION: As the FRPG version of this spell is less for general foretelling and more for identifying lootable targets, this miracle would be uncommon, but there are precedents. St. Bernadino of Siena (who was appealed to by those hoping to find a source of income).

EXORCISE: St. Genevieve, St. Antony, Bishop Wulfstan (though not actually a saint), St. Gall.

LOWER WATER: St. Romain (caused the Seine to recede). St. Fridian (lowered the river Auser), St. Sabinus (lowered the Po River). **RAISE WATER:** wells and spring-creating saints, e.g. St. Winifred.

NEUTRALIZE POISON: St. Benedict (foiled attempts to poison his food), St. John the Evangelist (drank a cup of poison and lived), the biblical Brazen Serpent, St. Winifred. **POISON:** Old Testament prophets, such as Daniel (who poisoned a dragon), St. Valery (who tuned stolen bread and wine poisonous)

PROTECTION FROM EVIL, 10' RADIUS: St. Clare (kept infidel raiders at bay). Those preserved from demons, dragons, lions, and other dangers would also be appropriate. **PROTECTION FROM GOOD, 10' RADIUS:** Keeping angels or other saints at bay is another difficult miracle to justify, but rival saints might manage this, for example the patron saints of two countries at war, or of two trades with feuding guilds.

SPEAK WITH PLANTS: St. Phocas (gardener)

STICKS TO SNAKES: Aaron's rod is the most famous example though some saints imitated this miracle: St. Perin (whose whip transformed into a snake), St. Dominic, St. Valery, and St. Benedict (who all changed stolen objects into snakes). **SNAKES TO STICKS:** St. Patrick, St. Cadoc

TONGUES: Many saints had this gift: St. Bernadino, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Pachomius, St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Francis Xavier, and of course the apostles. **CONFUSE TONGUES:** Relics from the tower of Babel such as bricks, trowels, etc. would be the best bet.

Level 5 Spells

ATONEMENT: St. Blaise (well), lock of the hair St. Mary Magdalene used to wash Jesus' feet.

COMMUNE: Saints visited by angels would be the most obvious choice: St. Ignatius, St. Martin, Pope Leo VIII

CURE CRITICAL WOUNDS: St. Elmo (survived all tortures but having his entrails drawn out).

DISPEL EVIL: Saints frequently put demons or the Devil to flight. St. Margaret (caused a devil to burst), St. Antony, St. Dunstan (rebuked Satan), St. Theophilus, St. Benedict, etc. DISPEL GOOD: Probably not a good fit for miracles, but see PROTECTION FROM GOOD 10' RADIUS.

FLAME STRIKE: St. Antony of Padua (symbol is a flame), prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:10-12).

INSECT PLAGUE: Moses (10 plagues), St. Severin (locusts), St. Ambrose (swarmed with bees but unharmed).

PLANE SHIFT: Crux Borealis in St. Pauls, London; also a number of saints were transported by angels: St. Barbara, St. Paul the Hermit, St. Fructuosus, St. Titus, etc.

QUEST: Saints occasionally compel people to do their bidding, and some saints compelled demons or Satan himself to do their bidding: e.g. St. Francis of Paula.

RAISE DEAD: St. Thomas Beckett and many other saints or their relics are credited with this miracle. SLAY LIVING: St. Leo IX (pope who saw several liars struck dead), St. Edmund, Moses (10 plagues), various Old Testament prophets, St. Hilary (who saved his daughter from paganism by having them struck dead).

TRUE SEEING: St. Dunstan (saw through Devil's disguise). FALSE SEEING: Again, deceptions are unlikely miracles, and illusions, rather than merely concealing something, are generally the work of the devil, so this spell cannot be reversed.



PAOLO'S NOTE: SAINT HILARY

The *Legenda Aurea* (Golden Legend) speaks highly of Saint Hilary and, since my friend Carlo mentioned him, Hilary became my favourite saint. Hilary was Father and Doctor of the Church, bishop of Poitiers, France, and performed many miracles. The first one involves resurrecting a kid, but that's not why I love the guy. The second, third and fourth miracle are the important ones: his daughter meant to get wed, but he prayed and prayed the Lord to take her soul so to keep her virgin and pure, and the Lord took her soul in heaven. But then his wife was heartbroken by the loss, and asked Hilary to mercifully send her soul to the Lord too. Hilary prayed and prayed until the Lord took his wife too. Hence SLAY LIVING.

Now, this would be enough, but Hilary's power had many more occasions to show. Heretic pope Leo summoned a conclave, but did not invite him. He showed up anyway, only to hear the Pope mock him. An altercation followed, and as the Pope left the room, Hilary said "if you do not return, who will get back at you?". Then Pope Leo went to the privy, but an attack of dysentery made him shit out his bowels out and die. Meanwhile Hilary, as nobody was giving him a place to sit, decided to sit anyway, and the earth itself rose to provide a seat. When news of the death of the Pope arrived Hilary brought all the bishops in the Catholic faith and then dismissed the conclave.

Don't diss Saint Hilary. Look how awesome he is as he gets ordained here on the left. Don't be Pope Leo.

Level 6 Spells

AERIAL SERVANT: St. Dorothea of Cappodocia (she sent an angel to deliver fruit)

ANIMATE OBJECT: St. Cuthbert (who made an axe kill a thief), prophet Elisha (who made an axe-head swim in 2 Kings)

BLADE BARRIER: St. Paul (the sword being instrument of his death and his symbol), St. Michael, St. Flora (given a sharp sword by an angel as defense against demons). This spell could also represent the apparition of “armies of martyrs” who defend a spot in battle.

CONJURE ANIMALS: St. Edmund (corpse protected by beasts), Elijah (bears sent to kill mocking kids)

FIND THE PATH: Some saints were granted divine guides: St. Oringa (guided by a rabbit), St. William Firmatus (guided by a crow); other saints posthumously guided others: St. Isidore.

LOSE THE PATH: Several saints frustrated thieves by making them unable to find an escape route: St. Eman, St. Hermeland, St. Latimer, St. Bernard.

HEAL: The most potent relics might work this miracle. In addition, the minor saint St. Pantaleon of Nicomedia (as patron of physicians) can, and St. Orens was able heal anyone completely regardless of their complaints. HARM: This degree of smiting may seem merciless and cruel, but the retribution of saints is not restrained by mercy.

PART WATER: Moses (famously parted the Red Sea and Jordan River), St. Christopher (who carried infant Christ across a swollen river), St. Alban (who parted a river to enable his martyrdom to be carried out more swiftly)

SPEAK WITH MONSTERS: cf Speak with animals, and consider saints who tamed lions and similar beasts as dealing with “monsters”: St. John of Beverley, St. Werburgh, etc. However St. Antony spoke with several monsters (a satyr, a centaur, and various demons), and St. Domitian, St. Caluppa, St. Fronton, and others confronted dragons, who understood them and were put to flight or slain.

STONE TELL: The spell is a bit of a stretch, perhaps, but there is a reference in the gospel of Luke to stones crying out, and a corresponding literalizing miracle. St. Luke (“If they keep silent, the stones will cry out”), the Venerable Bede (who preached to stones which cried out “Amen!”)

WORD OF RECALL: Some saints were delivered from jail by angels (St. Apollo, St. Felis, St. Germanus, St. Julian of Antioch). Others were spirited from one place to another (St. Maidoc, St. Antony, St. Restituta)

Level 7 Spells

ASTRAL SPELL: St. Peter (holds keys to portal of heaven); saints who had visions of Heaven would also be appropriate (St. Robert of Lyons)

CONTROL WEATHER: St. Nicholas (calms storms), John Schorne, St. Edmund, St. Sabas, St. Serenus, St. Porphyry of Gaza and others.

EARTHQUAKE: St. Victor of Marseilles (overturned idols), Joshua's horn from the siege of Jericho

GATE: Saints rarely summoned demons, but St. Wilgefortis would be an exception: this bearded lady is also known as "St. Uncumber" for her willingness to summon Nightmares to carry bad husbands off to hell.

HOLY WORD: This potent miracle requires enormous faith, but most Class I relics will suffice. The GM may decide on a case-by-case basis whether the situation is one the particular saint has influence over.

REGENERATE: St. Eloy (cut off and rejoined a horse's leg), St. Vitus (restored withered limbs), St. Thomas Beckett and St. Peter (restored severed limbs or body parts). WITHER: The reversed spell is mainly targeted at plants in imitation of Jesus withering the fig tree (St. Leubais, St. Valery); however King Jeroboam's hand was withered as a punishment (1 Kings 13:4) so there is precedent for this miracle, and St. Vitus actually withered the arms of his accusers before regenerating them.

RESTORATION: St. Ausonius (restored energy and vigor to a Roman), St. Antony (had his vitality restored), Sampson's hair, Breast-milk of the Blessed Virgin Mary. ENERGY DRAIN: Though "levels" are alien to the hagiographical literature, some saints did smite their enemies or tormentors with weakness and other unnamed but debilitating maladies which could stand in for energy drain. St. Valery, St. Thyrsus

RESURRECTION: One of the defining miracles of Christianity, the resurrection of dead bodies is surprisingly common in legend, though as this is a seventh level spell, we might interpret most instances of the dead being raised as the lesser miracle of a RAISE DEAD spell, or even

ANIMATE DEAD for short-term effects. St. Nicholas (revived 3 boys who have been killed and mummified), Elisha's bones (which in 2 Kings raised a dead man they merely touched). DESTRUCTION: St. Januarius (tormentors blasted to ashes)

SYMBOL (HOPELESSNESS): Many saints overwhelmed demons, dragons, and pagans by invoking Jesus, God, or the Holy Ghost, so this miracle might be available to any holder of a potent relic. St. Martha (tamed a dragon)

SYMBOL (PAIN): Though inflicting wanton pain may seem malevolent, saints and their relics occasionally smote their enemies with terrible fear and writhing. St. Edmund (smote pagans on several occasions)

SYMBOL (PERSUASION): On many occasions a cross appeared in the sky, halting saint's enemies. St. Cyril, St. Ouen.

WIND WALK: St. John the Evangelist (symbol is eagle); St. Euphrasia (carried by angels when pushed from a tower) and St. Marcellus (carried by angels when pushed off a cliff)

A note on the spell list

Perspicacious readers have long noted that the spell list for cleric in the original FRPG is largely drawn from miracles of medieval legend. Some spells are not, but were worth retaining because they fit so well with the usual mode of playing FRPGs — investigation, exploration, and combat. Toward this end I have tried to be liberal in my interpretation of miracles and spells. For example, an angel's appearance and intercession might be simulated by an AERIAL SERVANT if it is merely delivering items or information, while it would be a BLADE BARRIER if it is St. Michael appearing to smite a dragon, or even GATE. Similarly, the iconography or area of patronage related to a saint sometimes causes me to include them under a spell, especially those spells not otherwise well provided for.

Additionally, several supernatural effects are not covered at all by the clerical spell list but were common enough to merit consideration for inclusion by the GM. These are: FEATHER FALL (several saints were miraculously lowered to the ground without harm by angels after a fall or being pushed: St. Agatha Hildegardes, St. Marcellinus), LEVITATION (again, saints were lifted by angels, also there were “flying nuns”: St. Coletta or Nicoletta, St. Peter Celestine, St. Arey, St. Angela of Brescia, St. Agnes), KNOCK (saints freed from prisons or chains by miracles that opened doors and smashed locks: St. Peter, St. Benedict of Mt. Cassio, St. Christansus, St. Eleutherius, or gates opened on their own accord: St. Genevieve), CHARM MAMMAL (saints who tamed lions or wolves: St. Francis, St. Myron, St. Primus, St. Jerome, etc.), CHARM MONSTER (though I also correlate these miracles to SYMBOL, SPEAK WITH MONSTERS, and others, there were several saints who tamed or commanded dragons and other monsters, like St. Martha), HOLD MONSTER (as many monster-slaying saints held the beast immobile while others slew it, such as St. Bernard of Menthon, St. Romanus), PROTECTION FROM NORMAL MISSILES (many saints were saved from hails of arrows or stones, or survived attempts to execute them thereby, like St. Sebastian, St. Savinian), PROJECT IMAGE (“bilocation”, being in two places at once, was a fairly common miracle), TELEKINESIS (saints suspending gravity or moving massive objects: St. Benedict, St. Francis of Paula, St. Christianna, St. Fridian).

In the interest of balance these should be treated as one spell level higher than their equivalent from the MU, druid or illusionist list.

While anyone might go on a pilgrimage, some people are on constant pilgrimages, travelling from site to site and living on charity, or earning their keep as storytellers, pardoners, miracle-workers, or by other means. This is a life of adventure and so is suitable as a class for PCs in FRPGs. Ordained miracle-workers might use the Cleric or Priest class already available in most game systems; this class represents peripatetic miracle-workers who gain access to spell-like powers through their veneration of shrines and relics. Just as fighting, spell-casting Clerics would be an exceptional minority of the clergy, Palmers are an exception to the rule that most pilgrims come from other walks of life. To get the most use out of this supplement, though, the GM should remove Clerics from the playable class list and use Palmers instead.

Miracle Working

Palmers can work miracles. Unlike Clerics who have access to all spells in the lists, Palmers gain the ability to work miracles by visiting the shrines of appropriate saints, holy sites, or recovering relics. The GM should seed the campaign world with a number of well-known shrines for simpler and commoner miracles. As the player desires for his character to learn new miracles, the GM can determine new shrines to create goals and missions and carry the campaign forward, and/or add potential holy sites to adventure sites already planned. The number of miracles a Palmer can work per day is not limited to a number of memorized spells but instead depends on their state of divine favor. Whenever a miracle is worked, roll a d20, adding the character's level and Charisma modifier. If the roll equals or exceeds (10+the spell level of the spell equivalent to the miracle), the miracle is worked. If the roll fails, the miracle is not worked and no further miracles can be worked that day. Turn Undead, while not normally listed as a spell, is a miracle too and the effective spell level is the HD of the creature being turned. The number of creatures affected follows the normal Cleric rules. Note also that some miracles the Palmer can learn may be from other spell lists — Druid, Magic-User, etc. This is up to the GM.

STARTING MIRACLES: Palmer characters begin the game with their choice of one miracle: Bless, Turn Undead, or Cure Light Wounds. In addition, Palmers will have an itinerary identifying at least three more shrines within a week's journey that are reputed to work miracles other than their starting miracle.

GAINING MIRACLES: Palmers who visit miracle-working sites and perform the proper veneration (including offering at least 100 SP per cleric spell level of the miracle) may add the miracle to their repertoire. The GM may require a reaction roll to be made by the saint or power that is providing the supernatural power.

The Palmer: a new class

PRIME REQUISITE: Charisma

HD: d6

FIGHTING ABILITY: as a Thief

SAVES: as a Cleric

EXPERIENCE: as a Cleric

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR: club, staff, dagger, sling, bow, sword, axe; armour no heavier than chain, as they must be able to travel comfortably; small shields allowed.

Note that the description assumes a “silver standard” economy where most transactions are carried out in silver and costs are generally calculated out in silver; if the standard coin is the gold piece, substitute “GP” for “SP” and “SP” for “CP.”

Busking

Palmers also need to develop some skill to earn their keep. They may choose one of the following three busking abilities at first level and add another skill at levels 4 and 8.

STORYTELLING: The Palmer has learned to tell compelling stories about their travels and the places he or she has been. If the Palmer spends at least 30 minutes telling stories in an urban, he will earn funds sufficient to pay for room and board for the night. In rural areas, any household will offer hospitality in return for a similar amount of time spent telling stories and sharing news. Each additional person to be accommodated will take another 30 minutes of storytelling. This ability will cause even those who have otherwise negative reactions to the Palmer and his company to allow them to spend the night.

PARDONING: The Palmer can sell indulgences. In urban areas, the Palmer can earn 3d6 SP selling indulgences. Selling indulgences takes all day, and the Palmer must have access to pen and paper to certify them. In rural areas only d6 SP is earned per day.

PREACHING: Some Palmers offer sermons. The audience will offer coin, food, or lodging to support the Palmer. The Palmer makes a reaction roll and collects food, board, or coin based on the size of the size of the audience and reaction roll.

REACTION	RURAL (VILLAGE OR TOWN)	URBAN (CITY)
very negative	shunned	arrested as vagrant or heretic
negative	mocked	mocked
neutral	meals, lodging in barn	meal & round of drinks or d6 CP
positive	meals, drink, lodging in a home, donations d6 CP	lodging, food & drink at an inn, donations d10 CP
very positive	humble feast, d20 CP in donations, lodge in best home in town	feast and lodging at a fine home, d6 SP gift

Establishing Shrines

Palmers who reach 7th level and who have acquired at least one Class I relic, can establish shrines. The significance of the relic is important for attracting pilgrims, but large, ostentatious, and/or marvelous shrines will also increase the traffic. Shrines located in urbanized areas will be expensive to build, while rural shrines will need to be in areas kept clear of monsters, and all shrines face the threat of thefts by robbers, rival shrine-keepers, and treasure-hunters. A shrine will generate revenue for the Palmer and attract d3 feretrars (shrine-keepers) who will be loyal to the Palmer and support themselves on the shrine’s offerings. Additional guards and staff will need to be hired for pay.

Palmers in the Campaign

The GM who decides to adopt shrine and relic-based clerical magic should place suitable pilgrimage sites, cathedrals, and other holy sites in his milieu with some consideration, as these are the only way the player characters can reliably access clerical magic. Shrines that can lend healing and treat various conditions take the place of a local cleric-for-hire and this will impact the PCs ability to recover from poison, disease, etc. It is a good idea to have a number of healing shrines within a few day's travel of the adventurers' initial starting location.

Since Palmer PCs will be dependent on visiting shrines to gain access to new miracles, clerical spells useful to adventurers should be taken into account when attributing miracles to shrines, and not just the usual healing miracles. Such shrines may become the object of a quest or mission, but remember that non-Palmers in the party will have little interest in visiting shrines all the time and you might leave some shrines to be discovered during the course of other adventures. Forgotten shrines and holy wells, lost relics, and similar boons might be added to suitable places like ruins, catacombs, and forests.

A reaction roll can be required for gaining miracles. There should be penalties and bonuses according to the Palmer's piety and how the saint in relates to the specific request or circumstances. The GM should consider allowing access to Magic-User, Druid, or Illusionist spells when pertinent to a saint's legend (e.g. St. Nicholas unlocked a door: KNOCK). This may also help balance the Palmers reduced access to the full Clerical list.

The Palmer's "endgame" is building shrines of their own. Shrines built by the Palmer PC should generate revenue according to the pilgrim traffic. Traffic will be increased by reports of miracles, the attractiveness of the shrine itself, other nearby attractions, and the ease of access such as being on or near a major road. Traffic is decreased by neglect of the shrine, difficulty in access, the failure of the saint to work miracles, or the humiliation of the relics. Worst of all, the theft or removal of relics can cause a loss of all traffic.

Defending and enhancing shrines — perhaps even establishing a pilgrimage route like the Camino de Santiago — might be a worthy goal for the Palmer when the other PCs are building castles and raising armies, establishing guilds and defeating rival guildmasters, or crafting magic items and researching spells.

Appendix I

An Index of Saints, Spells, and Relics

Now, let us reckon up those apostles who possess two or three bodies. St. Andrew has a duplicate at Amalfi, St. Philip and St. James the Minor both have duplicates at Rome, ad sanctos Apostolos, St. Simeon and St. Jude the same in St. Peter's Church. St. Bartholomew enjoys an equal privilege at Rome, in the church bearing his name. Here we have enumerated six of them, each provided with two bodies, and St. Bartholomew has an additional skin into the bargain, which is shown at Pisa. St. Matthew, however, outrivals them all, for besides the body at Padua, which we have before mentioned, he has another at Rome in the church of St. Maria Maggiore, a third at Treves, and an additional arm at Rome.

— John Calvin, *Treatise on Relics*

For the GM's convenience, the following list gives saints (or other people and things) and the spells associated with their relics. Some specific relics are attested to in various sources and when this information was readily available to me, I include the nature and location of the relic; some relics have many instances (especially those ascribed to Jesus and Mary) or were in portable reliquaries that are impossible to track, and in other cases the details of the relics are not clear but must often would be various bones. The format is:

Name (SPELLS) [attested relics: place].

“Tr.” means “translated (moved) to another site”.

Saints

SS. Cyprian and Justina (RESIST FIRE, DISPEL MAGIC)

St. Adrian (SPIRITUAL HAMMER)

St. Aelred (CONTINUAL LIGHT)

St. Africus (CONTINUAL LIGHT)

St. Agatha (RESIST FIRE, FEATHER FALL) [bones: Catania]

St. Agathias (CURE DISEASE, CHANT, PRAYER) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]

St. Agnes (CREATE FOOD AND WATER, LEVITATION) [skull: Agone; bones: Rome]

St. Aibert (CREATE FOOD AND WATER)

St. Alban (CAUSE BLINDNESS, CONCEAL OBJECT, PART WATER) [bones; St. Albans and Cologne]

St. Alexis (FEIGN DEATH, UNDETECTABLE ALIGNMENT) [a portion of the staircase he lived under Rome]

St. Alkmund (CHANT, PRAYER) [body: Derby]

St. Amandus (CURE BLINDNESS)

St. Ambrose (INSECT PLAGUE, PROJECT IMAGE) [body: Milan]

St. Angela of Brescia (LEVITATION)
 St. Angelis (SPEAK WITH DEAD)
 St. Anthony of Padua (LOCATE OBJECT, FLAME STRIKE, PROJECT IMAGE, SPEAK WITH ANIMALS, CONTINUAL LIGHT, TONGUES) [skeleton, tongue: Padua]
 St. Antony (DISPEL EVIL, RESTORATION, SPEAK WITH MONSTERS, WORD OF RECALL) [tomb: St. Anthony's Monastery, Egypt]
 St. Apollo (WORD OF RECALL)
 St. Apollonia of Alexandria (RESIST FIRE) [skull and arms: Rome; teeth: Rab, Croatia and Porto, Portugal]
 St. Arey (LEVITATION)
 St. Arsenius (CONTINUAL LIGHT, SILENCE, 15' RADIUS)
 St. Augustine of Hippo [Pavia]
 St. Ausonius (RESTORATION)
 St. Austregisil (Create Food and Water)
 St. Avoya (CREATE FOOD AND WATER)
 St. Barbara (PLANE SHIFT) [bones: Cairo, Kiev, and Reiti, Italy; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Barnabas (CURE DISEASE) [skeleton: Cyprus]
 St. Bede the Venerable (STONE TELL) [bones: Jarrow, tr. Durham]
 St. Benedict (DISPEL EVIL, FIND TRAPS, NEUTRALIZE POISON, STICKS TO SNAKES, TELEKINESIS) [bones; Fleury, France]
 St. Benedict of Mt. Cassino (KNOCK) [bones: Mt. Cassino, Italy]
 St. Bernardino (or Bernadine) of Siena (TONGUES, DIVINATION) [bones: L'Aquila, Italy]
 St. Bernard (LOSE THE PATH, CURE BLINDNESS) [bones: Clairvaux Abbey, France; body/tomb: Troyes]
 St. Bernard of Menthon (HOLD MONSTER, PRAYER, FIND THE PATH)
 St. Blaise (ATONEMENT) [skull and hands: Dubrovnik, Croatia; bones: Sivas, Turkey, tr. Maratea, Italy; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Bonaventure (DETECT CHARM) [body: Lyons; right arm: Bagnoregio, Italy]
 St. Boniface (RESIST FIRE) [body: Fulda Abbey, Germany]
 St. Brigit/Brigid (HOLD PERSON, CONTINUAL LIGHT, CREATE FOOD AND WATER) [body: Armagh, Ireland; skull: Lumiar, Portugal]
 St. Cadoc (SNAKE CHARM, CONTINUAL DARKNESS. SNAKES TO STICKS)
 St. Caluppa (SPEAK WITH MONSTERS)
 St. Catherine of Alexandria (PROTECTION FROM EVIL, 10' RADIUS) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Catherine of Siena (RESIST FIRE) [body: Rome; head: Siena; foot: Venice]
 St. Catherine of Sweden (CAUSE BLINDNESS) [bones: Vadstena Abbey]
 St. Cecilia (RESIST FIRE) [body: Rome]
 St. Chad (HEAL) [dust, bones: Lichfield]
 St. Christansus (KNOCK)
 St. Christianna (St. Christina?) (TELEKINESIS) [skull: Milan; other bones: Palermo and Torcelli]
 St. Christopher (PART WATER) [skull: Rab, Croatia; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Clara (CREATE FOOD AND WATER)

St. Clare (GLYPH OF WARDING, PROTECTION FROM EVIL, 10' RADIUS) [body, belt, habit, hair: Assisi]
 St. Coletta or Nicoletta (LEVITATION) [bones: Ghent]
 St. Columba (CURE DISEASE, EXORCISM, CHARM MAMMAL, CONTROL WEATHER, RAISE DEAD, COMMUNE, DISPEL MAGIC) [bones: Ionia, tr. various sites in Scotland, tr. Downpatrick, Ireland]
 St. Cuthbert (ANIMATE OBJECT, SPEAK WITH ANIMALS) [body: Lindisfarne, tr. Durham; cross, feretrum: Durham]
 St. Cyriacus (EXORCISM) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Cyril (SYMBOL OF PERSUASION)
 St. Denis (SPEAK WITH THE DEAD) [banner, other relics: St. Denis, France; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Domenico Abate (CONTROL WEATHER, CURE DISEASE, NEUTRALIZE POISON, SNAKE CHARM) [Cucollo, Italy]
 St. Dominic (STICKS TO SNAKES) [bones and skull: Bologna]
 St. Domitian (PRAYER, SPEAK WITH MONSTERS)
 St. Dorothea (Dorothy) of Cappodocia (AERIAL SERVANT) [bones: Rome]
 St. Dunstan (DISPEL EVIL, SPIRITUAL HAMMER, TRUE SEEING)
 St. Edmund (CONJURE ANIMALS, CONTROL WEATHER, SLAY LIVING, SPEAK WITH DEAD, SYMBOL OF PAIN) [body: Burt St. Edmund]
 St. Eleutherius (KNOCK, SPEAK WITH DEAD)
 St. Elmo (aka Ernest, Erasmus of Formiae) (CURE CRITICAL WOUNDS) [bones: Formiae tr. Gaeta, Italy; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Eloy (REGENERATE)
 St. Eman (LOSE THE PATH)
 St. Erasmus (RESIST FIRE)
 St. Erkenwald (ANIMATE DEAD) [London]
 St. Euphemia (SPEAK WITH ANIMALS)
 St. Euphrasia (WIND WALK)
 St. Euthymius (CREATE FOOD AND WATER, SILENCE, 15' RADIUS)
 St. Eustace (SPEAK WITH ANIMALS, FIND THE PATH, SYMBOL-PERSUASION) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Felis (WORD OF RECALL)
 St. Flora (BLADE BARRIER)
 St. Florian (RESIST FIRE)
 St. Francis of Assisi (SPEAK WITH ANIMALS) [tunic: Gubbino, Italy; hair shirt, sandals, cross, bandages: Assisi]
 St. Francis of Paula (QUEST, RESIST FIRE, TELEKINESIS)
 St. Fridian (LOWER WATER, TELEKINESIS)
 St. Frodobert (CURE BLINDNESS)
 St. Fronton (SPEAK WITH MONSTERS)
 St. Francis Xavier (TONGUES)
 St. Fructuosus (PLANE SHIFT, SPEAK WITH DEAD)
 St. Galgano (CONJURE ANIMALS, SANCTUARY) [Siena]
 St. Gall (EXORCISM)
 St. Genevieve (CONTINUAL LIGHT, EXORCISE, KNOCK) [bone: Paris]
 St. George (PRAYER, CURE CRITICAL WOUNDS) [skull: Rome, London, Reichenau Germany, Marmoutier Abbey France, Venice; arm and two fingers: London; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria; Beit Jala]
 St. Germanus (WORD OF RECALL)

St. Giles (ATONEMENT, CURE DISEASE) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Govan (PLANE SHIFT, PRAYER, ALTER REALITY) [Pembrokeshire, Wales]
 St. Gregory the Great (AUGURY) [bones and throne: Rome]
 St. Helena (LOCATE OBJECT) [bones: Rome]
 St. Hermeland (LOSE THE PATH)
 St. Hilary (SLAY LIVING, SPEAK WITH DEAD) [bones: Poitiers and Le Puy; various relics throughout France including his Feretrum at Faye-L'Abbesse]
 St. Ignatious (or Ignatius of Antioch) (COMMUNE) [bones: Antioch, tr. Rome]
 St. Ilerius (PRAYER)
 St. Isidore (FIND THE PATH, PROJECT IMAGE) [bones: Murcia, Spain; body: Rome]
 St. Januarius (or Gennaro) (DESTRUCTION) [body: Naples, Benevento]
 St. Jerome (CHARM MAMMAL) [bones: Bethlehem, tr. Rome]
 St. John Nepomuck (or John Nepomucene) (SILENCE, 15' RADIUS) [body: Prague]
 St. John of Beverley (SPEAK WITH MONSTERS, SPEAK WITH ANIMALS, FLAME STRIKE) [Beverley]
 St. John the Evangelist (NEUTRALIZE POISON, TONGUES, WIND WALK) [grave: Ephesus; cave where he had visions: Patmos]
 St. Julian of Antioch (WORD OF RECALL)
 St. Kevin (CHARM ANIMAL, ANIMAL SUMMONING, CREATE FOOD & WATER, RAISE DEAD) [County Wicklow, Ireland]
 St. Latimer (LOSE THE PATH)
 St. Lawrence (HOLD PERSON) [bones: Rome]
 St. Leo IX (SLAY LIVING) [bones: Rome]
 St. Leubais (WITHER)
 St. Longinus (KNOW ALIGNMENT, CHANT) [spear: various places]
 St. Lucy (or Lucia) (TRUE SEEING, CURE BLINDNESS, CAUSE BLINDNESS, DETECTION SPELLS) [body: Bourges, Metz, Constantinople, Abruzzo, etc.]
 St. Luke (STONE TELL, TONGUES) [grave: Thebes; bones: Constantinople, tr. Padua]
 St. Maidoc (WORD OF RECALL)
 St. Marcel (PRAYER)
 St. Marcellinus (FEATHER FALL)
 St. Marcellus (WIND WALK)
 St. Margaret of Antioch (DISPEL EVIL) [body: various places in Greece and Italy; hand: Athos, Greece; Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Mark [grave: Alexandria; body: Venice]
 St. Martha (CHARM MONSTER, SYMBOL OF HOPELESSNESS) [bones: Tarascon]
 St. Martin (COMMUNE, CHANT, SPIRITUAL HAMMER, PRAYER) [grave and bones: Tours]
 St. Mennas (aka Menas, Mina, Mena) (SPIRITUAL HAMMER) [bones: St. Mina, Egypt]
 St. Michael (BLADE BARRIER) [sweat, shield, and sword]
 St. Myron (CHARM MAMMAL)
 St. Nicholas (CONTROL WEATHER, RESURRECTION) [tomb and bones: Myra; skeleton tr. to: Venice and Bari, Italy, each holding half; bones: also in Kilkenny, Ireland, Beit Jala, Lycia, etc.]
 St. Odilo (HOLD PERSON)
 St. Orens (HEAL)
 St. Oringa (FIND THE PATH)
 St. Osmund (WORD OF RECALL) [Salisbury]

St. Ouen (SYMBOL OF PERSUASION)
 St. Pachomius (TONGUES)
 St. Pancras (DETECT LIE)
 St. Pantaleon of Nicomedia (HEAL) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Patrick (SNAKE CHARM, DISPEL MAGIC, SPEAK WITH DEAD, SNAKES TO STICKS) [crosier, tooth, and bell: Dublin; lower jaw: Derriaghy]
 St. Paul (BLADE BARRIER, CAUSE BLINDNESS, TONGUES) [bone fragments: Rome]
 St. Paul the Hermit (PLANE SHIFT)
 St. Perin (STICKS TO SNAKES)
 St. Peter (ASTRAL SPELL, KNOCK, REGENERATE, TONGUES) [grave, chains, chair fragments, bones: Rome]
 St. Peter Celestine (LEVITATION)
 St. Peter Gonzalez (RESIST FIRE)
 St. Phocas (SPEAK WITH PLANTS)
 St. Poma (SILENCE, 15' RADIUS)
 St. Porphyry of Gaza (CONTROL WEATHER)
 St. Primus (CHARM MAMMAL)
 St. Restituta (WORD OF RECALL)
 St. Robert of Lyons (ASTRAL SPELL)
 St. Romain or Romanus (LOWER WATER, HOLD MONSTER)
 St. Sabas (CONTROL WEATHER)
 St. Sabinus (LOWER WATER)
 St. Savinian (PROTECTION FROM NORMAL MISSILES)
 St. Sebastian (CURE DISEASE, PROTECTION FROM NORMAL MISSILES) [tomb: Rome; arrows: various]
 St. Serenus (CONTROL WEATHER)
 St. Severin (INSECT PLAGUE)
 St. Theophilus (DISPEL EVIL)
 St. Thomas Aquinas (DETECT CHARM, DETECT LIE) [grave and skull: Fossanova; bones: Toulouse]
 St. Thomas Becket (RAISE DEAD, REGENERATE) [grave and bones: Canterbury; vestment and bone fragment: Gubbio, Italy; finger: Chevetogne, France]
 St. Thomas the Apostle (TONGUES, TRUE SEEING, DETECTION SPELLS) [bones: Edessa, tr. Ortona, Italy; bones: Chennai, India; finger: Rome; thumb]
 St. Thyrsus (ENERGY DRAIN)
 St. Titus (PLANE SHIFT)
 St. Valentine (SYMBOL OF PERSUASION, CHARM PERSON) [skull: Rome]
 St. Valery aka St. Walric (ENERGY DRAIN, WITHER, POISON, STICKS TO SNAKES)
 St. Victor of Marseilles (EARTHQUAKE)
 St. Victor of Milan (CHANT, RESIST FIRE, PRAYER)
 St. Vincent Ferrier (TONGUES, RAISE DEAD) [bones: Vannes, France]
 St. Vitalis of Assisi (CURE DISEASE, LOWER WATER) [head, chasuble, water cup: Assisi]
 St. Vitus (REGENERATE, WITHER) [Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria]
 St. Werburgh (SPEAK WITH MONSTERS, SPEAK WITH ANIMALS, RAISE DEAD) [Chester, Wales]
 St. Wilgefortis (GATE) [icon: London]
 St. William Firmatus (FIND THE PATH)
 St. Winifred (CAUSE PARALYSIS, RAISE WATER, NEUTRALIZE POISON)
 St. Yves of Bretagne (CHARM PERSON, SUGGESTION)

Patriarchs, Prophets, Biblical figures, Sacred Items and Non-Canonized Persons

Aaron's rod (STICKS TO SNAKES)

Bishop Wulfstan (EXORCISM)

Brick from the tower of Babel (CONFUSE TONGUES)

Crux Borealis in St. Paul's, London (PLANE SHIFT)

Daniel (POISON)

Elijah (CONJURE ANIMALS, CREATE FOOD AND WATER, CURSE)

Elisha (ANIMATE OBJECT, RESURRECTION)

Ezekiel (ANIMATE DEAD, CURSE)

Jesus (usually just one spell is associated with a given relic, but anything is possible)

blood [a fine reliquary in Bruges]

sweat

rib

foreskin [Constantinople, tr. Rome]

childhood home [Ancona, Italy]

Jugs from Cana (CREATE FOOD AND WATER)

leftovers from the loaves and fishes (CREATE FOOD AND WATER)

the Withered Fig tree (CURSE, WITHER)

pillar of scourging [Jerusalem, Rome]

true cross [pieces in many locations; sign in Rome]

crown of thorns [Jerusalem, Constantinople, Venice, Paris; thorns widely distributed]

nails [at least 30 in various places]

burial shrouds [Turin]

John Schorne (ANIMATE DEAD, CONTROL WEATHER)

John the Baptist [head: Rome, Amiens, Munich, Damascus, Armenia, Scetes Egypt, Istanbul; right hand: Athos Greece and Montenegro; bone: Vezelay, Burgundy, etc. etc.]

Joshua's horn from the siege of Jericho (EARTHQUAKE)

King Jeroboam (WITHER)

Mary Magdalene (SPEAK WITH DEAD, ATONEMENT) [body: Fécamp; finger: Lincoln]

Moses (CONTINUAL DARKNESS, CREATE FOOD AND WATER, CAUSE DISEASE, CURSE, INSECT PLAGUE, PART WATER, SLAY LIVING)

Virgin Mary:

Our Lady of the Pillar (PROJECT IMAGE) [Zaragoza, Spain]

Breast-milk of the Blessed Virgin Mary (RESTORATION) [Walsingham and other places]

Girdle [London]

Pope Leo VIII (COMMUNE)

Prophet Elijah (FLAME STRIKE)

Sampson's hair (RESTORATION)

The Brazen Serpent (NEUTRALIZE POISON)

Ark of the Covenant [Auxum, Ethiopia]

Appendix II

Adventure Seeds

Adventure seeds for On Road

- 1 - A “John Ball” figure (Lollard priest, rabble-rouser and revolutionary) is known to be in the area, and the local authorities have asked the party to find and apprehend him. The locals will mostly be unhelpful or even hostile if they learn of the party’s mission, though the Church hierarchy will aid them if asked, as a Lollard is a heretic. Complications: The Lollard is also performing miracles — is he a saint or a wizard? and/or: A local friar contacts the PCs, revealing that the accused Lollard is secretly a disenfranchised noble, and is planning to use the peasant revolt he stirs up to replace the local baron.
- 2 - A band of flagellants have forced a local merchant’s son to join their pilgrimage — destined for a shrine on the other side of the country. The merchant needs his son help as soon as possible though, and enlists the party to bring him back. COMPLICATIONS: The son was not forced but went voluntarily. A band of knights have decided to find and slay the heretical band. The flagellants also have a relic of great importance to a local abbot, who wants it returned; however the flagellants have incorporated it into their own portable altar. The destination shrine, long neglected, has become home to evil spirits. And an NPC, important to or beloved by the PCs, has also been swept up by the flagellants.
- 3 - A hermit has encouraged the area’s children to come on a pilgrimage to a faraway shrine. Some townsfolk approach the party to beg for help getting the children back.
- 4 - A band of “laborers” have been roaming the region. They claim to be looking for work, but no-one has seen them working or even inquiring. What are they up to? (A coven of witches looking for victims, outlaws on the lam, a scouting party for bandits, ...)
- 5 - A scholar (alchemist, wizard, etc.) on his way to a large city to see some books. He needs an escort, and asks the PCs. COMPLICATIONS: In addition to the usual dangers of travel, he has some enemies on his trail...some of whom he does not even know about. Rival scholars, Church assassins, thieves, and a mysterious stranger (An enemy? Someone else who needs his help? Or just a long-lost relative tracking him down?).
- 6 - The party, if on a pilgrimage itself, finds a Margery Kempe type figure attaching herself to them. (The historical Margery Kempe was infamously obnoxious as a pilgrim, who made constant, vocal, and teary displays of emotion and piety, and had hallucinations and outbursts that annoyed other pilgrims and eventually caused her to be the target of cruel tricks, abandonment by fellow-travelers, shunning, and finally a trial for heresy, which she passed. On the other hand she was also a mystic and regarded as being touched by the divine and her frequent loud conversations with the saints were taken as possibly prophetic. Kempe traveled very widely and could pop up anywhere.) The Kempe that joins the party (perhaps asking for protection) should slowly reveal a penchant for talking to invisible saints, being overcome with emotion, making ostentatious displays of piety, and so forth. Despite the annoyance factor, she also has useful visions that may lead the party to important finds.

Adventure seeds for Death and Burial

- 1 - The party has been hired (or conscripted) to escort a royal heart to be buried elsewhere. Travel hazards, political intriguers intent on preventing the heart from finding its new home, and vengeful enemies all will make the trip dangerous.
- 2 - A PC's master or lord has died while away on campaign, pilgrimage, or other journey, and his bones need to be escorted home.
- 3 - A local town has had terrible problems with vandalism in their churchyard. Is it grave-robbers, black magicians, the restless dead, or something even worse?
- 4 - A bishop was buried long ago, and then placed in a shrine for several decades. Eventually his advocates lost their bid for his canonization and he was reburied — some say that the shrine offerings were buried with him and represent a kingly hoard! The only problem is that he is still buried indoors, in the floor of a cathedral. But the cathedral is undergoing repairs and this may be the perfect opportunity to get the loot! Can the party pull off a heist?
- 5 - The unclean posthumous congress of a man with his late wife has birthed monsters. Said monsters haunt the church where she is buried. Can the party cleanse this evil?
- 6 - A Viking leader was buried with his magical sword, a legendary blade which in fact is said to be the only the weapon that can harm a monster terrorizing a nearby manor. Can the party find the ancient barrow and claim the blade? One barrow looks a lot like another and he was buried hundreds of years ago...
- 7 - A PC's friend or relative has just returned from a wake, where the bereaved are terrified by the antics of the deceased or his ghost. Is it the pranks of a bored "watcher," a relative trying to clear the house in order to search for valuables, or something more sinister? Can the party expose the prankster who is creating the haunting, or lay the spirit to rest?
- 8 - A wealthy family hires the party to sneak their loved one (who had been denied churchyard burial because they committed suicide, or were a lunatic, etc.) into a churchyard grave. Naturally this simple task is complicated by an unusually watchful sexton, a band of grave-robbers targeting the same yard, and/or restless spirits.
- 9 - An entire family was recently excommunicated, including many members already dead and buried in the churchyard. But heretics cannot lie in a churchyard, and the local cleric asks the party's help to remove the excommunicated dead before they become inhabited by evil spirits. (Do I even need to say it's already too late?)

Adventure seeds for Furta Sacra

- 1 - It's festival/fair time again, and some monks are transporting relics on the festival circuit in portable shrines to solicit donations for a building project (yes, this was a common practice). But they are robbed by bandits! Who is behind this theft — a rival monastery, unscrupulous relic dealers, a noble who wants to claim the monastery's land, or something far worse?
- 2 - An abbot has a vision of a neglected tomb, and asks adventurers to accompany a novice to get it. Is the novice a spy or plant from a competing monastery? Is the relic really abandoned/neglected? Does the relic even want to be moved?
- 3 - The party is hired to recover relics from Moorish Spain, the Holy Land, or some heathen land. The journey itself is forbidding, and when they get to their destination how will they pull off this caper in a foreign, and/or enemy, land?
- 4 - The party is hired to recover a relic from another monastery which stole it some time ago — but they find that the relic is working miracles in its new home and doesn't want to be moved. Returning home empty-handed is not an option, but who dares defy a saint?
- 5 - A town wracked by war, famine, or plague has neglected its relics! A nearby abbot asks the party to recover them so the saints can be properly honored/enshrined. Of course the town isn't quite deserted: ghouls, plague-bearing trolls, and other monsters might have settled in the area; perhaps the 'famine' is caused by a dragon or poisonous serpent.
- 6 - The party, engaged in robbing a tomb, encounters rival adventurers — merchants and/or monks seeking a relic said to be nearby. Can they be trusted to cooperate? Papal agents, more rival relic thieves, and the town watch might all be nearby as well.
- 7 - A saint (well, the relic of a saint) announces his desire to move in a series of prodigies and visions. The party must protect the relics from "inspired" thieves, or maybe the party needs to convince a greedy abbot to allow the relics to be moved.
- 8 - A bishop asks the party to rescue the relics before the Turks (or Vikings/Huns/Moors/etc.) descend on a town. Of course the locals don't think they need this "help" and have geared up for war so it may get a little tricky.
- 9 - A Byzantine catacomb has been located by a Crusader, and though he speaks of devious traps and guardians, there must be a large number of martyrs entombed within.
- 10 - A pilgrim offered a relic for sale to a local bishop — the head of John the Baptist (well, the skull), encased in a silver reliquary. The bishop didn't trust him and refused the deal, but has since had a dream that convinced him he must get the relic and place it in an appropriate altar. The party is engaged to find the pilgrim — a merchant who has traveled far and wide and is always on the move. When they find him, they will learn he has but one of seven supposed skulls of John the baptist! He and some fellow-travelers happened upon a cache of skulls, and while there is reason to think one of them was authentic, the other six are forgeries, copied exactly from the original! The party will need to find the other shifty pilgrims and figure out which head is the real relic.
- 11 - The local church has a relic of an early martyr like St. Oswald, who was dismembered by pagans and his parts scattered. Will the party track down more sacred pieces parts of the saint, so that there can be an impressive (and potentially profitable) translation of the relics to a larger cathedral nearby? (This could also used as the backstory for a more secular adventure. Some traitor might have been drawn and quartered but his descendants are in power now and want his body collected from the four ends of the kingdom.)
- 12 - Relics are disappearing from the catacombs, and the abbot asks for help. Who or what is behind the thefts? Perhaps there are different factions: rival monks, treasure-hunters, cultists, and worse.

- 13 - A warlord is readying his men to seize the treasures in a nearby town. If only a relic of his great uncle, the Sainted Odo, could be found and enshrined in the town the warlord would not dare attack
- 14 - A local man with a reputation as a drunkard and layabout has had a vision of a certain saint who asks him to reform himself and retrieve her relics from their current resting place, which is neglected and unvisited. He has a good idea of where he must go, but needs the party to help him get there safely. He has no money to pay them but swears that a vast treasure is also in the crypt with the relics. The tomb is located at The Abbey, a large monastic estate now held by a militant order of monks. What horrors await in the neglected crypt beneath the ancient abbey?
- 15 - The “seven sleepers of Ephesus” are seven martyrs said to lie in a certain cave. Visitors to their grave report that the position of the sleepers’ relics foretells the future. An important noble or ruler wants the party to consult the sleepers and return with their prophecy for him. The cave, forgotten by the locals, is now home to bandits and worse... The party can try sneaking in to check on the sleepers’ tomb, or may decide to evict the bandits, or fight whatever other horror is there now.

Adventure seeds for Into the Catacombs

- 1 - Strange lights have been noticed coming from the catacomb light shafts. Could it be tomb robbers working at night, criminals meeting, or something far worse?
- 2 - The spirits of some of the pagan dead are stalking the catacombs because their loculi were robbed (only returning the treasures will appease them, and these must be tracked down through fences, merchants, etc.).
- 3 - The ghost of a fossori roams the catacombs because of some dereliction of duty he made in life. He may even be attacking passersby with his pick. Completing his duty (opening or closing a hall or gallery, burying a misplaced body properly, etc.) will lay him to rest.
- 4 - A coven of witches and poisoners meet in the catacombs for infernal rites. The local authorities seem to be unable to catch them and ask the party for help. (Is this a setup? Are the party being sent to their doom, framed, or could the so-called coven be innocent of wrongdoing?)
- 5 - Some important or valuable MacGuffin (a relic, treasure, map, clue, etc.) is thought to be buried in an ancient part of the catacombs — so ancient that the only access halls have been walled up long ago. The party needs to get in, but the local fossori and church hierarchy are watchful and unwellcoming. (Maybe they walled off the area to keep something in rather than to keep visitors out?)
- 6 - Rival families have long wanted to claim a prime section of the catacombs, and remove the bodies of the other family’s ancestors to make room for new construction. The Church has hired the party as mediators (or asked the party’s clerics to volunteer); local authorities are hiring adventurers as muscle to maintain the status quo; the families are hiring assassins to remove any obstacles to their respective plans, and to harass the other side. The party might be drawn into this struggle from one or more angles. Chases, ambushes, and the regular hazards of the catacombs will spice things up.
- 7 - A monster is said to have taken up residence in the catacombs. Whether it is an animal (or pack of animals), a crazy hermit, or a wandering monster is unclear from the witnesses’ reports. Could it be an advance party of some subterranean invasion? Or have some fossori dug too deep and accidentally connected the catacombs to the mythic underworld?
- 8 - An entrance to a forgotten catacomb has been discovered! The party may be caught up in the rush to loot, or explore, the find. Rival treasure-hunters are sure to muck the party’s efforts, and maybe some group doesn’t want anyone exploring their little secret.

Appendix III

a Glossary of Tombs, Burial, Relics & Pilgrimage

ARCOSOLIUM: A burial niche with an arch set over the loculus.

CATACOMBS: underground passages, often complex and maze-like as additions were made over the years. There could be chapel areas, and other chambers and hallways would be filled with nooks and crypts for the dead. The construction of dedicated catacombs in Rome began in the 2nd century, as cemetery land became crowded, but quarries and over excavations were used as crypts long before. They were used by Christians and pagans alike for the burial of the dead and for memorial services. By the time Christians no longer feared persecution (and began their own persecutions of pagans and Jews in the 5th century), most of Rome's catacombs were used only to commemorate the deaths of martyrs. The separate catacomb complexes used by Jews went out of use in the 5th century too and were only rediscovered in the 20th century. By the 9th century, the Roman catacombs completely fell into disuse and were largely forgotten until the 16th century, when scientific surveys of the catacombs began.

CENOTAPH: A empty tomb, often made as a monument to someone buried elsewhere, or maintained after the remains were translated to another location.

CILICE (or "HAIR SHIRT"): A shirt or tunic made of scratchy hair or wool, sometimes augmented by thorns, bits of wire or metal barbs, and worn by penitents. Pilgrims sometimes wore these on their journeys, as part of their penance or a sign of devotion.

CIST BURIAL: Burial in a small rock-lined chamber. The cist served the role of a coffin, protecting the remains from direct contact with the earth and keeping them together.

COLUMBARIUM: A building used to store urns filled with cremains (the ashes and bone cinders of cremated bodies). They often resemble dovecotes, with many small niches.

CONFESSIO: A window in an altar to allow viewing the relics enshrined within.

COSTREL: A canteen or waterskin carried by a pilgrim.

CRYPT: a burial chamber, often located beneath a church. In the 8th-10th centuries, these were common features in churches and cathedrals because relics were not permitted to be housed on the main floor of a church, so crypts were built under the altar, nave, or apse with access by stairs and passages to allow pilgrims to enter the crypt without interrupting church services. Crypts could also be located under mausoleums and chapels on private property. The typical crypt is just a vaulted room, and might have coffins, sarcophagi, or simple reliquaries in them. Elaborately decorated reliquaries would usually be displayed above in the church, after it became common to house relics on the first floor.

CUBICULUM: Chamber or room in a catacomb.

DOLMEN (or "PORTAL TOMB"): These are small burial chambers dug into the ground and covered with large rocks to form a sort of shelter. There is typically an open end, though some are open on more than one side. They are sometimes covered with earth creating tumuli (see TUMULUS).

DOOLE: A black cape or tunic worn by mourners, usually provided by the family of the deceased.

FERETRAR: A shrine keeper, responsible for maintaining a shrine, accounting for offerings, and so on.

FERETRUM: An ornate reliquary used to transport relics on parades or journeys, used as a portable shrine.

FORMAE: A burial niche or loculus that was dug into the floor of a room rather than a wall.

FOSSORES: Catacomb workers responsible for excavating new passages and loculi, maintaining the place, and burying the dead.

HERIOT: Death-tax owed to one's lord, usually consisting in the return of any arms and horses given for feudal services, or the best possession or livestock the decedent owned. Even the very poor or unfree would have to turn over something — a set of clothes or even a humble chicken.

HUMILIATION: Ritual mistreatment of relics in order to apply pressure to secular powers. A humiliated relic lost its potency to perform miracles and provide blessings or prosperity. Humiliation might also be used to punish relics which had stopped performing properly.

INCUBATION: Sleeping near a saint's shrine or remains in order to effect a cure or have a vision.

LOCULUS: A niche in a wall for holding a body or coffin. Loculi were sometimes sealed with slabs (with or without carved reliefs), bricked over, or more rarely left open.

LUMINARE: A shaft, generally running to the surface, which allows light and fresh air into the catacombs. These were sometimes artifacts of the use of the place as mines, and sometimes added specially for more luxurious cubicula.

MAUSOLEUM: An above-ground monument building that may contain remains or be built over a below-ground crypt.

MYRON: A scented oil said to ooze from relics.

OSSUARY: The term ossuary can refer to a chest or box for the storage of bones, but for our purposes we will use the term to refer to the rooms or complexes used to house disinterred bones (usually removed from cemeteries when space runs out). The catacombs of Paris are perhaps the largest & most well-known ossuary. Ossuaries might be rooms full of carefully lined shelves and crates, or they might have a more decorative touch with chandeliers, cabinets, gates, and other furnishings and architectural details created from carefully assembled bones. The care and dignity provided the remains distinguished an ossuary from a more secular charnel house, where bones discovered while excavating for a building or grave would be deposited, often in a jumble of unidentified remains.

PLENARY INDULGENCE: An indulgence offered to a class of people, typically all visitors to a given site or contributors to a cause. The blank-check forgiveness of sins offered to crusaders is perhaps the most well-known plenary indulgence in history.

REFRIGERIUM: A ritualized funeral meal, held in special chambers inside the catacombs. An empty throne-like seat would be reserved for the deceased.

SAWLSCOT (or "MORTUARY"): Fee charged by the Church for a funeral, usually consisting of the deceased second-best possession if they had any notable goods; otherwise candles, livestock, or money would do.

SCRIP (or "WALLET"): A shoulder-slung bag used by pilgrims to carry provisions.

SEPULCHRE: A cavern or grotto-like burial place dug out from rock, usually with a facade carved in front, and rarely free-standing.

SEPULCRO A MENSA: A burial niche with a rectangular space set above the loculus; the lid forms a sort of shelf or table.

TRANSI: A funeral monument consisting of a sculpture of decaying corpse or skeleton.

TRANSLATION: Moving relics, usually with Church sanction, as from a tomb to a shrine or altar.

TUMULUS (or "BARROW"): A mound of earth covering burial sites (possibly with chambers or DOLMEN beneath). Tumuli are generally pagan burial sites, but it would be possible for early Christian missionaries to be buried in them in Scandinavia or England where barrows, howes, and other tumuli were common relatively late.

VOTIVE: An offering left at a shrine, made of clay, wax, or precious metals. The shape of the votive usually represents something the person making the offering wants healed (a body part) or protected (a wheel or ship representing a journey, etc.)

WATCHERS: Hired mourners who attend wakes.

Appendix IV

Delving Deeper: further reading

The following books, articles, and blogs provided a great deal of the information herein, and should be consulted for more information and for inspiration. Where online versions of texts are freely available, I do not provide full citations, as you can see the originals at the urls.

Books and Articles

“Animal traction : guidelines for utilization” / Michael R. Goe and Robert E. McDowell. *Cornell International Agriculture Mimeo* #81, December 1980. This research report on animals in agriculture is chock full of statistics on the body mass and work outputs of animals from asses to yaks and was invaluable for compiling the numbers on how far a sumpter can travel and how much it can carry.

“British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs, 1450-1900” / Robert W. Gaston, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 46 (1983), pp. 144-165. Though this does not cover much of the middle ages, it has interesting anecdotes and descriptions from explorers and tourists, and is a good reminder that catacombs could spark adventures in any period.

The catacombs: rediscovered monuments of early Christianity / J. Stevenson. London : Thames and Hudson, c1978. Well-illustrated and more accessible to the layperson than Nicolai, it gives a thorough history and detailed descriptions of the iconography of the decorations. The Via Latina catacomb is drawn in a very nice, keyed plan and several areas are described in detail — you could easily grab the map and key the rest with some monsters. This also provided the quote from St. Jerome at the beginning of the catacombs chapter.

The Christian catacombs of Rome : history, decoration, inscriptions. / Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti, Danilo Mazzoleni ; [English translation by Cristina Carlo Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette]. 3rd ed. Regensburg : Schnell & Steiner, 2009. Lavishly illustrated with many excellent plans of catacombs. The first section was especially useful.

Death in England: an illustrated history / edited by Gittings & Jupp. Rutgers University Press, 2000. Indispensable; I did my best to summarize and integrate the chapters on the Dark and Middle Ages.

A Dictionary of miracles: imitative, realistic, and dogmatic / by E. Cobham Brewer. New edition. London: Chatto & Windus, 1901. (online at <https://archive.org/details/adictionarymiraoobrewgoog>.) An amazing resource listing miracles from legends, arranged by themes and correlated to the Bible events or phrases they imitate (“imitative”) or render literally (“realistic”) as well as some examples of miracles meant to demonstrate church dogmas. Several essays on various topics are also included. The 50 page index alone is a valuable resource.

English wayfaring life in the Middle Ages / J.J. Susserand. A pioneering work, covering the topic in depth, this relatively scholarly book was a best-seller in its time.

Scan available here: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924027902364>

Funeral customs : their origin and development / Bertram S. Puckle. Online text at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/etc/fcod/> This book is a little dated in attitudes but has a great wealth of anecdotes and interesting tidbits. I found it very useful.

Furta sacra / Patrick Geary. Revised edition. Princeton University Press, 1990. This was the principal source I consulted for the chapter here of the same title. It includes an appendix which lists fifty incidents of sacred thefts in the hagiographical and historical literature from the period.

Heavenly bodies : cult treasures & spectacular saints from the catacombs / Paul Koudounaris. London : Hudson & Thames, 2013. Amazing color photos of “catacomb saints” and a brief history. Some of the photos are viewable here: <http://laluzdejesus.com/dr-paul-koudounaris-heavenly-bodies-christine-wu-come-home/>

Life on a medieval pilgrimage / Don Nardo. Lucent Books, c1996. Aimed at middle- or high-school students, this is a great introduction to pilgrimage and includes a number of passages from contemporary accounts rendered in updated English.

The martyr of the catacombs: a tale of ancient Rome / Anonymous. Available at Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/24680>). Somewhat interesting for its breathless and leering depiction of the bad old days, it is a good representation of what romantics in the 18th and 19th century thought ancient Roman persecutions might be like, complete with congregations hiding in the catacombs.

Miracle cures : saints, pilgrimage, and the healing powers of belief / Robert A. Scott. University of California Press, 2010. Though the author focuses on sociological aspects of pilgrimage, and the only looks at healings and apparitions (as opposed to other miracles), this book is worth checking out both for the overview chapters and some attempts to assemble a large quantity of cases for examination.

“Mummies of Olive Baboons and Barbary Macaques in the Baboon Catacomb of the Sacred Animal Necropolis at North Saqqara” / Jaap Goudsmit and Douglas Brandon-Jones, in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 85 (1999), pp. 45-53. This has a brief description of the necropolis and a simple plan of the catacombs.

Pilgrim life in the Middle Ages / Sidney Heath. (1911) Interesting especially for the chapters on flagellants, pilgrim inns, and pilgrim itineraries. Scan available here: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924027902307>

Roma sotterranea : or some account of the Roman catacombs, especially of the cemetery of San Callisto / J. Spencer Northcote & W.R. Brownlow. (1869) A classic work with a lot of illustrations, it covers the general history of catacombs in Rome and tries to reconstruct an outline of how the catacombs were built and added to.
Scan available here: https://archive.org/details/romasotterranea00onort_0

The Roman catacombs and their martyrs / eds. Hertling & Kirshbaum. Milwaukee : Bruce Pub. Co., 1956. (English translation of Römischen Katakomben und ihre Martyrer) A lot of specific tombs, including those of early popes, are detailed.

“The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages” / J. Osborne, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, Vol. 53 (1985), pp. 278-328. An excellent survey of the later history of the catacombs and their gradual obscurity.

Saints / Alison Jones. Chambers, 1992, republished as *The Wordsworth book of saints*. Wordsworth, 1994. There are many books on saints, but I am fond of this one, which has one or two page entries on a large number saints, including details of their cults and how they are represented in art.

Saints preserved : an encyclopedia of relics / Thomas J. Craughwell. Image Books, 2011. A collection of short entries identifying the whereabouts of various relics, mostly limited to those recognized by the Catholic Church. A brief biography of the relevant saints and their feast days is given, and the usual persecution myths are repeated, but miracles and supernatural events are mostly downplayed or omitted. Some spurious relics are included, but only if they are actually still enshrined in a Catholic church. About half the saints are from later periods.

Shrines of British Saints / Charles J. Wall (1905). This has some great illustrations and anecdotes about shrines. The hosting web site, “Historyfish,” has a great deal of information on holy sites and people. At Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/shrinesofbritishoowall_0
Also available online at http://www.historyfish.net/shrines/british_shrines.html.

“The Topography of the Catacombs of S. Callixtus in the Light of Recent Excavations” / E. R. Barker, in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 1 (1911), pp. 107-127. Quite a bit of detail about the decoration of this catacombs, mainly around the famous papal tombs.

Travel and trade in the Middle Ages / Paul B. Newman. McFarland & Co., 2011. An excellent overview, with some intriguing numbers and statistics that were incorporated into the present work.

Treasures of heaven. Distributed by Yale University Press, 2010. This is an excellent museum exhibit catalog with photos of a number of Christian reliquaries and some essays on them and the cult of relics. I was fortunate enough to see this exhibit in person when it was in Cleveland and found it “inspirational” as well: <http://mikemonaco.wordpress.com/2011/01/04/swords-and-reliquaries/>

Web sites and blogs

THE BLOOD OF PROKOPIUS, <http://bloodofprokopius.blogspot.com/>. This is an interesting blog with occasional posts about saints, and general musings about religion and RPGs, and although the intent is often to proselytize, Fr. Dave has an interesting Orthodox perspective. This post:

<http://bloodofprokopius.blogspot.com/2015/03/saintly-saturday-st-hilarion-new.html> has some of the best of what you'll find there.

THE CATACOMB SOCIETY has a few interactive maps and several galleries of images from various Roman catacombs on their web site: <http://www.catacombsociety.org/>

ELF MAIDS & OCTOPI, <http://elfmaidsandoctopi.blogspot.com/>. Konsumterra's blog Is an excellent source of inspiration and has a number of tables for generating random graves, grave guardians, and grave contents; see for example this post:

<http://elfmaidsandoctopi.blogspot.com/2013/10/grave-robbing-3-guardians-and-graveyards.html>

Honestly I felt a bit "scooped" by some of this, but Konsumterra's tables are more grounded in fantasy and gothic horror than the tables here, which I hope are more "realistic" or at least grounded in reality.

MYSTAGOGY, <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/>, covers many topics of interest and in particular the hundreds of posts tagged "Shrines and Relics" are worth exploring.

<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/search/label/Shrines%20and%20Relics>

One could always do worse than to perform a Google Image Search on the phrase "Pontificia commissione di archeologia sacra" — This is the Pontifical Commission on Sacred Archaeology, which now controls access to the Roman catacombs but has allowed many excellent photographs onto the web.

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