

Rite of Naming

Suzsha crouched in the center of the birthing circle, sweat matting her once-glossy fur. She snarled as another contraction hit, claws raking deep into the hard-packed soil. Nearby her sisters and mother, fellow warriors of the Claw, waited, patiently watching. They guarded the clearing, making sure no one dared to come too close. Above, the hot noon sun broke through the canopy of leaves. Beside her, the Shika Tshosa continued chanting, her gnarled fingers striking a slow beat on the ground with an ancient thigh bone. Her apprentice crouched nearby, slowly adding holy *sezza* leaves to the small fire. The pungent smoke rose up in lazy waves, making Suzsha's senses waver. Tshosa's voice was a sibilant stream of prayer.

"Come oh honored one
Heed the call of bone
Heed the call of blood
Heed the mew of a new soul
Come oh warrior
Heed the cry
Come oh guardian
Heed the blood
Come oh ancient one
Return to your blood
Return to your kin
Come oh honored one..."

Suzsha's panting snarls became a sharp series of pained yowls as the child forced its way from her body in a gush of blood and fluid. Her cub lay upon the ground between her haunches and Suzsha howled in triumph. The Shika Tshosa moved closer, dipping the thigh bone in the blood. Her chant continued as she reached out, one sharp claw gently scribing a holy rune onto the shrieking child's belly. Blood swelled up from the cut; the Shika wiped it off with her fingers, anointing the bone she held. Suzsha's howls faded away as she waited the Shika's announcement.

"*Isshan has returned to us.*"

Around them, the other women broke into howls and screams of joy. Suzsha's lips pulled back from her sharp teeth as she smiled in victory and bent to pick up her daughter, the cub da-Isshan.

Kalkiska - Rite of Honor. This is a ceremony of vassalage or allegiance. Obligations are announced before a gathering of those concerned. The kahan of the lesser-ranking Kalm is offered into the hands of the higher, signifying that the one trusts the other with the guardianship of his honor and soul, a state called *kadiss*. A Kalm under *kadiss* is not responsible for the honor of any act the other requires him to commit - all obligation falls upon the other.

The state of marriage is considered to be a state of mutual allegiance among the Kalmis. It is a simple ceremony before witnesses in which kahan are exchanged for a brief moment and then returned. A marriage can be ended only by the Rite of Duel.

Kaldesha - Rite of Duel. This is a ritual of determination through combat. Conflicts of honor between individuals are settled upon the *Sakiska*, the field of honor. A challenge of *Kaldesha* cannot be refused.

There are two forms of this rite. The first is *Redesha*, the naked duel. Combatants fight naked, using only claws and teeth. *Redesha* ends when one combatant submits his throat to the other. The second rite of *Kaldesha* is *Rekah*, a duel in which kahan are used. This duel ends in the death of one (or both) of the participants.

Kalkors - Rite of Blood. This is the rite of feuding. There are two forms of the *Kalkors*. The first is *Korskal*, a personal vendetta. If a Kalm feels that his honor has been insulted beyond repair, he calls *Kalkors* upon an individual *and* all his lineage within a certain degree of kinship. *Kalkors* is declared by slaying a close member of the lineage in a ritualistic fashion and presenting the body to the challenged party (see *Kalkessa*, below). Such feuds end quickly, though they garner much honor for the outnumbered challenger. Death through *Korskal* is an excellent reason to call the second form of *Kalkors*, *Korska*. This involves entire families, and continues until either honor is satisfied, or there is no one left to fight.

Kalka - Rite of Spirit. This is the initiation rite of a Kalm shaman. About the time of puberty the would-be Shika disappears into the forest for several days upon *Shalel*, or vision-quest. The supplicant wanders and fasts, drinking only his own blood until he falls into a trance state and travels for the first time to the upper realm. It is there that the C'lanan, the great spirit, touches him and grants him his spirit helpers. When the new Shika returns he joins the ranks of the Ka. Shika can be drawn from any of the three castes, although Shika rarely come from the Claw. Those born to the Ka caste who do not become Shika train as Seda or Shani instead.

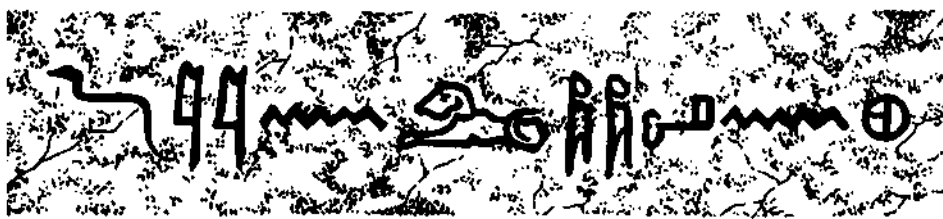
Kalkessa - Rite of Feast. This is one of the most important observances of the Kalm, in which the bodies of the dead are consumed. It is considered the utmost insult to refuse to eat a vanquished foe (hence the horrible consequences of returning the body in the Rite of Blood, above). The kahan of the slain are given to the Shika, who travel to the realm of Kas with the soul.

Kaltas - Rite of Clan. This is an extremely rare rite involving adoption. If honor demands an obligation of such import that even ritualistic suicide cannot repay the debt, the honored person may be adopted, creating bonds of blood and honor that nothing can erase. Before a gathering of the entire lineage, the adoptee is blooded by the kahan of every adult member. In turn, the adoptee drinks from a cup in which blood from the entire lineage - including children has been mixed. (If it happens that the adoptee is not strong enough to survive the rite, he is consumed in a Rite of Feast with great ceremony.)

DISCIPLINES OF CHANGE

It was the year 2042 of the old calendar when Dr. Mary Kelly first demonstrated her incredible power to the world by healing an entire ward of terminally-ill patients. She became a public icon overnight, an object of adulation, fear and worship, hailed as a new messiah, and was eventually driven into seclusion by those who sought her healing touch. She lived in near-solitary confinement for the next 10 years with a handpicked group of students, until her death in the year 2052 at the hands of a rabid mob who feared her power. But her work survived her. Entitled the Doctrine of Change, it spoke of a new way, foregoing faith and religion for rational thought and scientific discovery, emphasizing her own exploration of the mind. From this work, preached and publicized by her chosen students, sprang forth what later came to be known as the Disciplines of Change.

Excerpted from *The Facts Behind The Myth - The Life of Dr. Mary Kelly*



Beliefs

From the words and writings of the prophet Mary came the Disciplines of Change. The Disciplines center about the following tenets:

Knowledge over faith. Perception over belief. Faith, wrote Mary, is the root of all prejudice in the world - faith in religion, faith in country, faith in truths that bear no relation to reality. Those who had opened their minds to knowledge knew the power of questions, and the sadness of ignorance. "Believe only that which you can demonstrate. That which cannot be known does not exist."

Power lies within ourselves. "Those who seek the divine need look no farther than themselves. Accept the power and the responsibility for yourselves, your actions, and their consequences. Seek the keys to unlocking the mind, for within lie the purest truths of all."

Change is the only constant. Change is, of course, the central doctrine of the Disciplines of Change. Mary viewed change as the major power of life. "Through change we grow, leaving behind the old and embracing the new. Change through knowledge is a path leading ever closer to enlightenment."

Learning is the primary motivator for change. "Learning disciplines the mind, leaving it open to change. Without learning we become stale, wasted, static."

Only through scientific exploration can we learn. "True learning must be experienced, explored, quantified and categorized. Rote memorization is worse than useless; it teaches faith rather than knowledge. Random questing can lead one astray. Hypothesize, experiment, and draw conclusions from your own experimentations. Believe nothing but that which you can constantly reproduce."

Without trial, complacency results. "Suffering is one of the prime motivators for change. Fear, starvation, disease, all cause us to seek answers and grow. Contentment breeds complacency. Decay is the result. Suffer, and be changed."

Mind Powers

As Mary Kelly proved, the mental powers sought by adherents of the Disciplines of Change are real. It was her belief that all people had one or more latent powers which could be discovered and trained. This may be true, or it may be that only special individuals with true latent talents will be able to reach this "enlightenment." In any case, it won't really matter to those who believe. Despite considerable attempts to quantify and rationalize the process, the sequence of steps each person goes through to discover his own talents is slightly different. Those who do not achieve such powers have obviously not found the proper path, or are not concentrating upon it adequately.

In game terms, the mental powers begin as latent Psionic abilities and are developed through study and discipline. Techniques include hypnosis, sensory deprivation, meditation, biofeedback and careful consumption of hallucinogenic drugs. There are two aspects to developing a power - achieving or increasing the power of a particular psi ability, and then developing the skill to use it in certain ways. The GM decides whether powers have upper limits, and whether the power for a particular ability is innate (and therefore immutable) or can be increased with further study.

Crystals

Crystals may be used to focus psi power through meditation. The individual clears his mind and concentrates on the chosen crystal. On a successful Meditation roll, the crystal will effectively increase his psi power in whatever ability he attempts to use thereafter. Each 10 carats of crystal (round down) will increase the psi power by 1. The crystal should be pure - without flaws or fractures. Each flaw reduces its effective size by 10 carats. Large, pure crystals are exceedingly rare.

For example, Adrienne, with a Telepathy power of 2, concentrates upon a pure crystal of 25 carats. Assuming a successful Meditation roll, the crystal will increase the effective power to 4, allowing her to Telesend up to 2 yards away from her current location. She must still make a successful Telesend roll against her usual skill level.



All perception is flawed. Truth is relative. Perhaps the most difficult of the tenets, Mary also realized the relative nature of perception, and the truth that results from it. "Your truth is not always my truth. Thus you must always seek the answers that are your own. By examining the works of others you can gain insights and ideas, but only through rigorous testing and cross-examination can real truths be found."

The Martyrdom of Mary

Considered a holy figure by many, Mary's death caused considerable outrage and furor. Not a few venerate her as a martyr of the common age, and have adopted her as an icon for peace against an increasingly violent society. Many without access to the training to appreciate her works see her as a figure worthy of devotion and worship. Some find their way into one of the many sects of the Disciplines, but others ignore her teachings, preferring to view her as a reincarnation of the Virgin Mary. Within the Catholic church, there has been a resurgence of the Cult of Mary, with Mary Kelly as its new focal point.

Needless to say, adherents of the Disciplines decry any attempts to deify their prophet, pointing to Mary's own words. However, their actions have had little or no effect on the growing movement.

Exploration of the Mind

Mary's own field of expertise was the study of the brain and the thought processes of the mind. She wrote many papers on the nature of hallucinations, dreams, and the keys to unlocking the inherent power of the mind. She believed that all people had latent talents which could be trained and developed by scientific methods.

Her research revolved around her own "evolution," as she called it. Beginning with biofeedback techniques, sensory deprivation, and the closely-monitored administration of certain drugs, along with Eastern mantras for centering and focusing the flow of thought, she tapped into her own latent powers and awoke her healing gift. The notes she left were copious and detailed. Her experiments were unorthodox on several levels, but her basic techniques were sound. Her results were unquestionable. Mary had achieved something - something people flocked in record numbers to seek for themselves.

Purpose

The purpose behind the Disciplines of Change is to learn the true nature of the universe and the self. Its disciples hold truth and knowledge, especially self-knowledge, above all else.

Though they stress the internal development of the mind, the leaders of the Disciplines also encourage students to interact with others and share what has been learned. They regularly hold seminars and meetings on all that they have discovered in their personal research. Through the professional quality of their work, proponents of the Disciplines have gradually received approval and acceptance among the scientific community.

Organization

There is no true organization to the Disciplines, no established central body. Mary specifically denounced "archaic and static hierarchies."

Despite her desires, however, certain distinctions are commonly made among followers of the Disciplines. Those new to the Disciplines are known as *Students*. Once they have mastered the basic principles, they are accepted by the community at large as *Associates*. Associates form the majority of the membership. Those Associates with particular initiative and insight will eventually develop a reputation among their peers, and may, with the approval of the majority, be accepted as *Principals*. Principals gather into informal collectives which judge new proofs and theories based on scientific merit, and write papers on their own experiments for others to study. They provide a focal point for the energies and ideas of the whole, and serve as a repository for the information collected by the members. Archives exist in many places, often supported by research grants and various scientific bodies.

Those members who achieve demonstrable mental powers are venerated by their peers, but hold no special rank.

Sects

As time goes on, the loose structure of the Disciplines has led to different sects, each focusing on some particular theorem derived by one of their Principles. Some of the sects merely provide a focus for learning, while remaining open to diverging points of view. Others have become almost hostile to this lax approach, declaring that certain fundamental truths must be accepted in order to ascend to the next state of knowledge. Two of these, on completely opposite sides of the spectrum, conflict openly.

The Relativists believe that since all knowing is relative (especially self-knowledge), the scientific slant of Mary's writings is but one expression of the real truth. They accept all member testament as fact, no matter how poorly documented, and build their theories in whatever manner suits them best. Much of their focus centers around the study of parapsychology and the awakening of mental gifts. Their claims far outstrip any other sect, and thus they tend to draw the more idealistic and enthusiastic adherents.

The Logicians, on the other hand, discount anything that cannot be empirically proven. They distrust many of the Relativists' claims, accusing them of being little better than a charlatan's parlor tricks. They deal only with that which can be easily quantified, and prefer to remain in the more familiar realm of metaphysics and philosophical proof. It is the work of the Logicians which has received the most scientific scrutiny and approval, and as time progresses, they feel more and more weighed down by their less-rigorous Associates.

The Future

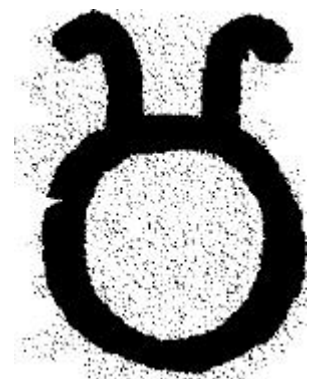
As time progresses, the differing sects grow farther and farther apart. Some of the collectives gather in monastic communes, citing the difficulties of focusing mental powers like telepathy and empathy in overcrowded cities. One particularly radical sect seeks to build its own space station, claiming that the magnetic fields, background radiation and overwhelming population of the earth have negative effects on its studies. Someday splinter groups may seek their isolation in separatist colonies, whose membership is limited to those who have achieved demonstrable and repeatable mental powers.

Crystals

Quartz, or rock crystal, has become a common token or talisman worn by followers of the Disciplines. Though crystals were not mentioned by Mary in her writings, her student Maratsu discovered that they seemed to be useful in focusing the mind. Further studies have proved that many of the claims of crystal enthusiasts through the years are true - crystals form a naturally balanced energy field which can be used to manipulate flows of psychic energy.

Jealousy and Fear

As techniques for waking mental powers become more advanced, those who practice them have been forced to be more and more careful about how they approach the public. The outrage at Mary's death halted much of the initial fear-mongering, but it is not completely gone. As the Disciplines grow and expand an ever-growing portion of the world population fears their use and potential abuse. Some of the group's more notorious members have been forced into isolation to escape threats of violence, while others have been approached by everyone from government agents to business interests interested in exploiting their talents.



DHALA, DESTROYER OF WORLDS

The Duality of Dhala

Dhala is the deity revered by the Children of Dhala (see *Dhala, Destroyer of Worlds*, pp. 154-156). Though her people forgot her dual aspects long ago, they still remain part of the goddess. At present, Dhala the Destroyer is foremost, but once the universe is truly unraveled, the creative side will flourish and life will begin again under Dhala the Creator. Such is the nature of duality - opposite sides of the same coin (see *Duality*, p. 130).

Dhala was born in the act that first created the universe. As it cycles, so does she, her aspects shifting from creator, to a balance in harmony, to the destroyer, in order that the whole shall begin again.

She is archetypal, in that she represents the primal forces of creation and destruction. As creator, she also symbolizes birth, mercy, and light. As destroyer, her primary aspect is the flame that shall consume all being.

Dhala is omnipresent, existing in all things simultaneously, as well as being omnipotent, though her cares are for the flux and flow of the universe rather than any particular individual fate.

The dualistic image Dhala presents to her believers is that of a multi-armed humanoid female. In her right hand she holds a newborn babe, while in the other she cups the flame that is her destructive potential. In reality she has no true physical form, but rather exists as an abstract force that is actualized through her chosen people.

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"The ages of creation are past, the days of our glory have sped into darkness. The supreme night is upon us - Dhala, who swallows all things. Upon the corpse of the universe she stands and we are the sword in her hand. Dissolution of all is her triumph, all that is colored shall fade into darkness, all that is shaped shall be dispersed. O enfolding darkness, o divinity of night, thy power is boundless, thy visage most terrible."

The Dhala are an ancient people, their origins lost in past millennia. They take their name from their goddess. At the height of their glory they ruled the galaxy, their technology so perfected that little was beyond their capabilities. Now they are a shadow of their former selves, their empires collapsed and forgotten, their worlds abandoned cinders. The few remaining Dhala travel the universe in their great world-ships, destroying all they encounter with single-minded fanaticism.

The Dhala are multi-armed, vaguely humanoid beings, genetically manipulated countless generations ago to resemble the image of their goddess. They reproduce by cloning - when one of their number is killed or undergoes the rite of Ysa, a replacement is made. The race must continue until the final immolation of the universe, at which time Dhala will consume them all. They possess psionic abilities and are especially adept at telekinesis. Pyrokinesis and other destructive mental skills.

Belief and Practice

The Dhala believe in *Riksa*, the eternal cycle of creation and destruction. The universe has entered the second half of the cycle, the journey to entropy and final destruction. And it is their divinely appointed task to ensure that the cycle continues.

While the Dhala are monotheists, they believe that Dhala has many aspects, all involved with dissolution and destruction. (The creative aspects once ascribed to her have been downplayed and are all but forgotten.) Fire is the primary aspect of Dhala. There are ten forms of fire - five natural and five ritual.





The Natural Forms of Fire

Aga - The common fire of fuel. It is the spirit of Aga that speeds the Dhala on their path of destruction through the universe.

Vaga - The fire of space. It is the spirit of Vaga that powers their weaponry, that brings conflagration and destruction upon the universe.

Saya - The celestial fire. This is the fire of a nova sun which illuminates a world in the last days before its annihilation.

Nara - Life-fire. This is the all-pervader, the power of consumption found within all living things. It supports life, yet it is holy to Dhala for it consumes and destroys to do so. Pyrokinetic abilities are evidence of the existence of Nara.

Ignis - This is Dhala's most fearful form, the ultimate fire of destruction. The power lies deep within each world, and it is the awakening of this fire that destroys worlds.

The Ritual Forms of Fire

Ima - Essence-fire. This is the burst of divine fire that appears at the time of a sacrifice and consumes it utterly.

Iga - Priest-fire. This is the eternal fire found at the core of a Dhala world-ship. It is preserved through worship and sacrifice.

Hisa - Blood-fire. This is the fire that burns at a private shrine. It is the center of personal worship and is fed by the supplicant's blood.

Haga - Ancestor-fire. This is the fire of purity and preparation. It is the fire of memory that recalls the deeds of ancestors so that the living might be strengthened and inspired.

Ysa - Immolation-fire. This is the fire of personal destruction, never approached by the living. A Dhala called by the goddess will set himself alight and throw himself into the Iga at the core of the world-ship.

The Image of Dhala

Dhala is most commonly depicted as a four-armed being perched upon a broken corpse, flames issuing from her mouth. She laughs in triumph for she holds utter dominion over all that exists. She mocks those who hope to escape her fury. The body on which she stands is the corpse of the universe. At the end of time, only the power of destruction - Dhala - remains. The sword she holds represents her people - the power of her wrath. She is naked, for she is clad only in the vast emptiness of space. And she is black - as are the ships and colors of her people - for she is the ultimate energy in which all things and all colors disappear, all shapes returning to the entropy of the everlasting night.

The Duality of Dhala (Continued)

Being essentially abstract, as well as omnipresent, Dhala exists everywhere simultaneously, having no particular realm or dwelling place. Though her universe may be consumed in flame, she is never destroyed.

Dhala the Creator is a benevolent deity. Dhala the Destroyer is malevolent, destroying all that comes before her with equal abandon. Generally speaking, she is an indifferent deity, not concerning herself with the piddling affairs of mortals. She will almost never interfere directly, though her devoted followers may call upon one of her two aspects - the light of healing, or the flame of destruction. She is almost always oblivious to the actions of her creations or the suffering of her destruction. She simply is, as she will always be.

Dhala's worship is one of mystery and discovery. She recognizes no other form of divinity besides her own, and thus has no divine ties.

Dhala is subject to no divine law except her own. She depends upon her followers for little - they but speed the process of her work. It would occur, and she would exist, with or without them.

Dhala has no associated demigods or divine servants.

Organization

The *Ris'da*, or priests, lead the Dhala. They are considered to be beyond rank. Occupation determines the rank of the remaining Dhala. Those who deal with weapons systems are ranked highest, those who deal with ship maintenance are lowest, with all others scaled somewhere in between. All Dhala, regardless of rank, consider themselves to be warriors in a holy cause and spend much of their off-duty time honing their martial skills.

Each world-ship, or *Dhak*, is totally independent of the others. The *Ris'da* maintain only enough contact between ships to ensure a certain level of planning in their destructive courses. The Dhala delight most in destroying entire planetary systems by awakening the *Saya*, causing the sun to go nova by use of their ancient technology. Spacefaring races that oppose them they destroy in great battles, reserving the most honorable fate for their defeated foes - those planets they destroy individually, by piercing the world's core with their weaponry and awakening the holy *Ignis*.

Creation Myths of Bethany

The Lay of Light

Each of the Holy Children had duties in the world, as the Lord of Light in His wisdom decreed. High among these were Keldan, Lightbringer and Lord of Truth and Honor, and Dorn, the Lord of Wisdom who spent long ages at Lystran's knee, drinking of His knowledge. And most beloved was Asta, whose beauty and fair spirit caused all to grow in glorious abundance. Birds broke into song at the sight of her, and flowers sprang up where she stepped.

But sadness came into the world, for where the light of Lystran did not fall, there grew darkness and shadow, giving birth to He-who-is-not-seen, the great Deceiver, the Dark One, the Hunter of Life, Soul-drinker. Many are His names, and great His evil.

As darkness grew, the Lord of Light weakened and grew wan. So the Queen of Earth sought out the Dark One. First She demanded, and struck at the foul darkness, but such ill suited her, and even a goddess may not kill what does not live. Then She tried the guiles and crafts of women, and pleaded for mercy. Her pleas moved the Dark One not, though Her beauty inflamed him. And so in dishonor and darkness did Volt come into the world, born of Daisha's strength and fire. Then came Wylan the trickster, born of Her witchery. And last, born of Her guile and beauty, came Cara Gildenheart, the temptress.

And while Darkness reveled in the birth of His children, Daisha crept away in Her shame, and was lost to the world.

So Keldan Firstborn, guided by Dorn's wisdom and craft, forged a sword of Light and Law, and tempered the blade within the fire of Lystran's fading glory, so that forever more might Lystran's light be with the world. And Asta wept, to see her beloved step out to war, Dorn at his side and a great host behind them. With her tears, the stars were kindled, to shine brightly and illuminate their way.

And so began the Sundering Wars.

Long ages they fought, brother god against brother god, until the very face of the world was changed. In those times even Volt fought against the darkest one, for he was shamed by Daisha's fate, and sought vengeance against his father. Wylan hid in the shadows and worked his witchery and dreamcraft. But such could not withstand the light of the Sword of Keldan and the righteous flames of Dorn's wisdom. And so Wylan hid behind the skirts of Cara, who by her guile kept all others from him.

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THE GODS OF BETHANY

Long ago, before the age of Man began, before even the Elves awoke and the stars began to shine, there were Daisha, the Queen of Earth and Lystran, the Lord of Light. Many were their children, and the world was peaceful and golden, without flaw and unchanging in the perfection of endless time.

-The Lay of Light

Long ago, when the very thought of man was but a whisper in the wind and the elder folk had not yet ventured forth into light of day, the world was wracked and broken by the arguments and wars of the gods. Now, we call this the Sundering, for it surely changed the world.

In those days, there was no Sleeping God, for Wylan was awake and wandered the world as he willed. All the magic and the mysteries of the world were known to him, no secret was held safe from his sight, and his will pierced the Darkness and gleaned all from it.

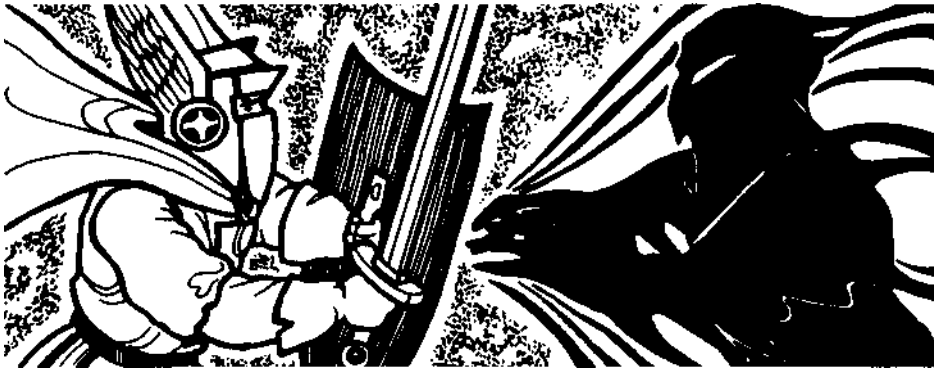
-The Tale of Wylan

Those who live in the lands of Bethany worship the Holy Children of Daisha, the Queen of Earth. Daisha had two consorts, the Lord of Light and the Dark Hunter. Most follow the children of the Lord of Light - Keldan. Dorn and Asta. Worship of the Dark Hunter's children is discouraged (and in some cases outlawed) by the church of Keldan. (See sidebars, pp. 163-166.)

Keldan Lawgiver

The firstborn of Daisha by the Lord of Light, Keldan is the Giver of Laws, the Defender, the Protector of Oaths. His spheres of influence are truth, honor, justice, resolve, loyalty and strength. Keldan dislikes magic and sanctions its use rarely, and then only in Dornite hands. He is a militant and Chivalric god. His symbols are the light and the sword; his colors are the gold of light and the white of purity.





Keldan's physical form is that of a tall, blond, golden-eyed knight wearing robes of white with a cross emblazoned in gold. He wields the Sword of Light, which represents both his strength and his purpose - to cut through the darkness with light, and to protect the defenseless.

Keldan is a benevolent but harsh deity. He requires much of those who follow him, and accepts little deviation from his laws. He keeps a close eye on his worshipers, and will even appear directly to his special chosen ones (known as Trueswords). He has a forthright and lawful nature, and demands the same of all who worship him. His weaknesses are an unforgiving character, and a tendency to view the world in terms that suit him best. Keldan opposes all things of chaos, darkness and deceit.

Those sworn to Keldan never lie or break an oath or law. They never abandon a charge, nor ignore an injustice. They cannot deny an appeal by the helpless. Keldanites will seek and destroy any who disturb the rest of the dead.

Keldan is closely allied with Dorn, and depends upon him for advice and guidance. He is the devoted protector and husband of Asta. He opposes and despises Volt, and hates Wylan for his crimes against Asta. He dislikes (and perhaps fears) Cara for her licentious and chaotic ways.

Organization

All clerics of Keldan are also knights and must belong to one of several holy orders. While some of these knightly orders are secular, their leadership consists entirely of clerics. Familiar ties and loyalties are superseded by obedience and duty to Keldan and one's knightly superiors. Clerics of Keldan who wish to marry must wed a Lady or Dame of Asta. Celibacy before marriage (and constancy afterwards) is demanded by the god.

The supreme temporal authority of the church is the *Highsword*, a cleric chosen by the god himself. A *Truesword* is a special knight who stands outside the regular hierarchy of the church and belongs to no one order. Also chosen by the god, a Truesword is answerable only to Keldan and the Highsword. Women may not be clerics of Keldan, although they may join cloistered orders as nuns. Female knights are extremely rare and frowned upon, but may join the Order of the Shield if they are virginal and swear an oath of celibacy.

Knights of Law - A closed (non-secular) order consisting entirely of cleric-knights. These knights supervise all other Keldanite orders, as well as monasteries and convents. They are responsible for the security of all churches and their fiefs.

Knights of the Land - Knights are appointed to this order by royal decree after having served at least ten years in another Keldanite order. They are responsible for the protection of the royal family and the capital.

Creation Myths of Bethany (Continued)

And so the Wars continued, age after age, and Asia's tears filled the oceans of the world.

Then Wylan in his anger whispered dreams into the ear of his father, and Darkness listened. And so they plotted foulness. Then fair Asta came into their hands, drawn by trickery and lies, and she brought with her the Sword of Keldan, for she thought to ransom her beloved's life.

Then even Volt's righteous anger paled beside the wrath of Keldan and the rage of Dorn. Even the earth mourned Asia's loss, and no new life came into the world. But alone Keldan's bright anger was no match for the coldness of the Dark One. Without the Sword, all was lost.

Dorn in his wisdom found another way.

And so began his hunt. Through long ages he sought through the Darkness, his cold flame lighting the way. Many perils, many tricks and traps did he overcome, many temptations did he face. But he persevered, though for a time he was counted among the lost.

But upon the coldest of nights, when all the light in the world was found in the stars that were the tears of Asta, did he return, bringing back the light of Lystran, leaving Wylan behind, bound in the darkness. And as the Sword left his hands, and was taken up by Keldan, bright flames remained to cloak Dorn, and from that day was he called the Wayfinder.

Then did Keldan stride forth triumphant, bringing Justice and Law once more into the world. The Dark One did Keldan sunder from the world with one swift blow and in Dorn's flames did the hosts of darkness perish. Cara danced through the shadows, always one step ahead of the bright blade.

Asta he rescued from the Dark One's foul halls, and set her in his own palace, where she has rested ever more by his hearth. And with her return, the world once more brought forth life, and thus man was born into the world.

But the world was forever tainted by the shadow of the Dark One, and ever do His children strive against the Light.

And so must we be ever wary, to drive out any taint of Darkness we may find within us, that Keldan might see us worthy of a place within his halls.

Continued on next page ...

Creation Myths of Bethany ***(Continued)***

The Tale of Wylan

Now do not think that Wylan was a dark god, no. He shared his secret knowledge as was needed, and amused the other gods with his mysteries and puzzles. But none's delight could compare with the joy of Asia the Kindler when she beheld Wylan's gifts to her.

But Asta had another suitor, strong Keldan the Swordgod. His strength at arms and noble ways were no match for Wylan's gifts and did not win the Kindler's favor. Many times did Keldan seek Wylan's heart, to reave it from him so that Wylan might never win Asia's love. But Wylan was wise, and sought the aid of his sister, Cara the Shadowdancer, and together they eluded Keldan, tangling the Swordgod in the bindings of his own laws.

Asta, fearing for her beloved Wylan, took Keldan's Sword of Light, and fled, hiding the Sword deep within the shadows of the Night. And so for a great time there was peace among the gods, and Asta dwelt with Wylan in the shadows and from their love sprang the stars.

And then Dorn Armsman found the Sword of Light, and wrapped in his cold flames fled with it to Keldan's halls. Then did the hosts of Keldan war with Wylan and the Darkness was cut by the Sword. Stolen was Asta the Kindler, and chained upon the hearth in Keldan's own halls was she.

And Wylan was cast into the heart of the Darkness by Dorn, and wrapped in icy flames, to sleep until the end of time ...

Long ages passed, then, until the coming of man. And as man surrendered his essence each night into Wylan's realm, so did the Sleeping God gain strength. Still the flames of Dorn bound him in eternal sleep, but nothing can bind the dreams of man.

So into the dark realm of Wylan came children: Sovar and Silar, the twin Lords of Dreams and Prophecy, and beauteous Marya, the Handmaid who guides and welcomes all into the dreamtime.

Knights of the Sword - A small secular order that accepts only members of noble blood. These knights often serve as leaders of the army, helping to protect the borders of Bethany.

Knights of the Shield - The largest Keldanite order, in which membership is won by right of arms. This is the only order which will accept a female knight, or one of illegitimate birth.

Guardian Knights of Vesma - A secular hospitaller order closely associated with the crofts of Asta. They also protect the Vale of Vesma, the birthplace of Keldan, Dorn and Asta.

Festivals

Swordcall - High Festival of Keldan, late in the fall of the year. It lasts six days, and is a favored time for initiations, oaths and knightings. During Swordcall, the Highsword goes through a series of fasts and purifications before disappearing to commune with the god, reporting on affairs of the church and receiving new directions.

Lumens - early in the first month of the year, this is one of the most important festivals in Bethany. It celebrates the return of Asta and the Sword of Light. It is during this festival that all fires in Keldanite churches and strongholds are relit from the flame rekindled by the Keeper of Vesma (see p. 162) in the Vale of Vesma.

Garb

Clerics of Keldan wear white, symbolizing purity, innocence and the white-hot heat of metal being forged.

For practical wear (when they can be convinced to take off their padding and armor), Keldanites don simple tunics, belted at the waist. Fancier tunics might have the Sword of Keldan embroidered upon them. At all times they wear a small sword pendant in token of their vows. For the celebration of rituals all Keldanite priests - regardless of their order - wear a chasuble, alb and stole.

At High Festivals more elaborate garb is worn. A long cope, usually richly embroidered, is worn over standard ceremonial wear. A priest of Keldan never covers his head except at funeral services and during the Festival of Darkhunt.

Keldan nuns wear a long flowing garment called a *kris* and a veil of purest white. Over it they wear the *cowl*, another floor-length garment with sleeves long enough when let down (they are worn folded back) that they just touch the ground, and wide enough that they touch the knees when the hands are folded upon the breast. Beneath the veil a *wimple* is worn to constrain the hair, which is cropped short to avoid fuss.

Charge of Chivalry

A cleric-knight of Keldan has a double responsibility. He must always live according to both the Rule of his Order and the *Charge of Chivalry*:

"Thou art never to do outrageously, nor murder, and to always flee treason. Likewise thou art by no means to be cruel and to always do succor to ladies, damosels and gentlewomen."

"Take no battles in a wrongful quarrel, for no law nor the world's goods."

"Thou shall be for all ladies, though thy own lady thou shalt honor above all ladies, and ever be courteous and never refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy, for a knight that is courteous and kind and gentle hath favor in every place."

"Thou must keep thy word to all and not be feeble of good belief and faith. Right must be defended against might and the distressed must be protected."

"Know good from evil and the vainglory of the world, because great pride and bombast make great sorrow. Should anyone require of ye any quest that is not to thy shame or the shame of thy Order, thou shouldst fulfill the desire as thy duties permit."

"Thou shouldst not fail in these things: charity and truth."

"No knight shall win honor but if he be of honor and of good living and loveth Keldan and dreadeth Keldan, and else he getteth no honor here, be he ever so hardy."

"Do not, nor say not, anything that will dishonor in any way the Rule of thy Order. For only by a stainless and honorable life shall Keldan be truly served."

"Therefore be a good knight and if ye be of prowess and worthiness ye shall grow strong in the Light of Keldan."



Dorn Wayfinder

The secondborn of Daisha by the Lord of Light, Dorn is the Seer, the Councillor, the Finder of Ways. His spheres of influence are wisdom, judgment, strategy and knowledge. His symbol is the eternal flame, and his colors dark scarlet and gold. His clerics always wear some item of scarlet and at their initiation receive a ring of red gold.

Dorn's physical form is that of a flame-haired man with eyes of amber fire. He is seen in a variety of different garb, depending on whether he is acting as armsman, judge, or seer, though in all forms he wears crimson and gold.

Dorn is a thoughtful and practical god, often sacrificing his integrity for the betterment of the whole. He is generally benevolent, though as judge his rulings are absolutely impartial. He keeps a very close eye upon the world, and will, at times of duress, appear before individual followers. He has a secretive and mysterious nature. His weaknesses are an insatiable curiosity, and a belief that the end justifies the means.

The tenets of Dorn are simple: never prejudge, observe before considering and consider before acting. All actions should be restrained. One reacts to a problem or threat in a just and equal way. Yet this works both ways, and Dornites seldom restrain themselves from fighting fire with fire.

Dorn is a loyal liegeman and advisor to Keldan, offering practical advice. He is friendly with Asta, his clerics often teaching the children in her charge. Dorn dislikes Volt's unreasoning violence, and opposes him wherever he may. He competes with Wylan for hidden knowledge and is quite friendly with Cara, despite Keldan's disapproval.

Gods of Bethany

The people of Bethany worship a pantheon of gods, who are described in detail in the main text (see *The Gods of Bethany*, pp. 156-166).

All gods of Bethany are of limited influence. Their power and worship does not extend outside the lands of Bethany, nor beyond the realms which form the basis for their power. They all have humanoid forms and personalities, and are said to live in a realm separate from the mortal world. Those who die in the service of a god will usually enter this realm and aid the god in whatever capacity he requires. The interrelationships of the deities and their particular aspects and natures are described in the main text (see pp. 157-166).

Gods of Bethany can be affected by each other's actions, but cannot be killed through any mortal means. They depend upon their followers for influence in the "real" world, but will retain their archetypal powers whether they are actively worshiped or not.

Clerics of Keldan

There are three ranks of clerics within the Church of Keldan. The first (5-point Clerical Investment) includes all who dedicate themselves to the church. In order to be invested as a cleric, the applicant must be male and a knight of the realm.

The second rank consists of those who are inducted into the Knights of Law (10-point Clerical Investment). The cleric will be assigned an order, monastery, convent or church to supervise and defend. Only clerics who have distinguished themselves in service, bravery and valor will be appointed to this order. All such appointments are made at the discretion of the Highsword.

The third and final rank is that of Highsword (15-point Clerical Investment). There is only ever one Highsword, chosen by the mandate of Keldan himself.

Trueswords are not clerics in the classical sense, but they are the recipients of divine visions and have the ability to do Divine Interventions.

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Clerics of Keldan ***(Continued)***

Magics

Keldan is an active god who appears frequently to his chosen. He disapproves strongly of magic, however, so his clerics have few spells, most of which are defensive in nature. All clerics of Keldan undergo a Power Investiture as a part of their initial clerical initiation, permitting them to learn those spells which Keldan allows. Most use their swords for their Sacred Vessels (see p. 105).

Keldan clerics may learn the following spells: Armor, Bless, Consecrate, Detect Magic, Divination, Final Rest, Flash, Iron Arm.

Lead Worship, Light, Magic Resistance, Missile Shield, Oath, Sense Danger, Sense Spirit, Shield, Turn Zombie and Watchdog.

Clerics who belong to the Knights of Law may additionally learn the following spells: Continual Light, dispel Magic, Drain Mana, Excommunicate, Exorcism, and a variation of Pentagram in the shape of a cross.

Keldan Consecrate spells will drain the mana from whatever object or area they are cast upon. Individuals with Magical Aptitude will have their fatigue reduced to zero. For this to work on magical items and people, the spell must be cast in its ceremonial form, with enough energy spent to equal twice that being drained. Areas of High or Very High Sanctity for Keldan are no-mana areas.

Knights

Knights of Keldan must prove their knowledge of the laws of Keldan and their ability to conduct themselves well in social situations as well as prowess of arms. They are trained in Dance, Heraldry, History, Law, and Savoir-Faire, as well as combat of arms. Most are excellent riders.

Organization

The church of Dorn is egalitarian, willing to accept anyone who has the wit and skill to pass its testing. Competence and experience, rather than rank of birth, determine one's place within the church.

The supreme temporal authority is called *the Flame of Dorn*. This person is a somewhat mysterious figure who leaves name and rank behind when accepting the mantle of Dorn. The Flame is always someone highly skilled in both magic and warfare.

There are three branches within the Church of Dorn.

Led by the *Armiger*, the Armsmen deal with the more martial problems the church might encounter. Those of a purely martial bent enter the Order of the Knights of the Flame. Those Armsmen of a more intellectual bent often become advisers and strategists.

The Acolytes, led by the *Magister*, are those Dornites who tend toward magery or secrecy. They usually travel and work alone, often in some sort of quiet disguise. The Acolytes wander the land, watching for problems and gathering information for the Advocates and their archives.

Advocates, led by the *Archivist*, deal with the interpretation of the law, history, tradition and teaching. It is the Advocates who run the Curia and monasteries of the church. No court or Lord in the land, not even the King, will pass judgment without the presence of an Advocate of Dorn. The Advocates also have a knightly order - the Knights of the Cup (also called the Chalciers). This Order is concerned with teaching and missionary work, having both cleric-knights and cleric-teachers.

Festivals

Highstar - High Festival of Dorn, early in the year about a month after Lumens. Oaths and initiations within the church take place at this time. Apprenticeships are also begun at this time throughout Bethany.

Darkhunt - this commemorates the beginning of Dorn's search for the Sword of Light. Held upon the winter's solstice, it is a time for serious reflection and thought. Rituals in memory of the dead are held at this time.

Garb

Dornites favor the color red, symbolizing blood and life and representing fire from the heavens.

Wayfinders of Dorn wear ceremonial garb in the Keldanite style, but in Dorn's colors. Acolytes of Dorn, however, have a definite fondness for secular garb and often wear it whenever ritual vestments are not required for church services. On formal religious occasions (such as rituals) both Acolytes and Advocates of Dorn wear a *cassock alb*. This is a more narrowly cut and tailored garment with a higher collar and a wide stiff belt, closing down one side from the shoulder to the floor. A wider stole is worn with this garment. The cassock alb is always scarlet in color and may be embroidered with flame patterns in varying shades of red and gold.

At High Festivals the Acolytes and Advocates of Dorn replace the cassock alb with the older-styled dalmatic and tunic. Both of these vestments are simple T-shaped garments with slightly flaring skirts. A thin golden stole is also worn. All Dornite clerics veil themselves at High Festivals.

Asta the Kindler

The thirdborn of Daisha by the Lord of Light, Asta is the Kindler, the Lifegiver and Healer. Her spheres are mercy, light, the hearth, children, healing and fertility. Her symbols are the flint, the wheat sheaf and the chalice. Asia's physical form is of a pretty, dark-skinned woman with brown hair and eyes, wearing golden-brown and green robes. She is usually depicted carrying a variety of things, her symbols always among them.

Asta is an unfailingly kind and benevolent deity. She has a nearly limitless supply of mercy. She shares the forthright and lawful nature of her husband, Keldan, but is much more forgiving. Asta keeps a close, but beneficent eye upon her followers. Her weaknesses are her attraction toward her half-brother, Wylan, and a tendency toward overgenerosity.

Hospitality, mercy and charity are the main tenets of the church. Her clerics must bless and heal any who ask, and protect, comfort and cherish all children and mothers. Those who follow Asta strive to be selfless, kind and gentle.

Asia's clerics conceal their hair beneath a linen coif and dress in simple robes of golden-brown and green.

Asta loves her husband Keldan, but feels constrained at times by his protectiveness. She is friendly with Dorn, whose clerics teach the children she shelters. She opposes Volt, and pities him. Wylan draws her, yet she fears him. Cara she treats as a scandalous younger sister.

Organization

Only women may be clerics of Asta. The main concern of the church is charity and healing, and they establish *crofts* where they see need for them. A croft is a cross between a hostel, a soup-kitchen and an orphanage. Often these crofts are built near Dornite Curia.



Clerics of Dorn

There are three ranks of clerics within the Church of Dorn, organized into three orders. Initiates of Dorn (5-point Clerical Investment) must join one of the three orders - Acolyte, Advocate, or Armsman. They must be sponsored by a member of the order, and pass a test (see *Initiation Rite of Dorn*, p. 165) appropriate for their order. »

The Magister, Archivist and Armiger are the leaders of the three orders, and hold the second of the three ranks (10-point Clerical Investment). These positions are appointed by the Flame of Dorn, and are responsible for administering their particular orders.

The Flame (15-point Clerical Investment) is the supreme head of the Church of Dorn, and is selected by the leaders of the three orders on the word of Dorn. All clerics within the church are considered eligible for the position. There is only ever one Flame.

Magic

Unlike his dour brother, Dorn accepts magic as a tool which can be put to good use. In addition to a wide range of clerical spells, those with magical talent are welcomed into the Church, usually as Acolytes. Indeed, the Church of Dorn is the repository of most of the magical teachings and knowledge in Bethany (though magical spells and knowledge are completely separate from clerical spells; see sidebar, p. 101). All clerics receive a Power Investiture as part of their initiation ceremony, symbolized by a red-gold ring given to them by the god.

Acolytes

Acolytes may learn the following clerical spells: Analyze Magic, Ancient History, Aura, Conceal Magic, Consecrate, Counterspell, Create Fire, Desecrate, Detect Magic, Dispel Magic, Divination, Essential Flame, Extinguish Fire, Far-Hearing, Flame Jet, Flaming Missiles, Flaming Weapon, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, History, Hush, Identify Spell, Ignite Fire, Mage Sight, Pathfinder, Phantom Flame, Scribe, Scryguard, Scrywall, See Secrets, Seeker, Sense Foes, Shape Fire, Spell Shield, Trace, Truthsayer, Ward and Wizard Eye. They may also learn any first-rank Keldan or Asta spell in its ceremonial form.

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Clerics of Dorn (Continued)

Acolytes vary greatly in personal abilities, but they are always curious, always questioning the world around them. They will tend to specialize in a few particular fields of professional and scientific skills, along with Detect Lies, Diplomacy,

Disguise, Fast-Talk, Savoir-Faire, Scrounging, Stealth, Streetwise and Teaching. All are literate, and most have some training in combat skills.

Advocates

Advocates may learn the following clerical spells: Ancient History, Aura, Compel Truth, Consecrate, Detect Magic, Dispel Magic, and

Divination, Excommunicate, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, History, Oath, Scribe, See Secrets, Spell Shield and Truthsayer.

Advocates serve as the judges and the librarians. They are the keepers of knowledge and the arbiters of Keldan's Law. They are all literate, and are taught Heraldry, History, Law, Research, Teaching and Theology as a matter of course. Most also carry on research projects of their own on the side.

Armsmen

Armsmen may learn the following clerical spells: Armor, Aura, Banish, Counterspell, Create Fire, Detect Magic, Dispel Magic, Divination, Flame Jet, Flaming Missiles, Flaming Weapon, Ignite Fire, Missile Shield, Nightingale, Reverse Missiles, Scryguard, Scrywall, Sense Danger, Sense Spirit, Shape Fire, Shield, Spell Shield, Truthsayer, Turn Zombie, Watchdog. They may also learn any first-rank Keldan spell in its ceremonial form.

Armsmen serve Bethany as strategists and tacticians. Often they are the brains behind Keldan's might. They learn all areas of combat - mounted, infantry and artillery - equally, and are taught Strategy and Tactics along with Diplomacy, Heraldry, Law and Leadership.

Novices of the church use the title "Lady." These women do the work necessary to run the crofts - gardening, cooking, beer-making, weaving and so on. A Lady of Asta may travel from croft to croft, serving where she is needed. A few travel out into the world, accompanied by a Dornite Chalcier.

Crofts are run by senior clerics, called "Dames." A Dame must wed a Keldan knight upon her investiture. A Dame's knight is responsible for the defense of the croft. A Lady is free to wed anyone of good birth and nature, on approval of her clerical superiors. Dames are very concerned with the welfare of the Ladies in their charge and attempt to find good marriages for them. Most crofts have only one Dame, although the larger crofts (also called croftholds) have several under the authority of the Dame Mother.

The senior authority of the church is the Keeper of Vesma. She runs the crofthold in the Vale of Vesma, and is responsible for tending the eternal flame which burns upon the hearth there.

Festivals

There are many festivals of Asta, who is especially beloved by the peasants and farmers of Bethany. Children are brought to Asta just after their birth to be named and blessed.

Heathar — celebrated at the spring equinox by feasts and dancing after a Lady of Asta blesses the newly-planted fields and young animals.

Springfire - primarily a country festival and a favored time for betrothals and courting. Lovers leap across the bonfires that burn throughout the night.

Loavan - The first loaves of the harvest are eaten at these feasts. In the cities, chefs work overtime creating elaborate pastry creations.

Harvestfall - celebrated at the autumn equinox, this festival is of great importance. Clerics of Asta are kept busy blessing barns, homes and silos in preparation for the coining winter.

Garb

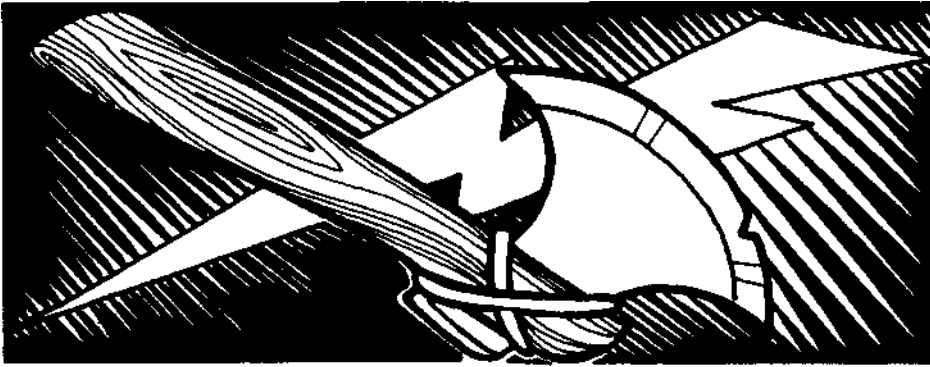
Those who serve Asta wear golden-brown and green, for these colors represent the earth and green is the color of life and birth.

Priestesses of Asta prefer simple and modest garments, regardless of the pageantry of the ceremony. They wear a short (ankle-length) tunic over a floor-length, tight-sleeved tunic. Both garments are tightly belted - sometimes a wide apron-like garment is worn over all. Their hair is tightly braided out of the way and covered by a simple *coif*. On formal occasions the casual coif is replaced by a circlet and veil over a loosely-draped wimple.

Volt the Avenger

The firstborn of Daisha by the Dark Hunter. Volt is the Avenger, the Reaver and Temper's Flame. His spheres are courage, just retribution, strength, challenge, perseverance and revenge. His symbols are the axe and the thunderbolt. His colors are blood-red and black. Worship of Volt is forbidden by the Church of Keldan.

Volt's physical form is that of a tanned, dark-haired man with black eyes, wearing a blood-red tunic and wielding the axe and thunderbolt which are his trademarks.



Volt is a harsh, stubborn and unforgiving deity, never forgetting a slight, and never denying a challenge. He has a forthright and lawful nature, but his laws vary somewhat from those Keldan follows. He keeps a diligent watch upon his followers. His weaknesses are his lust for vengeance, and his hatred for weakness of any kind.

Those who follow Volt let no slight go unpunished. They fear nothing, and never deny a challenge or cry surrender. No cost is too great if it ensures success and vengeance.

Volt has no allies among the gods. He despises Keldan, thinking him a coward who protects weak fools. He hates Dorn's calm reasoning, envying his skill at arms, and considers Asta to be a meddling bitch. He has no use at all for Wylan's deceptions. He lusts after Cara and longs to someday teach her a lesson.

Organization

Only men may be clerics of Volt. There is no central organization of followers, only the simplest of hierarchies based upon strength and prowess. Those who would become clerics of Volt must first find another cleric willing to train them. Training another is a courageous act since clerics advance by challenging and killing their superiors. Many who follow Volt hire themselves out as mercenaries in bitter disputes, often favoring the losing side as a challenge.

Festivals

Darkstorm - occurs shortly after Swordcall. This is the only time that Volt's disorganized followers gather together to feast and fight. Ceremonies remembering the dead and settling advancements and feuds are common at this time. This festival is held in isolated locations since the Church of Keldan bans worship of Volt.

Garb

Clerics of Volt have little patience for frivolity and so have no formal garb. They favor dark reds in their daily dress, however, symbolizing blood, the fire of vengeance and the destruction of war.

Wylan the Sleeping God

The secondborn of Daisha by the Dark Hunter, Wylan is the Sleeping God, the Magiker, the Dreamweaver. His spheres are magic, the night, sleep, prophecy and dreams. His colors are black and midnight blue. The spindle, the skein and sand are his symbols

Clerics of Asta

There are three ranks of clerics in the Church of Asta. The first, the novices (5-point Clerical Investment), are known as Ladies. They have just joined the church and are assigned to work with Dames within a croft.

The second rank (10-point Clerical Investment) is that of Dame. A Dame is one who leads a croft, or is recognized to hold certain rank within the church. Dames must marry a Keldan Knight upon elevation to this station, and are generally given a croft of their own to oversee.

The third rank (15-point Clerical Investment) is the Keeper of Vesma, the senior authority in the church.

Magic

Asia's clerics specialize in magics which aid other people. They are invested with the power of the goddess during their initiation rite.

Ladies may learn the following spells: Awaken, Bless Plants, Bless, Consecrate, Heal Plant, Lend Health, Minor Healing, Preserve Food, Purify Food, Purify Water, Share Strength and Test Food.

Dames may learn the following spells: Cure Disease, Divination, Lend Strength, Light, Major Healing, Neutralize Poison, Sense Life and Sterilize.

Duties and Responsibilities

Asia's clerics are charged with the well-being of the citizenry of Bethany. They heal the sick and wounded, feed the poor, and run orphanages for the unfortunate. They are taught Accounting, Administration, Animal Handling, Diagnosis, First Aid, Physician, and any craft skill.

Followers of Volt

Like his sister Cara, Volt has no formal, organized religion or clerics. His followers are few, but they are always fanatical. Bloodlust and Berserk are required disadvantages. They dedicate their lives to avenging Volt's name, and may perform Divine Interventions if their actions have pleased the god.

Clerics of Wylan

There are only two levels of clergy in the scattered groups which still pay homage to the Sleeping God. The junior clerics, or Students (5-point Clerical Investment), spend much of their time penetrating the many veils of mystery surrounding their deity. They are put through many tests and are always in competition with one another. Applicants must gain the sponsorship of a senior cleric within the order whose wisdom they seek. Most become Dream weavers.

Those with enough talent, skill and initiative will become senior clerics, or Masters (10-point Clerical Investment). Any Student may seek this rank by proving himself worthy in the eyes of his Master. The penalty for failure is almost always death.

Magic

While he sleeps, Wylan is unable to manifest powers upon the mortal plane. Thus his servants choose only those with innate magical talent as Students. Many of the mysteries involve the learning of magical rites thought to be invocations of the deity's power - in reality they are little more than the casting of magical spells. Some small number of Masters have realized this, but maintain the charade in the interests of the church.

Dreamweavers

Dreamweavers specialize in subtle personal and political manipulations. They are often drawn from the nobility of Bethany, and most are considered to be loyal followers of Keldan.

Dreamweavers specialize in Illusion, Knowledge, Meta and Mind Control magics. Each will have slightly different specialties within the greater scope. Their spells are always associated with symbolic rituals, and the greater spells are carefully hoarded by those who have managed to learn them.

Social skills are important to Dreamweavers, particularly Acting, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Leadership, Politics and Savoir-Faire. They are generally also quite knowledgeable in Law and History.

Seers

Seers specialize in prophetic magics, particularly Divinations. Little is known of them. It is possible that they may even have shamanistic abilities (see *Shamanism*, pp. 116 and 128) which provide their visions and allow them access to the fears and dreams of those around them.

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Long ago, Wylan lived in the world with the other gods. His quarrels with Keldan (and his theft of the Sword of Light) resulted in his magical imprisonment by Dorn in the void. But Dorn could only capture Wylan; he could not remove his power. Wylan's power changed his prison into the realm of dreams and now his influence reaches once more into mortal lands. Since his imprisonment by Dorn, Wylan has divided his power and manifests through his dream-children - *Sovar*, the Dreamlord, *Silar*, the Lord of Prophecy, and *Marya*, the Handmaid who welcomes all into the dreamtime. Worship of Wylan is forbidden by the Church of Keldan.

Wylan's physical form is that of a tall, slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed man, wearing midnight-blue robes embroidered with mystical symbols. All of his dream-children manifest in similar forms.

Wylan is a clever, curious deity with a random, mysterious nature. He never answers directly what he can make a riddle, and always pushes the edge to see what he can get away with. Unlike his siblings, he never appears directly before his followers, but rather through his dream-children. His weaknesses are his utter hatred of Dorn, along with his eternal fascination for puzzles, and his insatiable curiosity.

Those who follow Wylan never take an inch when they can take a mile, nor do they pass up an opportunity to twist the truth into a puzzle. It is best to be wary of what is asked of Wylan, for he might deliver it. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and what is seen is often not what it seems to be.

Wylan opposes Keldan, taking his laws and bending them until they scream. He utterly hates Dorn as a result of his imprisonment. Wylan loves Asta and dreams of the chance to seduce her away from Keldan. He dislikes Volt's brashness, but finds him useful and easy to manipulate. He is fond of Cara, finding her amusing and refreshing.



Organization

Anyone with magical aptitude may become a cleric of Wylan. Each cleric must choose which aspect suits them best - most follow Sovar. Senior clerics are called *Dreamweavers*. Each gathers a coterie of students and lesser clerics about them to aid in his plots. Clerics of Wylan delight in discovering secret information and manipulating political situations. They specialize in informational, illusionary and mind magics. There is no supreme authority in the church; rather each Dreamweaver strives to outdo the others and gain the god's favor. The prime concern of a cleric of Wylan - besides stirring up trouble - is discovering a means to free Wylan from his captive sleep.

Clerics of Silar - also called Seers - are rare and spend much of their time in a trance state. Each Dreamweaver tries to recruit a seer to aid him, for their prophecies are an invaluable asset.

Clerics of Marya are recluses who specialize in enchantments and illusions. Unlike the Dreamweavers, they are unconcerned with the politics and the affairs of others, living their lives in their own private worlds. Many believe that Marya's servants are not truly sane.

Festivals

Yearnight - High Festival of Wylan, when the old year ends and the new begins. At this time the god's power is greatest and the dreams of men are most susceptible to his clerics' influence. This festival is celebrated in secret by the faithful. Those who do not worship Wylan either ignore the significance of this day, or spend it behind locked doors.

Lunar - half a year from Yearnight, it provides an opportunity for the Dreamweavers to gather and plan for their god's awakening. Rites of initiation are also held. In much of Bethany the true meaning of this four-day festival is lost - instead, it is called *Fool's Fair* and is a time of tricks and gaming.

Garb

Those who serve Wylan dress primarily in secular garb except at their High Festival, when they wear many layers of elaborately-worked garments, in graduated shades of black and gray. These dark colors symbolize the night and sleep.

Cara Gildenheart

The thirdborn of Daisha by the Dark Hunter, Cara Gildenheart is the Temptress, the Siren and the Fabler. Her spheres are luck, artifice, intrigue, wealth, vice and temptation. Her colors are all the shades of the rainbow and her symbols are coins, jewels, dice, the cymbal and the dance. Worship of Cara is discouraged by the Church of Keldan.

Cara's physical form is that of a petite black-haired woman with mismatched eyes, wearing the brilliant clothing of her followers, always decorated with dangling jewelry of various sorts. She is often seen dancing, or holding the dice that are her symbol.

Cara is a mischievous, licentious deity, with a taste for fun and frivolity. Her attention is generally benevolent, though often self-serving. She requires nothing of her followers but that they enjoy life and play the "game." She is meddlesome by nature, and often appears to those who strike her fancy. She is very chaotic and mysterious. Her weaknesses are a love of danger and a marked preference for pretty things.

Clerics of Wylan (Continued)

Marya

Marya's followers stay away from society, practicing their arts in remote villages and hidden monasteries dedicated to Wylan. They generally have an overwhelming reason or desire to escape from society.

Marya's clerics specialize in Illusion and Enchantment magics. Quite often Dreamweavers will seek to draw them into their service, coveting the items they create.

Followers of Cara Gildenheart

Cara has no formal, organized religion or clerics. She is a willful, capricious goddess who will often interfere in the lives of her favorite followers. The GM might want to make use of *Miraculous Magic* to handle this (see pp. 113-115), or leave it very freeform. As a patron, Cara has a very high Frequency of Appearance, though she is likely to interpret requests for aid in whimsical ways.

Initiation Rite of Dorn

Dressed in the simple frock, its bleached plainness hidden beneath her cloak, the initiate stands before a rough-hewn wooden door. As the first warning rays of the dawning sun spread across cobbles, the initiate takes hold of the great brass knocker upon the plain wooden door, and knocks.

Once. Twice. Thrice.

Silence stretches on after the third knock, bare echoes soon swallowed by the thick wood of the door. Then, when it almost seems that none will answer and she will be turned away, the door opens.

The priest stands before the initiate, the liturgical chant echoing between them.

"Who seeks..."

"... Finds."

"Who watches..."

"... Sees."

"Who asks..."

"... Learns."

"Who knows..."

"... Teaches."

"Who stands with knowledge, armed with wit..."

"... Shall never fall."

Continued on next page . .

Initiation Rite of Dorn (Continued)

The priest stands back and allows the initiate to enter, bringing her to the very center of the shrine, a place she has never before been.

"We gather here, within the seat of knowledge, to welcome another who seeks the congress of Dorn."

"Step forward, daughter."

As the initiate steps closer, a ring of cool fire springs into being around her, bright flames flickering at the hem of her gown, licking at her calves.

Fear and worry swells within her, and with it the flames grow, warming dangerously, linen darkening in its heat.

All around her stand in silence, watching, as she speaks the pre-taught words.

"Do not fear, for fear is the death of thought. It is the enemy. Fear twists and perverts, breeds resentment and discontent, fathers anger."

"What is understood, cannot be feared, for everything acts according to its nature."

"Watch, consider and learn. For with knowledge comes understanding and control. Remember restraint, for control and balance empower us."

"And with knowledge, all things are possible."

"We are the fire that burns away the darkness. We are the fire that sunders."

"Yet fire by its nature, unrestrained, unchained... destroys."

"Restraint in all things..."

"We are those who harness the spirit of flame..."

"We are those who meet challenge, and answer it with its own kind..."

"We are the fires of Dorn, that shall ever burn..."

About her, the flames flicker, falling back the merest degree. Joyously her will embraces the flames that flare about her, accepting them... touching and touched.

The flames flicker, until their light is but the merest ring upon the floor about her, shining bright red-gold that burns her eyes. Yet she sees, a pure and blinding light illuminating, empowering, comforting, a fiery touch upon her very soul...

Then... the light is gone, the flames fading away, though the warmth still lingers through her. And at her feet, a plain ring of blood-red gold, marking her acceptance into the service of Dorn.



The tenets of Gildenheart are these: Never betray a trust or a secret - unless you want to. Life is but a game. Life is the dance. Resist nothing and dare all.

Cara Gildenheart is amused by Keldan and enjoys teasing him. She is friendly with Dorn and Asta, but Volt disgusts her and she often baits him. She is friendly with Wylan and weaves her own plots through his. She opposes law and constraint in all things. She is an extremely active goddess and spends much of her time disguised among her followers.

Organization

Cara will accept anyone who pleases her. She has no clerics as such - her followers need no one else to intercede for them. Those who amuse or delight her she gifts with luck, wealth, knowledge or whatever else might strike her fancy at the moment.

Festivals

While Cara is disliked by the established church of Keldan, her festivals are far too popular to be suppressed, especially in rural areas.

Lets - also called *Loversmeet*, this is the first of Cara's festivals, a time for secret meetings and wooings. It takes place just before *Merrymeet*.

Merrymeet - a few weeks before *Springfire*, *Merrymeet* is a four-day festival of dancing, feasting and contests.

Heartsong - This takes place at midsummer and is a favored time for betrothals and weddings, even among the nobility.

Garb

Those who serve Cara favor bright clothes in all colors of the rainbow and lots of scarves and jewelry. They have no formal garb.

APPENDIX

CHECKLIST FOR RELIGION CREATION

Religions are complicated entities. The design of a religion must delineate many factors. Everything from the nature of the divinity worshiped, to the social influence, the rituals, the symbols and the eventual cultural effects should be considered. The following outline serves as a checklist of the issues and questions which must be raised in the development of a religion.

Origin Myth/Cosmology

The world (pp. 7-16) The deity
(pp. 9-11) Origin of life (pp.
16-21)

Status/Relation to Culture

Social standing (pp. 51, 52-53)
Relationship with state (pp. 51-53)
Relationships with other prominent religions (p. 53)

History of Development

Origin of the religion (pp. 53-55)
Development over time (pp. 56-62)
Holy wars (p. 53) Schisms (pp. 62-64)

Symbols

Appearance and dress (p. 67, 85-86)
Churches and temples (p. 68) Sacred
Items (pp. 68, 80-86)

Dogma/Scriptures/Laws (pp. 46,48-49,52)

Common Rituals

Birth (p. 72)
Initiation (p. 73)
Marriage (p. 73)
Funeral (p. 73)
Others (pp. 74-75)

Holy Times/Holy Places (pp. 79-80)

Festivals (pp. 71-72)
Shrines (pp. 68, 77-78)
Pilgrimage (pp. 78-79)

Hierarchy/Organization of Clerics

Recruitment (pp. 50-51)
Advancement (pp. 49-50)
Special Orders (p. 50)

Clerical Abilities (pp. 96-97 and 100-125)

CHECKLIST FOR DEITY CREATION

Deities can also be quite complex. Whether considering the addition of one god or multiple pantheons, avoid problems by taking into account the following factors when designing. Note that not everything that people believe about a god is *necessarily* true!

Deity/Philosophy

Origins (pp. 23-24)
Nature and purpose (pp. 13-16)
Spheres of influence (pp. 24, 25-27 and 104)
Attributes (pp. 24-34)
Physical forms (pp. 27, 25-29)
Residence (pp. 28-29)
Allies and enemies (pp. 34-37)
Worship (pp. 38-41)
Divine servants (pp. 40-41, 43-44)

Symbols

Graphic Shapes (pp. 66-70)
Colors (p. 87)
Animals (pp. 25-29, 67-68)
Sacred Items (pp. 68, 80-86)

Holy Times/Holy Places

Festivals (pp. 30, 33)
Shrines (pp. 28, 102, 103, 107)
Holy Days/Days of Weakness (p. 103)

Divine Magic

Spells (pp. 100-104, 108-125)
Divine Intervention/Divine Favor (pp. 93, 113, 114 and 118)
Divination (pp. 16, 109-111, 115-116 and 123)

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This is a very subjective list. Undoubtedly, some of your favorites have been omitted. All but one or two of these movies are available on video.

Agnes of God (1985). Mystery set in a convent, interesting because of the clash between Jane Fonda's ultra-rational psychiatrist and Anne Bancroft as the Mother Superior defending the faith.

Angel Heart (1987). Mysterious Robert De Niro launches two-bit detective Mickey Rourke at the beginning of a twisted "deal-with-the-devil" plot.

Black Robe (?). Jesuit attempts to convert natives of 17th-century Canada. Lots of culture clash; very historically accurate.

Clash of the Titans (1981). Greek mythology brought to life, with nifty effects from Ray Harryhausen. Not very true to the classics, but good inspiration for a campaign where the gods meddle in mortals' daily affairs.

The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965). The story of Christ, with Max von Sydow in the title role (he later played the Devil in *Needful Things*, proof of the ultimate in acting range). Length varies with edition.

Jesus Christ Superstar (1973). Webber-Rice rock opera brought to the screen, with a few very odd visuals (why is Judas being chased by a tank?).

Jesus of Montreal (1989). Modern-day Passion-play interpretation with lots of different viewpoints; historical and archeological references are very accurate. Not available on video.

The Last Temptation of Christ (1988). Many protesters hated this adaptation of a Greek novel because it presented a Christ who had doubts about his mission.

Leap of Faith (1992). Overlooked great film, with Steve Martin as a con man masquerading as a faith healer. Interesting insights into the nature (and power) of faith.

Life of Brian (1979). This movie — possibly Monty Python's best — offended lots of folks, most of whom hadn't seen it. Incredibly funny, and much more of a political satire than any sort of blasphemy.

Name of the Rose (1986). Sean Connery struggles with lots of religious infighting in this medieval murder mystery.

Oh, God! (1977). George Burns is the Big Guy Himself; John Denver is the meek grocer chosen to be his modern-day prophet. Much better than it had any right to be.

The Rapture (1993). Mimi Kennedy is amazing as a woman who fills her empty life with fundamentalism, only to fail the test on the Last Day. Watch for a cameo from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The Seventh Sign (1988). Pregnant Demi Moore believes the Apocalypse is at hand, and that her boarder wants her baby for end-of-the-world plot.

The Ten Commandments (1956). Cecil B. DeMille's epic story of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. Worth watching for the parting of the Red Sea alone.

The Wicker Man (1973). Edward Woodward is perfect as a pious Scottish police sergeant investigating a disappearance on a small island. The evidence of paganism shocks him more and more. Look for the 103-minute version.

Wings of Desire (1988). Two angels wander around West Berlin and muse on what it would like to be human.

GLOSSARY

adherent: a follower, believer or worshiper.

afterlife: the state of existence after death.

agnosticism: belief that the divine is unknowable.

alms: food, clothes, money and so on given to the poor.

androgynous: having both male and female nature.

animism: belief that all reality is inhabited by souls and spirits.

anoint: to put oil on to consecrate; usually part of a ceremony.

antiphon: a song or chant that is sung in response to another.

apocalypse: a prophecy or divine revelation; particularly concerning the end of the world.

apotheosis: the elevation of a person or principle to divine honor; deification.

ascetism: self-denial as a means of spiritual discipline.

astrology: divination based upon the positions of the stars and planets.

astronomy: a science concerning the properties of celestial bodies.



atheism: disbelief in the existence of the divine.

belief: a conviction that certain things are true; trust or confidence; see *also faith*.

benevolence: kindness; a tendency to do good.

berdache: a transvestite male North American Indian, who assumed the dress, role and status of a woman and was accepted as a woman; often thought to possess spiritual powers.

bless: to ask divine favor for; to consecrate; to grant; to glorify; to protect.

cadence: rhythmic sequence or flow of sounds in language.

canon: regulation or dogma as decreed by church council.

celebrant: one who performs rites, rituals or ceremonies.

celestial: relating to the sky, heavens or divinity.

celibate: abstaining from sexual intercourse.

ceremony: a formal act prescribed by tradition, ritual and protocol; a gathering of clerics and worshipers for religious purpose, often including the casting of a clerical spell.

chant: a repetitive liturgical melody.

chaotic: unpredictable, irregular, confused.

chastity: the state of being innocent of sexual intercourse; virginal.

cleric: an ordained individual who serves a form of divinity or belief.

code: a system of rules for expected behavior.

commune: to partake in a common rite or ritual; to experience the divine in the company of others.

conscience: individual and personal sense of morality and ethics.

consciousness: power of self-knowledge; state of self-awareness.

consecrate: to make or declare holy or blessed; to dedicate an object or area to the divine; to focus the deity's power within an object or area.

cosmology: the structure and nature of the universe, or a system of belief concerning it.

covenant: contract, promise or agreement

creation myth: stories and beliefs relating to the act of creation.

cult: a religious or quasi-religious sect, frequently living communally, led by a charismatic person with unorthodox or extreme views.

curia: the administrative body of a church, such as the Roman Catholic Church, made up of various courts, officials, departments, etc., under the authority of the head of the church.

demigod: semi-divine, immortal spiritual being.

desecrate: to violate the sanctity of a person, place or object.

destiny: an externally influenced, predetermined course of future events.

divination: the art or practice of determining future events.

divine: relating to gods or deities.

divine intervention: a direct manifestation of the deity's power or person.

doctrine: principles and laws stating fundamental beliefs and policies.

dogma: a doctrine accepted to be a divinely revealed truth.

dualism: a theory that reality consists of two irreducible elements.

ecstasy: a state of being beyond reason and self-control.

enlightenment: a state of illumination, insight and realization.

entropy: disorder and change leading to an ultimate state of inertness.

equinox: the time of the year when night and day are of equal length.

eulogy: a commendatory formal statement or set oration.

excommunicate: to cast out and separate from the community.

expiate: to atone for sin or offense, usually by suffering punishment.

fade: a deity's loss of divine power within the world, usually due to lack of followers.

faith: allegiance, duty, belief and trust in a principle or divine being.

fanaticism: excessive enthusiasm and intense unquestioning devotion.

fast: to abstain or eat sparingly from some foods.

fate: an inevitable and often adverse outcome or condition.

festival: a time of celebration marked by special observances.

ghost dance: 19th-century North American Indian ceremony connected with a messianic movement.

glossolalia: the ecstatic emission of (usually) unintelligible sounds, which some view as manifesting a deep religious experience.

hallow: sanctify; consecrate; to make holy; to honor as sacred.

haze: to harass, ridicule or criticize.

heresy: adherence to belief or opinion contrary to church dogma.

heretic: a dissenter from official and authorized belief.

holy war: a war waged by religious partisans to propagate or defend their faith.

incense: material used to create a fragrant smell when burned.

indulgence: partial or total release from divine temporal punishment still due for a sin that has been forgiven.

intercession: prayer, petition or entreaty in favor of another.

invest: to endow with qualities, attributes, etc.; to install in office; to furnish with power, privilege or authority.

Judgment Day: the end of the world, accompanied by the deity's final accounting of people's souls.

karma: concept that a one's acts hold spiritual consequences.

kismet: Arabic concept of fate or destiny.

kiss of peace: handshake, embrace, etc., to show mutual love, union, peace, usually given during a service.

knell: slow sounding of a bell; often a symbol of death.

kosher: fit to eat according to Jewish dietary laws.

laity, lay: ordinary people, as contrasted with clergy.

laud: praise; worship at dawn; morning prayer.

libation: ritual pouring out of wine, oil or other liquid, on the ground, an altar or elsewhere.

liturgy: collection of prescribed forms for public worship.

maltheism: the worship of a self-proclaimed evil deity.

meditation: to calm and focus one's thoughts.

medium: an individual who acts as a channel of communication with the spirit world.

mendicant: one who begs for alms; a member of a religious order who holds no personal or community property and lives mostly on alms.

messianic: centering around a person expected to save or liberate a country or a people.

metaphysics: philosophical study concerning the real nature of things.

miracle: an extraordinary event caused by divine intervention.

missionary: a person undertaking a religious mission to carry the faith into new lands and recruit new believers.

monasticism: a discipline of faith involving seclusion and ascetism.

monotheism: the belief and worship of a single god.

motif: a thematic element, influence or stimulus.

mysticism: experience of mystical union with ultimate or divine reality.

neophyte: a beginner, novice, new convert.

nirvana: state of complete enlightenment; the attainment of complete freedom from all worldly concerns.

novice: a person on probation with a religious order before taking vows; a beginner, apprentice, neophyte.

oracle: a prophetic response given by a representative of a deity in answer to specific inquiry, thought to be divine in origin.

oracular: relating to an oracle or prophecy.

ordeal: a means to determine guilt through trial or pain.

ordain: to invest or appoint officially to a position of religious authority.

pantheon: a group of associated deities.

penance: an act of self-abasement, mortification or punishment.

pilgrimage: a journey to a shrine or other sacred or special place.

plane: a realm of existence removed from the earth, often inhabited by spirits or deities.

polytheism: the belief and worship of more than one god.

priest: a cleric whose duties revolve around the welfare of the faithful.

prophecy: a prediction or divinely inspired declaration.

proselytism: the act of encouraging conversion to a faith or belief. **psychopomp:** an escort of the soul and the dead.

purgatory: a place (or time) after death for a soul to be purified before continuing its journey to its reward.

querent: one who asks or questions, especially one who consults an astrologer or other diviner.

reincarnation: rebirth in new bodies or forms of life.

relic: object of sacred reverence; portion or fragment of a holy object or person.

religion: a system of beliefs, causes and principles held to by faith.

reliquary: a repository for relics.

ritual: the established form for a ceremony.

sacred: holy, entitled to reverence and respect.

sacrifice: an offering.

sanctity: saintliness; holiness; the measure of the deity's power in a given locale.

scarification: the act or process of creating marks and scars.

schism: the act or result of dividing a church into factions.

scriptures: holy, sacred or revered writings.

secular: relating to worldly or temporal concerns, non-clerical.

seer: a person of extraordinary moral and spiritual insight.

shaman: a person able to break through and contact other planes and spirits.

shrine: a holy place or receptacle.

soul: the animating essence of life, also called spirit.

taboo: holy, forbidden, or set apart.

tenet: a principle, belief or doctrine.

testament: a tangible proof or tribute, a witnessed account.

theocracy: a state or people ruled by a deity or a priestly class claiming divine authority.

totem: animal, plant or crafted object symbolizing a person or people; a tribe's guardian or ancestral spirit.

tutelary: relating to a guardian or guardianship.

unbeliever: a person who does not accept a, or a particular, religious belief.

unholy: not hallowed or consecrated; profane or impious.

veneration: worship and reverence.

vestment: religious and ceremonial clothing.

vigil: a period of testing, watching or surveillance.

visionary: able or likely to see visions.

vocation: a summons or strong inclination, a divine call to religious life.

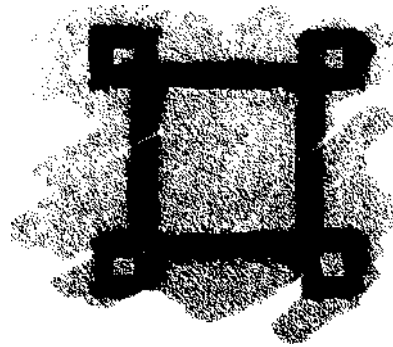
ylem: in some cosmologies, the primordial material from which all elements supposedly derived.



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