

CANNIBAL HERESY™



A SOURCEBOOK OF BLASPHEMOUS HORROR FOR
VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®
FOR ADULTS ONLY

CANNIBAL HERESY™



*If God created us in his own image we
have more than reciprocated
- Voltaire*

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Everyone out there who takes the time to read a book before commenting on it, and who knows that in the end, it's just a game.

NOTE

The author of *The Cainite Heresy* believes that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Nobody remotely involved with this project, or at White Wolf, believes he was a vampire. In the Real World (as distinct from the World of Darkness), the Cathars *were* heretics, but there isn't the tiniest shred of evidence anywhere that they were diabolists, concealed diabolism or were in any way deserving of their nearly genocidal fate at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, not only is what you hold just a game, it's just a game about some seriously bent — and entirely fictional — people horribly misled and tortured by inhuman monsters. And that is why it's for individuals over the age of 18 only. If you have a problem with the content of this book, or find it offensive, PUT IT BACK DOWN.

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HOTZ

For men have shed the blood of Saints
and prophets and thou hast given them
blood to drink for they are worthy



M

ummers

Psalm

By P. D. Cacek



CAINITE HERESY

Damhlaic d'Giolla Dhe shuddered and tightened his grip on the firm, and until only a few moments before, untouched hips of the prostrate young monk. It was, however, not the naked flesh nor the release that held d'Giolla Dhe's interest, but rather the beauty of the Abbey of St. Anacletus.

Still two leagues away and silhouetted against the waxing light of the pre-dawn sky, the abbey's arched casements blazed with welcoming light and glowed in the topmost spires of turned stone that flanked each corner of the basilica and bell tower like halberdiers.

If looking upon the Face of God was the greatest transgression a mortal man could commit, then gazing upon the abbey should have constituted no lesser a sin. For it was, in d'Giolla Dhe's mind, the epitome of what was meant by the very words "the Church." Of course, had he believed in sin, he would have looked away; but since he didn't, he emptied himself into the monk and stared in hopeless awe at the abbey.

Sin was something d'Giolla Dhe was always quick to point out... in others. And sin, in this case, the Sin of Omission, was what had brought him to the Abbey of St. Anacletus.

For almost three months, the abbey had neglected to send so much as a copper to the diocese which had jurisdiction over it. And Father Damhlaic d'Giolla Dhe, recently appointed Papal legate, was going to put an end to that.

Besides which, the Bishop had promised him an equal share of whatever profits were to be found within the abbey's silent walls.

It was an offer d'Giolla Dhe could not... *in Holy Conscience*... refuse.

The thought momentarily transformed itself into a second stiffening in his loins, to which the young man reacted with a muttered sob and a breathless prayer. D'Giolla Dhe looked down at the chill-pricked flesh pressed against him and slapped it.

"Be still," he hissed as the young and formerly celibate monk fell to one side and looked up at him. "Do not think so highly of yourself, brother. It's unbecoming."

Grunting as he stood, d'Giolla Dhe smoothed down the front of his cassock and rolled his shoulders beneath the heavy greased-wool and velvet cloak that had been presented to him for the journey.

The cowering young monk was barely able to stifle a sob as he stood. The air was still cold despite the promise of morning, and the brief exertion had left d'Giolla Dhe with aching knees and a low tolerance for excessive dramatics.

"What is it now, brother?" he asked and hoped the tone of his voice would dissuade any possible answer.

"We—we have sinned against God," the young monk said, his voice falling to a whisper at the final word... as if God were truly listening to every utterance this lowly cleric produced. "We shall burn in Hell's everlasting torment."

D'Giolla Dhe took a deep breath and looked toward Heaven.

"No," he said, "you have sinned. I merely made the suggestion. You agreed to it."

The monk, not yet one full year past postulant, gaped up at him. "But... but..."

The look reminded d'Giolla Dhe of one his father had given him — at the end of the old man's life. Once a cruel man who, upon finding his son accepting the flaccid blessings of a rector upon his tongue, had beaten the boy within an inch of his life, the elder d'Giolla Dhe had died miserably, gape-mouthed and drooling as he swung from the gibbet, a confessed heretic.

The fact that the confession had come by way of d'Giolla Dhe the *younger's* mouth did not seem to matter in the slightest to the hangman. Nor did it matter that the son immediately was accepted as Oblate by the same priest who had condemned his father. Now, after two-score years and three of learning the subtleties of seduction and persuasion as practiced under the silken banner of the True Faith, there were few who could match d'Giolla Dhe's skill at getting exactly what he wanted.

And what he wanted now was all that the Abbey of St. Anacletus had to offer.

As if acknowledging that desire, a bell began tolling from the abbey's tower — a low, hollow sound that blessedly drowned out the sobbing of the young Cistercian.

"By God's own wounds," the legate hissed and slapped the smooth tonsure separating the sobbing monk's thick, winter-wheat curls. "Enough of yourself, brother. The hour has struck lauds.... It is a time for prayer and psalms. Have you forgotten that along with your other vows?"

The monk shook his head.

"Good. Now, go fetch the mounts. You've delayed my journey long enough."

The young monk physically was as appetizing as a bowl of cold mutton broth on a winter's morning, and his infernal whimpering could easily get on a man's nerves. Still, he had served as a pleasant enough diversion and was now moving as quickly as his past obedience (and present limitations) allowed to gather d'Giolla Dhe's gelding and his own tiny gray ass.

Dawn glimmered pale and wan above the eastern rim of the valley by the time the young monk, hobbling slightly, returned with d'Giolla Dhe's gelding. Accepting the reins,

the older man swung himself into the saddle and watched his companion study the knobby, unblanketed spine of the donkey, then take hold of the rope halter and lead the animal to d'Giolla Dhe's side.

They hadn't gone 20 steps — horse, ass, and man — before a sudden scream fought for dominance with the voice of the bell.

And won.

D'Giolla Dhe reined the gelding in sharply and looked down at the young monk to see if that was where the cry had originated. But even though the cleric's mouth opened and shut and opened again like that of a fish suffocating in air, no sound, save the ragged drawing of breath, emerged.

It was only after a second scream, louder than the first and filled with pain, that he knew the direction from which it came.

The Abbey of St. Anacletus.

"By God's mercy," the monk gasped as he crossed himself quickly. "What was that?"

D'Giolla Dhe felt himself grow stiff against the saddle leather as another scream rent the shattered stillness.

"A heretic, by the sounds of it," d'Giolla Dhe said faintly.

More screams, one atop another, echoed above and around them.

"Yes, I'd definitely say a heretic."

Gathering up the reins, he felt the horse quiver in anticipation beneath him. "Now, brother, I command you to ride back to the arms of your priory. This is not the place for the likes of you or your mild manners."

"But, Father..."

D'Giolla Dhe raised his hand in a blessing. "I insist," he said. "Go in peace, little monk. And say a prayer for those souls so in torment. Begone."

He didn't give the monk, or the brief moment they had spent together, another thought as he spurred the gelding from the woods and into the bright, golden light that spilled from the arched doorway.

Two white-robed monks stood there, one to take his horse and the other to greet him with an embrace and a kiss.

Tall and pale, with a shock of white hair and eyes like polished jet beneath lashes of spun gold, the second monk smiled and stepped back as he released the legate. A warm rush, barely remembered from his youth, filled d'Giolla Dhe's belly. The white monk was as beautiful as any man he had ever seen... almost as beautiful as the gem-studded, golden crucifix that hung from his waist.

"You are Damhlaic d'Giolla Dhe," the monk said. "Welcome, servant of God. I am Brother Uisdean, the abbot here. We have been expecting you."

D'Giolla Dhe smiled, although his lips stung from the lingering coldness of the man's mouth, and cocked his head to one side. The screams were so loud, so vibrant, it was as if they were a living entity standing behind the abbot and awaiting introduction.

"I thank you, Brother Uisdean. And it sounds as if I have not arrived a moment too soon."

The abbot smiled and light seemed to gather in his face.

"How perceptive of you, Father," he said and, taking d'Giolla Dhe's elbow, led them through the nave where thick tallow tapers in gleaming silver holders lit their way to the apse. "Yes, as you can see... we are in need of you."

D'Giolla Dhe stumbled and felt the abbot's cold fingers tighten on his flesh as he looked past the circle of monks kneeling before the Holy Rood and up into the face of the crucified Christ.

The figure on the cross was not carved wood, but a man, a living, breathing, *bleeding* man. Naked, hands and feet bound to the wooden cross by thongs that cut into his flesh, the man stared down at d'Giolla Dhe and screamed, blood gushing from his tongueless maw.

"My God."

Brother Uisdean nodded. "Yes," he said, "such a meager offering... and we have so little on the pallet to choose from. But now that you're here, Father d'Giolla Dhe, it is our hope that all our sacrifice and scrounging will soon be things of the past."

D'Giolla Dhe could not take his eyes from the crucified man as the abbot half-carried, half-dragged him to the blood-stained cross.

"I—I...."

Brother Uisdean waved the words away and gently placed a hand over d'Giolla Dhe's heart. Cold seeped through the wool and velvet and all but made the racing organ stop.

"Tell me, Father," the monk said, "would you agree that on a certain level, heresy is simply the non-acceptance of a power greater than one's self, a power that has already made itself manifest?"

D'Giolla Dhe looked from the calm face of the monk to the tortured countenance suspended above him. If *this* was how the monks within the Abbey of St. Anacletus dealt with heretics then it was no wonder there'd been no tithing. You could not render coppers from the dead.

"Yes," he answered. "I would."



CAINITE HERESY

Brother Uisdean nodded and moved his hand from d'Giolla Dhe's chest to accept a golden chalice bejeweled with rubies.

"And heresy is the greatest sin your kind can commit?"

"My kind?" d'Giolla Dhe asked... then his stomach turned as the Abbot held the cup to the stream of blood flowing down the crucified man's thigh and filled it to the brim.

Bile raced into the back of his throat when the brimming cup was offered to him.

"No?" Brother Uisdean asked before bringing the cup to his own lips and drinking deeply. "You should, Father.... It is best when still warm."

The cold which had touched d'Giolla Dhe's heart and lips suddenly seemed to encase him from tonsure to boots, and all but numbed the feeling from his fingers as he snatched the cross from his throat and lifted it into the space between himself and the grinning monk.

"God protect me," he tried to shout, only to hear his voice muffled with fear. "You are Cainites!"

"Yes," the creature in monk's guise answered, "we are."

Then, reaching out, it took the cross from d'Giolla Dhe's hand and turned it first one way and then the other. It frowned.

"Ours are so much prettier," the thing calling itself Brother Uisdean said. "But now, we have so little time to devote to the creation of beauty that it soon may come to... this." He looked sadly at d'Giolla Dhe's impotent ornament. "That is why we sent for you."

"We need you, Father Damhlaic d'Giolla Dhe, beloved servant of God, to give us back the time and energy we must expend each night in the pursuit of sustenance."

D'Giolla Dhe covered his throat with both hands.

"Please, Father, control yourself. If we'd wanted to feast on you, you would have already taken this man's place on the Holy Cross. No, you are of more use to us alive than you would be as a mere supper, drained and then forgotten."

"H-h-how then?"

"Well," the Cainite said, "I know that priestly modesty prevents you from admitting this, but you are well known throughout the land. We have heard of your fame and... talents, even in a place as isolated as this one. If you were to renounce your position as Papal legate in order to retire here, as rector, there would be no end of old foes seeking you out."

D'Giolla Dhe looked up at the crucified man. "You want to use me as bait. To make me another Judas?"

The Cainite didn't answer, didn't move, didn't breathe.

"And if I refuse?"

This Brother Uisdean answered. "You will have to die. But I promise you a true death, one without our particular damnation."

Dead, but not damned. But still dead.

"And if I accept?"

A smile parted the Cainite's lips as he held the chalice out once more to d'Giolla Dhe. "Then all that we have created, and all that we will ever create, will be yours, Father."

D'Giolla Dhe studied his miniature reflections within the faceted hearts of the rubies, then lifted the chalice to his lips.

The legate watched over the golden rim of the cup as Brother Uisdean smiled, his elongated fangs gleaming like polished ivory.

"And Jesus said," the Cainite whispered, "Take this and drink... for it is My blood."



The book of the shining blood of Our Lord Jesus
Christ and His holy angels as sent by His
brother Caine from out of Nod to all mankind.

The first word was God, who knows all things, who
is life, and whose light shines undimmed.

The shadows of such light have dim light, and the
thirtieth shadow is Laldabaoth, the modeler in
dust. From him comes Adamas, from dust
and shadow.

It is from Caine that the angels
spring, archons from aeon and aeon
from God. From Caine springs the True
Trinity and thirteen pure archons from his
shining blood, which holds the only virtue and
the only truth for all men.

It is Caine that Laldabaoth, the
modeler in dust, dared not kill, that
none may kill. For the world of clay
moves as clay to water, and

even water to the shining blood is as
clay to water. Only the light of shining blood may
overcome the virtue therein.

For the passing of an age, he lived beyond Nod
in the splendor of power and glory. For six
times six hundred years dwelt he in the House of
Life. But still he saw the hand of
Ialdabaoth heavy on mankind, and he who slew
for love awoke again in Wisdom, and Sophia
returned to the world of mortals.

And from her and from the power of
Caine came the very virtue of Life, and the
very light of the light that shines in the holy
blood of Caine, and of the Crown into
Bethlehem and unto Galilee.

And the Life spoke in riddles, that those who would
embrace Wisdom might understand, and
know that the Light of Caine shone for
all, for all within Wisdom. And the

Life was called King, and Emmanuel, and Prophet,
and Enoch.

And Life opened again the doors of shining
blood, the doors for mortals
to enter the embrace of
Wisdom and to share in
the Glory of Caine.

And Life departed when the
Material washed its hands of the
shining blood of the covenant. But the sons of
life, the holy angels, remained, guarding the
treasure of virtue, the shining blood.


And the wise man seeks such virtue, and the
good man seeks to grant others such virtue, and
the angels seek to guard such virtue.

And there will come a time when the turnings of
the years are met and when the shining blood
shall dim, when the world will turn cold and a
red star shine in the heavens like the eye of

wrath, when the Virtue of
Caine shall withdraw from
the world, crumbling it like
clay left too long in the oven,
and the angels and archons will
arise incorruptible and the doors to
God slam shut.

And those who do not enter the
embrace of Wisdom and know the Re-
turned Virtue, the Second Enoch, the
Third Caine, shall fall to Laldabaoth
and be swept up as dust from the oven-
side, into the Vale of Gehenna.

But before those days will rise the
kingdom of Virtue where the blood shines



like an alabaster
fortress on a mountaintop,
and within that kingdom
the angels shall walk
and the legions of
Pilate shall
dash against
its walls.

And those who know the Third Caine shall
live eternally, and they shall never die
though Laldabaoth strike mightily against
them, and they shall return the shining virtue
to God, taken up by the apomans.





Introduction

Now then, listen to the things which they are telling you in a mystery and guard them. Do not tell them to the sons of this age, for they shall blaspheme you in these ages since they are ignorant of you, but they will praise you in knowledge... And they will cleave to the name of a dead man thinking they will become pure. But they will become greatly defiled and they will fall into a name of error and into the hand of evil... and they will be ruled heretically...

- Apocalypse of St. Peter

... and when they were alone, Caine slew his brother Abel with a stone. Then Caine took the blood of Abel into his hands and gulped it down. The Lord said to Caine, "What have you done to your brother Abel?" He answered, "I have drunk of his blood, so I may be my brother's keeper." And the Lord said, "You have tasted your kin's blood and no fruit of the soil will succor you. A great sorrow you have brought to your father Adam and your mother Eve." Caine became sad and said to the Lord, "I am driven from the soil and shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

The Lord said, "Not so! Hide from my face, so you cannot be found. But bear this token and by it any who find you will know that you are the first born to Adam, and to kill you is to suffer for it sevenfold." And Caine was marked by the Lord and went out from his presence to dwell in the land of Nod, to the east of Eden.

— The story of Caine and Abel, from the text of the *Definitiones Cælestii*

Welcome to the corruption beneath the corruption. Observe how the Church, humanity's greatest hope — for intellectual rebirth no less than for spiritual salvation — rots away as black seductions, jealous greed and selfish dogma do their corrosive work. These elements have always been present, even within the human hearts of the Church. The need for the reforms of Leo IX's papacy and of the Cistercian movement, as well as the great popularity of movements such as that of Francis of Assisi, demonstrate that men of God are no strangers to the ways of the flesh — or to striving for better. But the errors made by clergymen are human flaws in a human structure. The very reforms that bring such abuses to light show that the human Church is not irredeemably cancerous. For every corrupt bishop lining his pockets from the poor box, there are communities of monks whose faith in the God of Love shames lords into feeding the hungry and clothing the ragged. The power of Faith grants temporal power, along with all the temptations of the world such power offers, but it also shelters the weak and gives hope to all Christendom.

Cainite Heretics do not oppose the Church because of its corruptions and failings; they oppose the Church because of its mercies and triumphs. The power that Rome holds over human souls (and human kingdoms) is a power that the Cainites covet. The Heresy substitutes vampiric vitae for the communion wine, thus leading to a dark transubstantiation indeed as the blood oath takes hold in the parishioners or priests. Similarly, its agents and ministers work to turn the pious worship of the Son of God into the black narcotic addiction to the blood of the Damned. The Heresy dreams of transforming the Bride of Christ on Earth into a ghoulish enslaved to vampiric bidding — and of taking all Europe as her dowry.

RESOURCES

MOVIES

For whatever reason, there don't seem to be a lot of movies about heretical cults controlling the Church through vampirism. No, I don't know what Hollywood is thinking, either, but here are some films with themes paralleling ones in *The Cainite Heresy*.

- *Bad Day at Black Rock* (John Sturges, 1955) is a Western noir set in a small California town with a dark communal secret. Not Catharism, unfortunately, but it's a heck of a movie about social pressure and the power of guilt.

- *The Name of the Rose* (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1986) stars Sean Connery, and it's based on an Umberto Eco novel (see below); what more can you possibly want?

- *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973) is a terrific modernization of the plight of a lone Inquisitor in a town full of heretics (in this case, a police detective in a town full of pagans).

BOOKS

- *The Gnostic Gospels*, by Elaine Pagels. A mercifully brief, unbiased and non-technical introduction to the complex of beliefs making up early Gnosticism.

- *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by Michael Baigent, Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh. It's got Church cover-ups, mystical blood, Gnosticism, the Cathars and dozens of sequels and imitators on the same topics.

- *Massacre at Montségur*, by Zoé Oldenbourg. Still a decent history of the Cathar movement and the Albigensian Crusade, but virulently pro-Cathar and becoming more out of date all the time. It's a shame, because Oldenbourg tells an exciting story very well.

- *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Charles Maturin. Two of the founding novels of English-language horror; both derive power from

CONTRA ERRARE AN AUTHOR'S NOTE

The path of the Cainite Heresy leads not only through the dominant Catholic and Orthodox Churches but through many other beliefs made anathema by them as heretical. Thus, references to "heresy" and "heretics" abound throughout this book. I have capitalized "Heresy," "Heretic" and allied terms when they refer specifically to the Cainite Heresy; any reference to a "heresy" or a "heretic" applies to other groups or to heretical groups in general. The word "Cainite" by itself as a noun always refers to a vampire; human followers of the Cainite Heresy are "Heretics."



themes of Church corruption. Both are pretty heavy going, too, so be warned.

- **Montaillou: Promised Land of Error**, by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. Taken from the records of the Inquisition, this social history describes a small French town and how heresy and orthodoxy were able to co-exist there.

- **The Name of the Rose**, by Umberto Eco. If you haven't read this masterpiece of a novel yet, do so as soon as you possibly can. This medieval murder mystery gives great insight into the nature of theology and the Inquisition.

LEXICON

In the Middle Ages, theological discussion is almost scientific discussion, with its own vocabulary, jargon and technical terms. This lexicon defines some of these terms and gives a first glimpse of the many groups which shape the milieu of the Cainite Heresy.

Aeons: In *Gnosticism*, emanations from God; the farther from God they are, the more corrupt and the more humanlike they become.

Albigensian: A *Cathar* (q.v.), specifically one in the south of France.

Animal: In *Gnosticism*, that which is composed almost entirely of matter with only minor spiritual component. Vide *psychic*.

Aphthartodocetism: Sixth century C.E. Byzantine heretical doctrine emphasizing the *incorruptibility* of Christ's flesh.

Archbishop of Nod: The "Pope" of the Cainite Heresy, currently the Lasombra Narses, Prince of Venice.

Archons: Guardians or rulers of the Earth; *dualist* heresies separate them into good and evil archons. Roughly equivalent to the Antediluvians in Heretical theology.

Arianism: Marginally *Gnostic* heresy of the fourth century C.E. popular with the Goths and other Germanic invaders.

Bishops of Nod: Circle of Cainites who direct the Heresy.

Black Magdalene, Church of the: A Heretical cult in France, secretly part of a Setite stratagem.

Blood Communion: The Heresy's central *sacrament*, which replaces or mingles the wine of the Christian *Eucharist* (q.v.) with *vitae*.

Bogomilism: *Manichaeism* heresy practiced in the Balkans from 950 C.E.; essentially a Slavic modification of *Paulicianism* and, to some extent, a Heretical front.

Carpocratians: Early dualist Gnostic heretics of the second century C.E. who, like the *Ophites* (q.v.), believed in knowledge of sin as the road to salvation; they may represent the beginning of the Heresy as a continuous entity.

Catharism: Widespread *Manichaeism* heresy connected with *Bogomilism*; currently the center of Heretical activity in the West.

Church Material: Pejorative Heretical name for traditional Christianity, specifically the Catholic church. Vide *Pilate*, *Church of*.

Consolamentum: In *Catharism*, both the ceremony ordaining a *parfait* and the ritual suicide of the *parfait*.

Crimson Curia: The administrative bureaucracy of the *Bishops of Nod* (q.v.), which is staffed almost entirely by ghouls.

Daimones: Pre-Christian philosophical conception of divine beings trapped in material flesh; highly influential on the Gnostic concept of spiritual beings (as opposed to *psychic* or *animal* beings, qq.v.).

Demiurge: "The Creator," usually identified in *Gnosticism* with Satan and often with the God of the Jews.

Donatism: Non-Gnostic heresy holding that the efficacy of the *Eucharist* depends on the spiritual and moral state of the *officiant*.

Dualism: The belief that all things are either good or evil, and that good and evil are closely balanced in an eternal struggle. Vide *Manichaeism*.

Eidolon: A shadow, or image; a term often used in *Gnosticism* to refer to Christ, one emphasizing His purely spiritual nature.

Elect: One who is destined to achieve salvation and reunion with God; in *Gnosticism*, the elect are spiritual beings.

Eucharist: Also called communion. One of the Christian sacraments, a recreation of the Last Supper of Jesus that involves the ceremonial ingestion of wine and bread. Vide *Transubstantiation*.

Euagetaematikon: The central scripture of the Cainite Heresy.

Gnosis: Knowledge, illumination; specifically, wisdom reserved for a dedicated few as opposed to revelations for all.

Gnosticism: Philosophy emphasizing *gnosis* (q.v.) over revelation; Gnosticism became the guiding theology of many Christian heresies.

Heresiarchs: Ruling figures in a heresy; when capitalized, refers to the rulers of the Cainite Heresy.

Ialdabaoth: Also called *Jaldabaoth*, a common Gnostic name for the *Demiurge* (q.v.).

Iconoclasm: Literally, the "breaking of icons"; name for a powerful quasi-heretical movement in eighth and ninth century Byzantium that opposed the representation of God, Jesus or other holy figures in art.

Incorruptibility: In Catholic and Orthodox doctrine, the quality possessed by the flesh of very holy saints (and in

some beliefs, of Christ) which ensures that it does not rot after death. Vide *Aphthartodocetism*.

Jehovah: A conventional spelling of the name of the Jewish and Christian God; actually, a mistransliteration of the word *Yahveh* (YHVH).

Johannites: Followers of a secretive heretical sect which believed that John the Baptist was the Messiah and Christ an impostor.

Languedoc: The nearly independent counties of Toulouse and Provence in southern France, also called Occitania, Septimania and (after about 1150) *les Pays de Cathars* (the country of the Cathars). The people of Languedoc speak Occitan, not French.

Legate: An ambassador, troubleshooter or other personal representative of an important religious figure. A legate can speak for his superior.

Liturgy of Childeric: The formal Western liturgy of the Cainite Heresy.

Logos: "The Word," a common Gnostic term for the good God.

Manichaeism: Starkly dualist heresy holding that the world and all matter are the realm of evil, and good rules only spiritual and ideal affairs.

Marcionism: Ascetic, communal anti-Gnostic heresy of the second century C.E. that rejected much of the New Testament and all of the Old Testament. Like Gnosticism, it identified the God of the Old Testament with Satan.

Materia: Base matter.

Monophysitism: Quasi-Gnostic heresy of the fourth and later centuries C.E. holding that Christ's nature was wholly divine. *Bogomilism* and *Catharism* hold similar beliefs.

Mystery Cult: Any religious group with hidden rituals of initiation or communion, usually used to refer to *Orphism* (q.v.) and similar sects in the Greek and Roman world.

Nestorianism: Marginally Gnostic heresy of the Byzantine Empire holding that Christ's two natures represented two beings working in perfect harmony.

Officiant: The performer of a ceremony, usually (in Catholic sacraments) a priest.

Ophites: Early Gnostics who deliberately identified themselves with the enemies of the Old Testament God. Vide *Carpocratians*.

Ordination: Becoming a priest; the associated Catholic sacrament is called Holy Orders. Vide *Consolamentum*.

Orphism: The most influential Greek *Mystery Cult* (q.v.); it was devoted to the allegorical and visionary elements of the legend of Orpheus, especially the achievement of "divine madness"; Orphism in this book includes the closely-related rites of Dionysus.

Parfaits: The *Elect* of Catharism, who serve as Cathar "priests." Vide *Perfecti*.

Paulicians: *Manichaeism* heretics in Asia Minor from the seventh to ninth centuries C.E.; they represent the key link in the chain of Heresy from the *Carpocratians* to *Bogomilism*,

and their exile to Bulgaria marks a key development in the westward movement of the Cainite Heresy.

Pelagianism: Non-Gnostic heresy holding that man can achieve salvation by will and reason alone; popular in Britain and Gaul in the fifth century and among many vampires to this day.

Perfecti: Latin for *parfaits* (q.v.).

Pilate, Church of: Scornful Heretical term for the Catholic Church, the Church of Rome. Vide *Church Material*.

Pleroma: The realm of pure spirit.

Pneuma: Greek for "breath," often used by Gnostics to refer to spirit.

Psychic: In *Gnosticism*, possessed of a modicum of spiritual consciousness though still too marred by *materia* to be considered *elect*. Vide *animal*.

Red Pentecost: Quasi-Orphic rite of "divine madness" used in the Heresy to worship the Beast, as a confessional sacrament and, occasionally, as a shattering initiation rite.

Sacrament: In Christianity, a ritual that makes manifest divine grace. The seven sacraments of Catholicism and Orthodoxy are the *Eucharist*, baptism, confession, *ordination*, confirmation, marriage and extreme unction (last rites). In Catholicism, the matter (e.g., wine and bread), form (spoken liturgy and gestures) and intention must all be present for the sacrament to take effect.

St. Panteleimon, Order of: A monastic order within the Cainite Heresy.

See of Nod: A "see" is a bishopric; the domain of the *Bishops of Nod* (q.v.).

Sethite: Gnostic doctrines placing emphasis on Seth, third son of Adam, as a prefiguration of Christ.

Sophia: Literally, "Wisdom," an important figure in *Gnosticism* representing both divine wisdom and (sometimes) divine mercy; the pursuit of Sophia is an important element of *gnosis*.

Swarm of Samael: Baalite branches of the Cainite Heresy.

Third Caine: Final Messiah promised in the *Haemophotikon*; a figure representing the Second Coming of Christ and the Third Coming of Caine. Possibly identical with the Christian Antichrist.

Transubstantiation: The literal, physical transformation of the bread and wine of the Eucharist to the Holy Body and Holy Blood of Christ at the climax of the sacrament with only the "accidents" of bread and wine remaining; a key element of Catholic doctrine.

Valentinian: Any follower of Valentinus (100?-160? C.E.); usually a believer in *Sethite* doctrine.

Vernacular: The local language of an area, as opposed to Latin. Catholic doctrine forbids preaching in, or translation of Scripture into, the vernacular.

Waldenses: Followers of Peter Waldo; these heretics deny *Transubstantiation* and preach in the *vernacular*. The beliefs of the Waldenses prefigure Lutheranism.

CONTENTS

Not all true things are true, and not all true things should be revealed to all men.

— attributed to Clement of Alexandria

The pages ahead reveal all of what is known and much of what is guessed about the trails and machinations of the Cainite Heresy in Dark Medieval Europe. As always, the Storyteller should decide exactly how much of this information is common knowledge, how much is dark rumor and how much is just plain wrong.

Chapter One: Paths of Thorns traces the lineage of the Cainite Heresy and its development from pre-Christian beginnings, through the birth of Gnosticism and up to the Dark Medieval present. Sidebars discuss vampiric influence on the other major heresies of the period, and those beliefs' contributions to the Heresy. Here, the major events in the Heresy's past stand revealed.

Chapter Two: Flowers of Evil covers the Heresy's theology, doctrine, practices, geographical spread, its hierarchy and its goals. How do you get into the Heresy? How do you know what is Heretical and what is not? Who is behind its growth, and what are they planning?

Chapter Three: Masks of Piety gives advice to Storytellers and players for dealing with Heretical themes in the chronicle. Roleplaying religion, not to mention blasphemy, can be difficult; this chapter is here to help.

Chapter Four: Fires of God tells of individuals who hunt the Heresy openly in the towns and castles, and of the ones who work to bring it down from the corridors of the Vatican and the palaces of kings. Not all the Heresy's enemies are churchmen. Not all of the Heresy's enemies are even alive.

Chapter Five: A Long Walk down the Devil's Road discusses mindsets and methods for playing this most challenging of Roads. While not technically affiliated with the Cainite Heresy, *Via Diabolis* certainly holds appeal for many Heretics.

Appendix: Notable Heretics and Hunters details for you, gentle reader, some of the faces and stories of the Heresy's staunchest supporters — and fiercest foes.

But now, the homily draws to its close; the Scriptures stand open and the cup is at hand.

Take, all of you, and drink....

A NOTE ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Much of the material covered in this book hews very closely to actual historical events and theologies. Apart from the Cainite Heresy, the heretical groups mentioned within these pages were real. Although the vampiric influence postulated upon them is of course fictional, orders such as the Ophites actually did exist. The horror of heresy gone terribly awry — and the steps taken to contain it — is all too real.

INTRODUCTION



NOTA



Chapter One: Paths of Thorns

Moreover, also, there has broken out another heresy also, which is called that of the Cainites. And the reason is, that they magnify Cain as if he had been conceived of some potent Virtue which operated in him; for Abel had been procreated after being conceived of an inferior Virtue, and accordingly had been found inferior.

— Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*

"Ærellius, you never could see to the heart of the matter," Cælestius said as he thumped his chest with a closed fist. "Why must you always be concerned with everything but the truth?"

"What you say is not the truth. No matter how long you argue it, it will not become true." Ærellius put a hand on his friend's shoulder to bring Cælestius' frantic pacing to a sudden halt.

Cælestius shoved the restraining hand aside and turned from his friend. "Force will not restrain me. You — and all of the other relics like you — are all so concerned with Caine. Don't you see, Ærellius? It is not Caine we should be following. Caine is not the source of our blood."

"Again with that. This grand revelation is what you want to share with the Pope?" Ærellius stared wearily at the back of Cælestius' head. They'd been through this argument a hundred times in a hundred cities, and Cælestius' position never so much as budged.

"Think, Ærellius, for once in your existence, think. Caine is the son of Adam. He is the first generation..." Cælestius waited, to see if his companion would make the connection. The length of the silence grew uncomfortable, so he continued: "What makes us what we are is not Caine's blood, but rather the blood of Adam. We carry the blood of the original man; we descend from Adam. The Pope has to know."

"I don't think so," Ærellius said, reaching out to place a comforting hand on Cælestius' shoulder. "Not if I can help it."

"Don't you see, sire?" Cælestius turned with a feral light in his eyes. "You can't."

The trail of the Cainite Heresy winds through the entire history of the Christian Church, and its roots go back centuries further. The careful student can find them in the bloodier Eastern mystery cults celebrated in the ancient territories of Asia Minor and Syria, which later became such fertile grounds for heresies of all kinds. The question of vampiric influence on or creation of the human heresies proves difficult to resolve: Some awestruck humans and vainglorious vampires give the Cainites credit for every zig and zag of human history, no matter how unlikely or contrived. On the other hand, both those vampires who feared Christianity and ones who saw in it a new avenue for their power had ample motives and opportunities to twist and reshape the skein of events to their own liking. As with so many issues, both heretical and vampiric, a final accounting of responsibilities and influences proves impossible, despite a hundred tempting threads of speculation.

THE CAINITES AND THE GODS

Should god be like a proud man in his rage?

— Euripides, *The Bacchae*

Ever since Carthage (if not before), some Cainites have reigned over human herds as gods, cowing the populace with minor "miracles" of vampiric power and ensuring streams of

bloody sacrifices. Cainite indolence and human fears kept these cults to the shadows of the primitive cities for the most part, although the Baali and Set's childer seldom caviled at ruling openly.

As time marched on, however, and as the kine learned the power of organization, and of fire, most vampires willingly returned to the shadows. Human priesthoods seldom interfered with the dark rites of the chthonic "gods" that the Cainites declared themselves to be, but it was not wise for a vampire to show himself too long, or too often, to his followers. The veil of mystery surrounding a "god," once rent, could never be repaired.

Driven by the wrath of mortals and the rewards of secrecy, vampiric cults melted deeper into the background of human religion. The poets and philosophers polished the old tales of blood and agony into stories of moral uplift or bawdy recollection. Humans seemed unconcerned with their gods; as a result, the vampires saw less and less reason to cloak their powers in religious mummery.

Comfortable as it was, this separation of religion from spiritual matters, ethics or other concerns of daily life could not last long. In the cosmopolitan Greek east, older and more powerful paganisms remade themselves in the model of the Orphic mysteries. Cults of Isis, Attis, Cybele and others spread as far as Rome even by the second century B.C.E. The influences of Zoroaster's uncompromising Persian morality spread into the region to provide an unflattering comparison with the effete and hypocritical forms of the cities' religions.

Still more influential were the Jews. The various diaspora of Assyrian, Babylonian and (later) Seleucid conquest left literate populations of devout monotheists in every major capital of the antique world. The Jewish colony in Alexandria, especially, carried on a major philosophical debate with the Hellenistic and Isian scholars of the library there. Monotheism, both simplistic and ineffable, appealed to the Hellenistic mind. Jewish traditions of a dark, adversarial spirit opposing God, ones taken from their Babylonian captors and reinforced by their Zoroastrian liberators, echoed strongly with the Platonic notion of the dialectic between the divine Idea and the material receptacles (*chora*) into which it falls.

GNOSIS

From this synthesis of Hebrew theology, Platonic philosophy, Egyptian ritual and Zoroastrian cosmology, Gnosticism emerged. Taking its name from the Greek word *gnosis*, or "knowledge," Gnosticism held that salvation can be achieved only by personal knowledge of the truth, regardless of whether that knowledge comes through studies, initiatory instruction or sudden "illumination." This belief contrasted sharply with the Christian belief that salvation derives from God alone,

whose revelations are available to all humanity through Church teachings, and with Jewish beliefs that obedience to the written Law and the covenants of the patriarchs ensure divine approval.

Gnostic cosmology differed strongly from Christian conceptions in other areas as well. In most Gnostic traditions, the material and divine worlds can be clearly distinguished; many Gnostics considered the Creator of the world (whom they called Ialdabaoth) not merely separate from God, but inferior or even malign and resentful. In Gnostic thought, the Godhead, in its Platonic purity, cannot have created the gross and cumbersome material world. Rather, emanations from God (usually eight or 30 "aeons," identified as angels in more Christian Gnosticisms) extend from the empyrean to the material, and the lowest such aeon, the Demiurge, creates the world.

Nevertheless, although the Demiurge's Creation remains horribly flawed, hope exists, at least for some. One of the aeons, Sophia, the feminine principle of divine wisdom (whom some traditions blame for the Creation through either her lustful weakness or her prideful reason), brings forth a redeeming spirit in memory of the higher world. When that redeemer rescues Sophia from the world through divine marriage (or at least through magical copulation), the reign of matter can be broken.

Sophia is not the only spiritual being trapped in the material world, of course. Other shards of divine light (or, in some versions, divine *pneuma*, or breath) fall into the worldly trap and must struggle against the prison of matter, thus recalling the Empedoclean doctrines of the Orphics. These higher, spiritual, beings possess the capacity for gnosis, and only through their influence and teachings can mere "psychic" or "animate" beings (ordinary Jews and Christians possessed of enough spirit, or *anima*, to reject pure matter) or material beings (base pagans worshipping material idols) be saved. Gnostic doctrines differ on the number and nature of spiritual beings, on whether there remains any hope for animal and psychic beings at all, and on virtually every other detail of the cosmology.

This basic framework emerged in the hundred years or so after 50 B.C.E. and rapidly intersected with the new Christian religion. Both Christianity and Gnosticism presented exciting new syntheses of Jewish monotheism with Greek intellectual and political thought. Many early Christians adopted Gnostic teachings, and vice versa, in an attempt to create a theology with the best of both schools. Other Christians recoiled in horror at the implications of Gnosticism. Even before the new faith had a form, it had a heresy. The Cainites were not slow to take advantage of these twin revolutions in human worship.



THE BIRTH OF THE HERESY

When you reach the place this evening, you shall hear my voice as I sing to you, and you shall have wine such as you never before drank....

— Offer of the Lamia to Menippus, as quoted in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

The first certain contact between the major figures of Gnostic thought and the Cainites came in 74 C.E., in the Greek polis of Corinth. (Rumors of Simon Magus' dealings with the Gangrel are simply that, rumors.) Artemisia, a Lamia of great intellectual gifts, fell in love with Menippus, a disciple of the great Gnostic magus Apollonius of Tyana. Menippus and Artemisia enjoyed a true meeting of minds, in addition to their mutual physical attraction. Menippus imparted much of Apollonius' Gnostic learning to the Gorgon, just as she shared the details of vampiric lore with him in intimate speech. Apollonius halted this peculiar pillow talk when he prevented his disciple's Embrace. The magus' intervention, once the Lamia noised it about, perversely engaged the curiosity of the Cappadocians, who were already fascinated with the new savior-cult spreading out of Palestine and into the civilized portions of the Empire. Their scholarly minds worked at the problems of Gnostic philosophy while Cappadocius himself sought the wisdom of Heaven. On the human side, Apollonius incorporated the fragments of learning Menippus had gathered into his own, highly influential, works.

In the blended worldview of the Cainites and the Gnostics, vampires became self-evidently spiritual beings of the highest type. Their magical-appearing Disciplines, their lack of dependence on rude matter such as food or air and their incorruptible flesh all worked to reinforce the identification of the Cainites with the purest divinity. (Even Nosferatu could be seen as spiritual entities through judicious use of Obfuscate, and they certainly rejected the prison of flesh vehemently enough to satisfy any early Gnostic.) Further study rapidly revealed (or created) connections between vitae and *pneuma*; the "water of life" and the "breath of spirit" became almost interchangeable to the early Gnostic scholars.

This identification of Cainites as the spiritual beings from whom gnosis springs made vampiric influence on Gnosticism inevitable. The Gnostics became fanatically stubborn in seeking out vampiric tutors, with scraps of magical lore aiding the cultists' often formidable intellects in the search. Even if a vampire refused such a role (and few did, when religiously mandated feasting was freely offered), such rejection only spurred the would-be worshipers to new theorizing about these divine entities who refused any imprisonment in "animate" teachings. Often, a Cainite

who rejected the devotion of a Gnostic cult found himself repeatedly approached by the same sect, its members seeking divine insight and approval for their latest reformulation of the relations between Sophia, the Demiurge, Christ and the aeons.

Some scholars see vampires as the true referents of the term "holy guardian angels" and as "those who call" in early Gnostic writings. Certainly, the way lay open for any Cainite who performed a modicum of research to establish her own cult complete with scriptures, liturgies and creation myth. (Cynical Lasombra occasionally observe that Gnostic theology often sounds like something made up on the fly by a hungry Cainite more eager for dinner than for disputation.) The easy power and blood available to a Cainite with her own religion remained a tempting prize for centuries, and few could resist that temptation. Scholars of the Heresy note that "guardian angels" inspired the author of the *Tractate Zostrianos* and Mani, father of Manichaeism, over the next 200 years, and whether those mortals' visions sprang from a combination of meditation and desert exposure or from applications of Presence and Dominate, none can say.

VALENTINUS AND THE SETHITE SCHOOL

The scholar Valentinus founded one of the most influential of the "angelic" Gnostic traditions. Valentinus' doctrines seemingly had little in common with the open decadence of the Ophites and Carpocratians. He even attributed the creation of the world to a shadow of Sophia, rather than to some corrupt Demiurge. Valentinus further maintained that Christ saved mankind, and that all mankind can approach the spiritual by discarding matter. In this insistence on the unreality of matter, Valentinus echoed classical Stoicism or even (possibly) Buddhism adapted from Greek translations of Indian texts at Alexandria. However, Valentinus did maintain that Christ was pure spirit, changing shape at will, and that Simon of Cyrene died on the cross in Jesus' place. Valentinus credited a "call from above" and an angel who revealed the "book of the living" to him with these inspirations and others.

Although some authorities' opinions differ, most Cainite heresiologists believe that Valentinus' "angel" sprang from the clan of Set. Early Gnostic sects such as, for example, the Ophites, clearly show the Serpents' tracks. Setite involvement in other mystery cults including that of Isis betokens a similar influence on the emerging Gnostic churches. In addition, Valentinus was born around 100 C.E. in Phrebonis in the Egyptian Delta, a veritable nest of Serpents. More evidence for the Setite role in Valentinian Gnosticism lies in the emphasis Valentinus and his successors placed on Seth, identified in the Valentinian manuscripts as the third son of Adam and the first manifestation of the Christ-spirit.

However, the childer of Set would have numerous reasons to inculcate a reverence for a spiritual Seth in their followers — and any other vampire would find such followers difficult to steal from the Serpents by appealing to any reverence for Caine.

Here, the Gnostic doctrine of secret knowledge available only by divine initiation worked for the Serpents. By its precepts, certain Gnostic teachers possessed divine dispensation to lie to their own followers, if necessary, to guard the divine *logos* from animal corruption by the unready. This tradition aided the secretion of Heretical seeds deep within the often quite humanistic Valentinian and Sethite traditions.

If Valentinus did have a Serpent as backer or instructor, she failed him at the crucial moment of his career, when he lost the Papal election in 141 C.E. to Pius I. St. Justin Martyr's vituperative attacks on Valentinus in Rome probably played the crucial role in thwarting what could have been a major Setite victory at a time when no other clan was paying any attention to what was still a minor (and annoyingly pacifist) cult. Human piety had saved the Church, and Valentinus returned to Egypt to teach his Sethite doctrine to devoted students rather than preach it in every corner of the Empire as Christian dogma.

The close call with Valentinus and the Papacy (and the power of other heresies such as Marcionism) led many of the most persuasive writers and teachers in Christendom to attack Gnosticism and its related beliefs. St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian and St. Hippolytus raged against heresy in sermons and angry rhetoric. These polemicists, suffused with True Faith, made Cainite involvement in heretical movements less risk-free than before, especially as the preferred tool for rooting out heresy was fire.

Gnosticism slowly lost the contest for the hearts and minds of humanity, as well: The clear Christian message of universal salvation drowned out more rarefied notions of multiple souls and evil angels. Christians showed far more willingness to suffer martyrdom for their faith than Gnostics, which impressed increasing numbers of spiritually hungry pagans. Some Gnostics, such as Clement of Alexandria, began adapting more and more orthodox Christianity into their rites and doctrines, to the point that Gnosticism survived, if at all, in hints and urgings to celibacy.

Even with Gnosticism fading, Christianity *did* face serious competition from Manichaeism and Arianism, as well as from elite "soldier cults" such as Mithraism and the cult of Sol Invictus. However, Cainites with sufficiently long views saw that Christianity was a *fait accompli*, no matter how many persecutions the emperors launched at vampiric instigation. (It took about a century to bring most Cainites around to that opinion, and some haven't adjusted to it yet.) With the rise of Constantine (possibly at the

hands of just such a far-sighted Lasombra), Catholic Christianity became the state religion of Rome. Suddenly, the Lasombra and Ventrue had an interest in preserving Catholicism and in weakening the heretics, even if it meant accepting the religious mania of Michael, Toreador Prince of Constantinople.

Various Valentinian and other Sethite heresies continued to exist, if not thrive, at least until 692 C.E., but by then Cainites had other fish to fry. The fall of Rome and the Persian invasion brought the old structures down in ruins, crushing human and Cainite plans alike. Many vampires blamed the spread of the pacifist human religion for the Empire's fall. They noted how the new creed destroyed the veneration of gods and Caesars they saw as necessary to keep the realm together.

Cainites also found reason to dislike the massive upsurge in True Faith that the coming of Christianity brought. Having been, under the Olympians, a rare phenomenon found only in the simple and the barbaric, True Faith spread after Christianity's advent throughout every stratum of society and from the heart of Rome even to the wildest deserts. The dangers posed by the Faithful convinced all but the most dedicated Cainite theologians to leave religion to the kine and to grasp for the falling shards of temporal power instead. Perhaps Cainites also tired of the circular cosmological disputations, the endless multiplication and naming of aeons and angels, and the sheer inconvenience and mortal pettiness of building yet another evanescent Gnostic cult from the rejected intelligentsia and bored decadents of the Empire.

THE HERESY TAKES SHAPE

The angel who dwells in the fourth heaven replied, saying, "It was not right to commit all those lawless deeds that are in the world of the dead." The soul replied, saying, "Bring witnesses! Let them show you in what body I committed lawless deeds. Do you wish to bring a book to read from?"

— *The Apocalypse of Paul*

The increasing reluctance of vampires to take a central role in Gnostic evolution may be why, in 413 C.E., a human took the next step toward creating the Cainite Heresy and providing it with a scripture all its own. The *Euagetaematikon*, or *Book of the Shining Blood*, sprang from the pen of a Byzantine priest named Procopius. Details of his life are sketchy: The Toreador Patriarch Michael removed his name from not only human but Cainite libraries wherever possible. Many Cappadocians and even fellow Toreador refused Michael's request for their records, only to find their mansions and libraries set ablaze the next night — or day, if their refusal had been unduly firm. From the best information available, Procopius headed a



division of monks charged with rooting out heresy in Cilicia, Syria and Palestine. He was a man of prodigious intellect who could read not only Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew but also many other scripts, and he discerned much that remained hidden to others. He repeatedly experienced ecstatic religious visions, which historians recall suspiciously and consider alongside the "guardian angel" appearances to Valentinus and Mani. After an Imperial raid on a small heretical commune (descended from one of the Cappadocian Cainite groups of three centuries previous) near the Dead Sea, Procopius closeted himself with several confiscated scrolls found near the site of the action.

Among those scrolls was a partial copy of the *Book of Nod*. Reading this work, after a lifetime of studying Gnosticism, neo-Platonism and similar dubious doctrine, unbalanced Procopius completely. Over the next 39 days, Procopius wrote out the *Euagetaematikon* in his own blood (he switched to that of his subordinates once they had become suspicious). After six months without word from Procopius' monastery, an imperial legate visited and found it strewn with flyblown corpses, splashed with dried gore and painted in "blasphemous designs." Procopius had vanished,

never to be seen again, although rumors of his reappearance have been a constant ever since.

Although testimony is unreliable and records almost nonexistent, Procopius' new Cainite Heresy must have spread throughout the Byzantine Empire during the next two centuries. Surely it followed Belisarius' conquering armies into Africa and Italy. The Empire battled other, more visible, heresies such as the Monophysites and Nestorians during that same period; and it did so bloodily at times, and ruthlessly as well. Despite the distraction other heresies offered, Procopius knew that for the new cult of Caine to survive it had to bury itself deep and lie dormant where possible. Procopius also had to contact interested members of the clans of Caine to receive the vitae for his new communion, and after the disasters of the first Cainite heresies, to do so was clearly a process to embark upon slowly.

With such secrecy and covert needs in mind, the Heresy's missionaries spread west, far from the prying eyes of the Patriarch and beyond the reach of the cataphracts' lances. The combination of large Christian churches and weak barbarian kings made the West the natural field for Heretical expansion. Although many of the Heresy's devotees followed the exiled Nestorians east into Persia and beyond,

and flagellant sects and anchorite monasteries gave the Heresy hosts for a time, the twin persecutions of Emperors and Caliphs burned most of these cells out by the 11th century. Within the Empire itself, the Heresy went underground, waiting patiently for an opportunity to rise up and proclaim the new religion from the blood-soaked floor of Hagia Sophia.

OUT OF THE EAST

Then the archon of the western regions arose, and from the East he will perform a work, and he will instruct men in his wickedness. And he wants to nullify all teaching, the words of true wisdom, while loving the lying wisdom... wishing to introduce wickedness and to put on dignity. He was incapable, because the defilement of his garments is great.

— "The Concept of Our Great Power," Nag Hammadi Codex VI, 4

The history of the Cainite Heresy in the East remains cloudy. Whether Procopius' Heresy found willing ears in the Setites of Khay'tall, or counted on support from the Obertus Tzimisce — or carved deals with the Assamites outside the walls or with the Baali inside hidden fastnesses — may never be known. Whatever Procopius' plans for domination were, they indisputably failed — Patriarch Michael and the Magnus Lasombra remain bulwarks of Orthodoxy to this day. Between a natural desire to keep its image immaculate and an even stronger desire to stay out of Cainite affairs, the Orthodox Church has rid itself of any document or charter that might indicate the Heresy's course or intentions in the East. As far as the Church of Byzantium is concerned, there is no Cainite Heresy in the East, and there never was.

THE PAULICIANS

On the other hand, the great similarities between the Paulician heresy and the Cainite Heresy as found in the West may put the lie to such claims. Certainly, the Byzantine government spared no effort to eradicate the Paulicians, even in the face of much graver military threats from the Caliphate. Only 20 years after the doctrine emerged from the Asian frontier, an Imperial expedition entered into the Armenian marches on a mission of eradication. The army arrested the Paulicians' founder, Constantine Silvanus, and stoned him to death in 668 C.E. A second expedition in 692 C.E. brought Silvanus' successor Simeon Titus back to Constantinople so that he might be burned at the stake.

Over the next century, the Iconoclastic controversy distracted the Empire from following up these victories, and the Paulicians got some breathing space. By the ninth century, however, the persecution resumed in earnest; the Emperor Michael I decimated the Paulicians' ranks before being deposed in 813 C.E. by Tzimisce-backed monks (see

Constantinople By Night, pp. 24-26 for the Tzimisce role in the Byzantine monastic movement). Finally, the Emperor Basil I of Macedonia launched an eight-year campaign against the Paulician territories in Cappadocia, Armenia and Cilicia, which ended with the wholesale removal of the Paulician populations from Asia Minor. Beginning in 872 C.E., Byzantine armies transplanted whole villages across the Empire to the Bulgarian frontier. The Paulician leaders Karbeas and Chrysocheir disappeared into the Balkan mountains, and the Paulician threat to the Empire's core faded away in like manner.

What did the Paulicians proclaim to make themselves so hated? Their fundamental doctrine drew from Gnostic traditions, especially from the harsh dualist philosophy of Marcionism and from the eastern Manichaean faith. Paulicians declared the Creator and God of the Old Testament an evil being, equal to the Devil. The good God thus remained unreachable by man, and the Paulicians rejected the sacraments as meaningless. In Paulician teachings, Christ was a being of pure spirit, whereas merely human souls were irredeemably tainted by the material world. Only in the intervention of angels and the renunciation of the world could anyone find hope of eternal life. Whether some, none or all of the "angels" in the Paulician cosmos were actually vampires remains an open question, but many scholars find it a likely explanation.

Other questions leave even more mysteries behind. Who was the "Paul" for whom the heresy was named? Certainly not St. Paul; Paulicianism was incompatibly hostile to the doctrines of that Apostle. Was "Paul" the alias of some ancient heresiarch forgotten by history, or of a shadowy Cainite taking up the old "guardian angel" mantle? What force allowed Paulicianism to survive nearly continuous persecution for more than two centuries, when other heresies broke on the rack in a decade? And what Tzimisce string-pulling got the Paulicians deported to the Bulgarian border as a coherent community, rather than executed *en masse* or scattered to the winds when Emperor Basil's armies finally burned the heart out of the heresy's Cilician homeland? On the other hand, if the Paulician heresy was actually a mask for the Cainite Heresy, why did it emerge when it did, rather than during the great Iconoclastic crisis, when its body-hating doctrine could have perhaps enjoyed a degree of support, or at least benign neglect?

Part of the answer surely lies in the ambiguous nature of the heretical movement itself. Even if the Paulician church was entirely a front for the Cainite Heresy, its human worshipers saw it only as the true vision of Christianity — and as such, eagerly spread its gospel wherever possible. This proselytization of a heretical faith drew the attention of the Orthodox Church and, inevitably, the temporal armies. The human devotees to the various forms of the Cainite Heresy broke its needed silence, thanks to its

own success at winning human souls; thus they endangered themselves and the Cainites behind the scenes. This pattern can be seen in the history of the earliest Ophite cults, and some observers watch for it in the Albigensian movement evangelizing southern France.

WESTERN EXPOSURE

Overeager humans also revealed the Heresy directly in the Roman port of Ostia in 754 C.E. The local Lasombra domitor of one Heretic sect there followed Pope Stephen on embassy to the Franks. Left without vitae for communion for a year, the desperate Heretics resorted to kidnapping infants, in hopes that the spiritual purity of their blood would approximate that of Cainite vitae. Regardless of the theological issues at stake, the lack of vitae caused the ghouled members of the Heretic group to engage in increasingly erratic behavior, and eventually Roman aediles uncovered its activities.

Had the Frankish King Pepin not chosen, during 754 C.E., to invade Italy in a war with the Lombards, the scandal would have been immense. As it was, the Pope declared the sect anathema without even launching a full-scale investigation, with the belief that the sect was only a local group of devil-worshippers. The fog of war left the Heresy able to go underground and institute some degree of discipline on congregations too near major cities to be allowed to run wild. Ironically, the Church crackdown on rumored blood-worshipping cults helped enforce such discipline. Groups too foolish to obey the new strictures rapidly became targets of Church investigation, cursory and distracted as it was, and they rapidly met messy, painful ends as a result.

The Heretics' relatively unified response to the Ostia revelation indicates that, even then, the Heresy possessed some sort of central command, or at least a coordinating council. Whether this group was the See of Nod, the Crimson Curia or some other assemblage entirely remains obscure. Having survived the discoveries of Ostia, the Heresy grew rapidly during the decline of the Papacy into simony and nepotism by extending its tendrils into many of the new monasteries and abbeys. The simultaneous disintegration of the Frankish Empire also benefited the Heresy — without Charlemagne's unified system of reeves and bailiffs spreading the word, the discovery of any individual congregation remained local news. By the ninth century C.E., Heretical scholars had translated the *Euagetaematikon* into Latin; in 879 C.E., Childeric Apina established the Western liturgy of the Heresy. Copies of both works, illuminated in dubious inks through the efforts of ghouled monks working by Auspex and lamps fueled with human fat, spread throughout Western Europe over the centuries.

From this point onward, the Western Heresy showed its characteristic (and faithfully Gnostic) division into outer,

enthusiastic or schismatic, groups and an inner sect with long-range goals for subversion, corruption and control of the Church itself — and with it the souls of all Christendom.

A HANDFUL OF HERESIES

THE ORPHICS

By the middle of the sixth century B.C.E., Greek intellectuals no longer accepted the myths of their Olympian gods. Some retreated into hollow agnosticism, but others strove to reconcile the rational mind with the experience of the mystical. These "mysteriosophes" founded cults devoted to the living, religious expression of beliefs such as those of Empedocles and other pre-Socratic philosophers.

Empedocles claimed that *daimones*, divine beings composed of superior power, had fallen from the spiritual world into the world of matter. Now clothed in the "foreign robe of flesh," they sought to escape by moving into an ever-improving series of forms: vegetable, animal, human and godlike. Empedocles' distinctions between the true world and the material world influenced Pythagoras and Plato, to name only his most distinguished successors. Some Gnostic sects followed Pythagoras' insistence that the two worlds were illusory and coexistent aspects of one world; others followed Plato into dualism.

The Orphic and Dionysiac cultists adopted the Empedoclean dualist concept of the human spirit incarcerated in a tomb (*sema*) of flesh (*soma*) as a central tenet of their belief. Only by performing secret rites could the soul briefly escape the tomb and realize its godhead. This communion left the body and mind irrational, and the Orphics designed many of their rites (ingesting sacred mushrooms, fasting, strong wine, inhaling herbs) to bring on this mystical insanity.

Hysterical Orphics often ran wild across the countryside to tear animals and luckless passersby to shreds. These practices recalled the myths of the Maenads, followers of Dionysus (and perhaps also of the mysterious Dionysian), who tore Orpheus to pieces while drunk and fed upon his flesh. These practices declined as Greece grew civilized and the lonely places receded; by the first century B.C.E., the mystery cults of Dionysus had become mere supper clubs for debate and funeral insurance.

However, the early mysteries of Dionysus and Orpheus blended Greek rationalism, hidden knowledge and personal communion with the divine, in a way closely prefiguring many of the Gnostic beliefs of six centuries later. The resemblances between the two are so strong that some historians trace the Cainite Heresy back to these early beginnings.

CAINITE HERESY



Individual vampires may well have served as mystagogues, leading the elites of Hellas in mind-shattering rites through carnage and madness and into blood oaths. Even now, some foolhardy vampires attempt to hunt lupines and drink their blood in order to plunge themselves into frenzied ecstasy more than slightly reminiscent of the Dionysiac "divine madness." These Cainites, primarily Malkavians or Gangrel of the high Balkan mountains and deep German forests, may be survivors of such a tradition, or they may be recreating it from the same half-understood urges.

THE OPHITES

Perhaps influenced overmuch by revelations from the Lamia, some of the earliest Gnostic sects went in quite radical directions. Under the general name of the Ophites, they sought out gnosis in the knowledge of good and evil as revealed by the serpent (in Greek, *ophis*) in the Garden of Eden. The Ophites not only believed in a corrupted and incompetent Demiurge, whom they blamed for creating the material world, but they identified this Demiurge with Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament and God of the Jews. Because the serpent liberated mankind from Jehovah's slavery in Eden and opened the door to gnosis, the Ophites revered it as a herald of the divine light and equated it with the *logos*, or divine Word.

This identification of Jehovah with the evil forces of *materia* allowed the Ophites to retain the Old Testament as scripture, but the new heroes of the story were the enemies of God such as Esau, Eve, Korah and Lucifer. Unlike later Gnostics, the Ophites equated Jehovah with God the Father of Christ; in the words of St. Irenaeus, they "entirely abandoned Jesus." The Ophites even had a Gospel of Judas among their holy books.

The inability of vampires to engage in normal sexual relations only enhanced Cainites' desirability in the eyes of the Ophites, and it gave further evidence of the connection of vampires to the Godhead. The very sterility of the childer of Caine demonstrated yet again vampires' spiritual natures. The Ophites viewed procreative (or potentially procreative) sex as the highest sin. They referred to the hated Jehovah as Hystera, "the womb." The Ophites venerated the Sodomites for being practitioners of occult sex magic as a route to sacred knowledge, for example. Thus, while championing sterility and celibacy, Ophite worship reveled in masturbation, sodomy and other non-procreative sexual practices as sins against the hated flesh. The Ophite leadership gleefully offered its bodies (and the bodies of its followers) to vampires for any and all bestialities and violations — which took on a more sadistic and less sexual tone.

One branch of the Ophites venerated Caine above all their other heroes — as the first murderer, he committed the first sin against matter. It took very little time for the humans of this “Cainite” sect to fall completely under the sway of vampires. Once the doctrines of Caine spread throughout the Ophite communities of the Roman East, a vampire could avail herself of any service a human might perform simply by revealing her powers to such believers. Even at this early stage, some crafty Cainites buried their human followers within the Church to conceal the vilest doctrines from all but the most trusted communicants. These fanatical, but covert, “cults of personality” let many Cainites rise slowly in local religious politics. Some, ironically, used their power to condemn their less subtle Ophite rivals to death or banishment as heretics.

Rumors of Ophite practices (often spread by rival Cainites) led to their destruction not only at the hands of irate Christian neighbors, but at those of the Roman authorities (who, in the provinces, at least, retained the stuffy sense of Roman virtue) as well. The Ophites’ enthusiastic cooperation with vampires may have also contributed to their decline; a single Setite or Cappadocian could go through any number of worshipers in games of murderous impalement and bloody castration. After a first flush of growth, the recruiting of new Ophite congregations became less a matter for missionaries and more one for kidnapers and brigands. Travelers still hear rumors of isolated Ophite villages, now entirely composed of ghouls, along the less-traveled byways of Asia Minor, and of the fate of lonely Crusaders or merchants who unknowingly stop in such places at night.

THE CARPOCRATIANS

Named for its founder, Carpocrates, this second-century Gnostic sect flourished in Alexandria and in the mountains between Syria and Asia Minor. Like the Ophites, the Carpocratians believed in the evil nature of the material world and identified the God of the Old Testament with the corrupt Demiurge and his evil angels, the archons. This belief led them to the notion that only by completely experiencing and mastering the material world could their spirits be freed from its bondage. Thus, they committed any number of sins and practiced demon summoning to demonstrate mastery of the psychic world. Carpocratian rites often centered on violating natural processes. Carpocratians fueled their ceremonies with semen and menstrual blood, and they practiced ritual cannibalism of aborted fetuses. Like the Ophites, they felt it was their sacred responsibility to break every single law and proscription in the Old Testament, though, unlike the Ophites, they believed that it would take more than one lifetime to do so correctly (thus the Carpocratian belief in reincarnation).

However, the Carpocratians revered Jesus as a mortal man who had magically learned the ability to remember

his spiritual nature — in other words, they saw him as the greatest Gnostic prophet in a lineage including Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle. Among the commandments the Carpocratians broke was the commandment against graven images; their colorful icons are the earliest known depictions of Jesus. This iconolatry, along with their magical prowess and almost gleefully callous attitude toward murder and suffering (after all, the victim always had another life to look forward to), implies that the Obertus, or Hidden, Tzimisce (see *Constantinople by Night*, p. 76) may have had a hand here. Given the Tzimisce hold on Bogomilism, they must have entered the development of the Heresy around this time and place, probably by appearing as fearsome angels indeed to Carpocrates and his first disciples.

MANICHAISM

Manichaeism represents the return of Zoroastrian influence to the Gnostic mainstream. In 228 C.E., an angel named at-Taum (or “the Twin,” identified by later Manichaeans as the Holy Spirit) appeared to a 12-year-old Babylonian prince of Persian descent named Mani and bestowed a revelation. According to Mani, at-Taum referred to him as the last in a long line of prophets, including Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. In Mani’s 24th year, at-Taum told Mani to reveal himself and preach the truth to the whole world. Mani did so throughout the Persian Empire, and he sent missionaries into the Roman lands and the eastern deserts. Eventually, King Bahram I of Persia arrested Mani as a dangerous rebel and imprisoned him on the advice of the Persian Magi.

Cainite consensus holds that Mani’s at-Taum was actually Thomas, a Lasombra scholar driven out of Palestine by the Cappadocians for stealing holy books from their library under Edessa. Persistent reports claim that Thomas Embraced Mani in a Persian prison in 276 C.E., and that both sire and childe traveled east along the Silk Road to study with the holy men of India and Cathay. The mention of India emphasizes Thomas’ connection with the Gnostic (and Heretical) myths of St. Thomas Didymus (“St. Thomas the Twin”), the so-called Apostle to India.

Manichaean cosmology reintegrates the Gnostic myth with the stark dualism of Zoroaster. God, the lord of light and spirit, battles endlessly against Saklas, the lord of darkness and creator of the world of matter. A series of spiritual beings, the “primal men” (including, in addition to Christ, Enoch and Seth) descend into the world of matter, are overcome by Saklas, and retreat to the world of light by realizing their nature and leaving behind their armor of flesh. Thus, God is always suffering, being torn to pieces by darkness, and then saving himself — and, by extension, any person willing to reject the ways of the flesh and return to the world of light. Not everyone has the strength of this gnosis, so only the spiritual elect

reject the flesh entirely (total celibacy, poverty and vegetarianism). The psychic and animal men exist to serve the elect with alms and to reincarnate until they, too, find gnosis.

This blending of Dionysian, Gnostic, Christian, Persian, Buddhist and Jewish elements proved amazingly popular. Manichaeism spread as far as Gaul and Spain in the west, and in the east reached Cathay in 694 C.E. Even St. Augustine became a Manichaean for a time. The Lasombra (if at-Taum was indeed the Lasombra Thomas) had built a major religion rather than the pathetic cults of Ophis and Carpocrates. Both the Roman Empire and the Christian church persecuted Manichaeism harshly, however; by 500 C.E., they had stamped it out in the West, and over the next century they drove it underground in the East. Nevertheless, either Thomas' machinations, or the eternally fascinated Cappadocians, spread the Manichaean doctrines on some astonishingly fertile soil. The Paulician, Bogomil and Cathar heresies emerged from Manichaean roots across the Mediterranean world over the next half-century. Perhaps the Lasombra Thomas and the Obertus Tzimisce struck some agreement; if so, it benefited the ideals of both.

ARIANISM

The last great threat to the dominance of orthodox Christianity came from an Alexandrian deacon named Arius early in the fourth century C.E. Arius believed that, because God is immutable, Jesus (who according to the Gospels grew and changed) cannot be God but only a demigod created by the Father. The separation of Jesus from God recalls Gnosticism, but Arianism has more in common with conventional polytheism (in which the main gods such as Zeus or Osiris emerge from an ineffable creator such as Ouranos or Nuit). The early Church rejected Arianism at the Council of Nicaea with the Nicene Creed.

Arians retained authority in regional churches and even converted one or two Emperors (thus leading to the final persecutions of Christians, under Valens, from 364 to 378), but internal disputes within Arianism doomed it to failure. However, the Arian doctrines sounded far more reasonable to the practical-minded Gothic invaders of Rome than did the technical, Hellenistic Trinity of Orthodox Christianity, so most of the first wave of Germanic invaders supported Arianism. The dichotomy made their rule over a firmly Catholic populace unstable and allowed the Catholic Franks and Orthodox Byzantines to topple the regime relatively easily.

PELAGIANISM

The preachings of Pelagius, a British monk and theologian, spawned this western heresy. Arriving in Rome around 400 C.E., he preached that God's love for man

allowed salvation by human will alone, as expressed in good acts and obedience to divine Law. This doctrine, carried to its logical extent, denied original sin, infant baptism and, eventually, the necessity of Christ. Such implications condemned Pelagius in the eyes of the Church, but his denial of inherent sin found appreciative believers throughout the Empire, especially in the British Isles and southern Gaul (the strong opposition of St. Augustine and St. Jerome prevented Pelagianism from spreading into Africa or the East).

Although the Benedictines erased the creed (at least in Pelagius' sophisticated formulation) among humanity, many older Cainites still find it comforting. Pelagius' vision of divine love gives hope to Christian vampires, who struggle nightly with the sure knowledge that they are damned irretrievably for their actions. A number of Christian Lasombra embrace Pelagianism, and Prince Mithras allows it as a compromise faith among British Ventrue. Pelagianism has little in common with Gnosticism, and Pelagian vampires almost never join or aid the Heresy.

THE MONOPHYSITES

The local compromises between Gnosticism and Catholicism favored Gnosticism most in Egypt and Syria, where the great Gnostics taught and preached. In those provinces, although the unity and goodness of God the Father and Creator became the majority view, churches taught that Christ was a being of pure spirit different from his material human form. The most extreme Monophysites (from the Greek words meaning "one nature") believed that Christ's physical form was completely illusory — that the Son of God was, essentially, a kind of Holy Ghost. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. (aimed at Monophysitism and Nestorianism) defined Christ's nature as both human and divine, coequal and not "mixed, transmuted, divided or separated."

Enforcing the Council's decision was more difficult; the local churches in Syria, Palestine and Egypt defiantly continued to elect Monophysite clergy and bishops. Imperial forces installed Catholic bishops but could keep them in office only at spearpoint. The whole controversy served to distract the Church from the growing threat of the Cainite Heresy, and it hastened the Arab conquest of the eastern provinces. The Arabs, feeling that no Christian doctrine had any greater value than another, allowed local Monophysites to elect any bishops they liked. Thus, local Christians from Edessa to Cyrene welcomed Moslem overlordship in the name of religious freedom, and the Empire lost the Holy Land forever. Even now, the Christian churches in the Moslem caliphates are most likely Monophysite — the behavior of the Latin Christian Crusaders has done little to change the minds of the local faithful.



CAINITE HERESY

THE NESTORIANS

Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 C.E. to 431 C.E., taught that Christ's two natures, the divine and the human, were completely separate beings conjoined in harmony of action. The Council of Ephesus condemned his preachings as heresy and banished him to Libya. Over the next century, the Empire expelled communities of Nestorians, usually deporting them to Persia. Here they flourished, because the Persians persecuted Orthodox Christians as puppets of Constantinople. By 500 C.E., the Nestorian Church had seven metropolitans (roughly archbishops) in Persia and one in India. Even in the 12th century, Nestorianism remains the religion of Christians in Persia, India and the East as far as Cathay.

Some Cainites (especially Cappadocians and Salubri) find Nestorian doctrines reminiscent of the teachings of Golconda. The Nestorian Christ's perfect harmony between material and spiritual natures evokes Saulot's hopeful vision of the Beast and human yoked together inside the Cainite. Even some Brujah (especially Greek or Hellenized members of the clan) have embraced Nestorianism as a Christianity emblematic of the perfection of mind and body that these Zealots hold holy. The surface similarities between Nestorianism and Gnosticism allowed the first Heretics to practice their vile rites within Nestorian communities. Many Cappadocians used a Nestorian (or Nestorian-Monophysite) framework for sorcerous experiments to forcibly tame, or even purge, the Beast within. The brutalized survivors of some of these experiments may still dwell along pilgrim roads in the East, alternately slaughtering travelers in feral glee and sobbing in incoherent remorse. Whether the formal Cainite Heresy has completely subverted the Nestorian Church remains an occasional subject for debate within the lower councils of the Patriarch Michael. No Byzantine vampire intends to cross leagues of Assamite territory to find out, however.

APHTHARTODOCETISM

The question of Aphthartodocetism serves as an example of the murky history of the Heresy in the East. This doctrine laid extremely heavy emphasis on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. Julian, bishop of Halicarnassus, asserted that the body of Jesus was divine, requiring no food and incapable of injury without Christ's will. This intriguing variation on Monophysite doctrine apparently captured the fancy of the Emperor Justinian, who proclaimed it in an edict of 564 C.E. Only his death the next year prevented him from imposing it upon the Church as official dogma.

Was the promulgation of Aphthartodocetism simply the final act of a senile Emperor increasingly convinced of his own divinity? An attempt to rejoin the Orthodox and Monophysite churches? A misunderstanding of a half-



glimpsed application of Vicissitude? Or the first step in a Heretical program to introduce the notion of Gnostically divine entities as an official element of Church doctrine? After all, it takes very little imagination to travel from the incorruptible and invulnerable body of the Aphthartodocetic Christ to the unaging and rapidly healing forms of the Cainites. At minimum, Aphthartodocetism seems to indicate a profound understanding of vampiric nature, and such an odd doctrine would not be promulgated for no reason at all. Whatever the cause, the Orthodox patriarchs moved against Aphthartodocetism immediately upon Justinian's death, and it vanished into the oubliette of anathema and the confusion of the general Monophysite crisis.

ICONOCLASM

In 726 C.E., Emperor Leo III ordered the destruction of the largest icon in Constantinople. The breaking of this immense statue of Christ opened the Iconoclastic ("icon-breaking") movement that nearly tore the Empire apart. Soldiers broke into monasteries, noble mansions and private homes to smash icons, break statues and burn even illuminated manuscripts. The mania raged for 120 years, interrupted only by the reign of the brutal and corrupt, but icon-worshipping, Empress Irene from 797 to 803 C.E. Finally exhausted, the Iconoclastic furor burned itself out. In 843 C.E., the Emperor Michael III (also the Treador Patriarch of Constantinople) restored worship of icons, and with it the unity of the Empire.

The Iconoclastic struggle served purposes besides the theological and puritan. The long campaign finally broke the power of the monks in the Imperial court and administration, for instance, and strengthened that of the Anatolian landlords. It also provided cover and impetus for a Ventrue campaign against the Tzimisce cults of body-shaping, image magic and what at least one authority refers to as "blood-worship." Some authorities speculate that the survival of the Paulicians in the Balkans (and hence the Cainite Heresy) might have been part of the price the Tzimisce demanded for peace after the restoration of icon-worship in the East.

Ironically, the Iconoclastic controversy may have benefited the Lasombra most of all. Bereft of their own image, the Magisters delight in portraiture more than even the Treador, although for different reasons. The Western Catholic Church, where Lasombra held power, never rejected icons and used the conflict to further separate itself from the Treador-dominated Eastern Orthodox Church. Thus, the Lasombra gained at the expense of the Artisans — by defending religious art. The victory must have been delicious.

THE BOGOMILS

As the core of the Heresy moved west, so too did its tools and its cloaks. The Paulician settlers in Bulgaria spread their Gnostic doctrines to the native Slavs there.

Around 950 C.E., a charismatic figure calling himself Bogomil ("beloved of God") emerged from the Rhodope Mountains to proclaim a new gospel revealing a hidden God and a world of devils. Whether the Tzimisce played any role in the career of Bogomil himself, or simply encouraged the corruption of the sect, is unknown. Like the mysterious "Paul" of the Paulicians, early stories of the Bogomil movement mention a shadowy "Father Jeremiah," about whom few details can be confirmed. Certainly, the Balkan natives, ruled by the Fiends for millennia, needed no convincing that the world was under the dominion of dark and hateful figures — how long it took them to accept other Cainites as "angels of light" is another question.

Like the Paulicians, and the Manichaeans before them, the Bogomils divide their followers into the sternly ascetic elect, rejecting meat and marriage, and the mass of followers who can only hope for a sign of angelic blessing to bring salvation. Christ was a being of spirit who dissolved into air and fled the Crucifixion; the body on the cross was either waste matter or an impostor. Such, at least, are the doctrines of the Bogomils as they have reached outsiders.

Although Bogomilism has spread west from Bulgaria to Serbia, Bosnia, Venetian Dalmatia and even northern Italy, its true meaning and motives remain unclear. Not every Bogomil holds Cainites sacred, certainly. How much of Bogomilism is a Cainite creation, and how much a genuine rejection of Byzantine corruption? Only the Heretics know, and perhaps not even they know for sure. From the time of the first Orphics to the 1140s, when Bogomil bishops are seen in southern France, the Cainite hand behind human heresy remains hidden — a mystery cult indeed.

THE CATHARS

Bogomil missionaries arrived in southern France around 1010 to rekindle the embers of the Manichaean traditions buried there since the fall of the Merovingians. Centering on Toulouse and Albi, they sparked the first elements of what the Church refers to as the Albigensian ("born in Albi") movement, and which the dualists name Catharism (after the Greek *katharos*, or "pure"). Catharism spread across western Europe: No sooner did the Church order the hanging of a den of heretics in Bavaria than another would spring up in the Po Valley. By 1149, the first Cathar bishops took their places in France and Italy as the heads of a parallel Church completely separate from the Church of Rome. In 1167, the Bogomil bishop Nicetas convoked a great Council (called the Council of Heretics by the Catholic Church) at St.-Félix-de-Caraman near Toulouse in the heart of Cathar country to establish a vast Manichaean confraternity extending from the Black Sea to the Atlantic.

The Cathars hold, like the Bogomils, that Jaldabaoth, the Devil, created the world (one of his titles is *Rex Mundi*, King of the World) and masquerades as the God



of the Old Testament. By worshipping that God, the Catholic faith reveals itself as the Church of Jaldabaoth, the Whore of Babylon. Jesus, a kind of extruded spiritual shadow of the true God, entered the sinful material world out of pity, established the true community of brothers and ascended back to heaven. There was no crucifixion — in fact, the cross is the symbol of Satan. No one may hope for resurrection after death except individuals who receive the *consolamentum* from one of the Cathar elect, the *parfaits* or Perfecti (Perfect Ones).

Usually, the *consolamentum* takes the form of laying on of hands, but because persons who receive it are forbidden to eat material food or have sex, Cathars often receive it shortly before dying. The period of self-starvation between the *consolamentum* and death is called the *endura*. Sometimes, to avoid temptation, the newly saved Cathar cuts his wrists and speeds his way to Paradise. Confusingly, the laying on of hands and reading from a sacred book to initiate a *parfait* is also called the *consolamentum*, which makes the *parfait* a "new creature." Much remains unknown about the inner workings of the Cathar faith.

In some Cathar communities, the Perfecti live exactly like the elect of the old Manichaean or Bogomil churches: avoiding sex and meat, but dining on

vegetables and fish. Although poverty in a *parfait* indicates nobility of soul, it is not required. Many of the richest nobles in the Languedoc have embraced Catharism and strive to be made Perfecti by the wandering ascetics who, rumor has it, can stop their breathing for hours, show no interest in sex, never eat food of any kind and can work miracles. To avoid the Church's patrols, these true Perfecti travel only by night, of course....

THE WALDENSES

The Waldenses are neither Gnostic nor dualist. They do denounce the Church as corrupt, but so does the holy Francis of Assisi. Unfortunately, Francis has powerful friends in the Church, whereas Peter of Waldo (after whom the movement is named) had powerful enemies in Lyon. For the sins of preaching from a Bible in French, denying the existence of Purgatory, and most especially maintaining a convincingly Christlike and impoverished lifestyle, Pope Lucius III proclaimed the "Poor Men of Waldo" heretical in 1184.

They have left Lyon for Strasbourg and other cities in hopes of escaping persecution along with the Cathar heretics to the south. Such fortune seems unlikely, as they have no protectors but their faith.

FUTURE FATES

In 1209, Pope Innocent III launches a Crusade against the Cathars of France which destroys the most literate culture in Europe (the Provençal troubadours), kills hundreds of thousands of people and brings the Languedoc firmly under the control of King Philip II of France. For 20 years, Crusading armies level cities, slaughter villagers and loot the treasures of 1,400 civilized years. The Treaty of Paris ends the Crusade for a time, but the Cathar heresy survives. In 1240, King Louis IX resumes the Crusade, trapping the last *perfecti* in the lone Cathar fortress of Montségur. After a two-month siege, the final bastion falls on March 14, 1244, and the Crusaders massacre the Perfecti. Stubborn Cathar holdouts in the foothills of the Pyrenees resist until the mid-1300s, but the Inquisition roots them all out by 1350.

The Crusade also reveals the extent of the Cainite Heresy within not only the Cathar church but the Catholic hierarchy as well. These revelations spur Pope Innocent III to approve the Dominicans and begin drafting the most pure and zealous priests available to staff a renewed Inquisition. From the Cainite Heresy, too many threads lead to the vampires themselves; Pope Gregory IX founds the Order of St. Leopold in 1231 to begin burning out the vampire menace. The Crusade also uncovers the Hermetic Chantry of Mistridge in 1210, which leads to further Church actions against the supernatural and to the Ascension War itself.

The Waldenses are swept up in the madness and driven into the Swiss and Italian Alps. Martin Luther splits the Church forever three centuries later, and his "Lutheranism" resembles the faith of Peter Waldo not a little. The Waldenses survive in the Alpine valleys and emerge as a Swiss Protestant denomination by 1532. They outlive the Inquisition — more or less.





Chapter Two: Flowers of Evil

From the beginning you have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated to yourselves so that you might spend it... for when you nullify the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption.

- Valentinus

"Three confessed today alone. At this rate, I'll be through them all before Sunday." Inquisitor Lemoire dabbed his bread in his stew as he spoke.

The priest across the table nodded his head solemnly, rolls of fat jiggling on his neck as he did so. "Very good, very good."

"I really think we're making progress."

"I agree, I agree." The priest kept nodding, a smile creasing his lips. "Did you uncover anything especially damning this time? Was Arneault in fact committing adultery with Agnes?"

"Yes, and having covetous thoughts about Henrietta, too." Distracted, Lemoire dripped some stew onto his chest. He spat on his fingertips and, frowning, tried to brush away the stain. "His story was strange, though. He said he'd been visited by a demon in your form before he'd laid a finger on the girl. The demon told him to do it, he said. He even held to the story under the lash." That stopped the nodding. It served the fat fool right for letting his parish get away from him, Lemoire thought. "Nothing to it, is there?" Lemoire looked down, trying to wipe up the remaining stew with another piece of bread.

Silence.

That was strange. Lemoire glanced up; where did the fat fool get to? He started when the other man's soft, cold hands touched his neck. "I think I ruined my cassock," the inquisitor said.

The fat priest bared his fangs and twisted with those soft, strong hands. "It's nothing you have to worry about anymore."

THE HERESY TODAY

The Cainite Heresy, after a millennium of evolution and six centuries of expansion, now waits poised in the heart of Europe's most sacred institutions. Faith undergirds humanity in the medieval world; faith holds back the legions of Hell and the worms of the earth; faith gives life meaning and death hope. The Cainite Heresy infects that faith with feverish blasphemy and bilious self-loathing to spread poison throughout Europe.

BLASPHEMOUS BELIEFS

The central doctrines of the Heresy derive, primarily, from the *Euagetaematikon*, but every Heretic interprets them in her own fashion. Just as with any religion, a believer places varying emphasis on those sections of the faith with which he feels most comfortable. A poor knight with a grudge against rich monks, for example, might focus on the Heretical teachings that the Church follows Satan rather than on the complex metaphysics of the Heretical Christ figure.

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Conversely, an erudite scholar may feel the truth of the Heresy lies in its Gnostic revelations on the nature of phenomenological being. Of course, any ghoul knows the true heart of the Heresy — the sons of Caine are Gods on Earth; any discussion that does not accept this basic tenet is futile.

ESCHATOLOGY

The *Euagetaematikon* adopts the Jewish creation date of 3761 B.C.E., but describes only five stages of creation (from John 1: Word, God, all things, life, light) rather than the six days of Genesis. According to Heretical numerologists, each of those stages represents a millennium; thus, the material world of Ialdabaoth has only 5,000 years to run. When those 5,000 years expire, in 1239, then will come the Time of Gehenna, when the Blood of Caine grows thin and withdraws from the material world, "crumbling it like clay left too long in the oven." The majority view in the Heresy is that the Third Caine will appear in the year 1206, dwell on Earth for 33 years (like Christ), redeem Sophia by blood, and then usher in the end of the material world. The Heresy hopes to be in complete control of the Roman Church by then, so that as many people as possible can taste of the Blood and be saved by the Third Caine.

There are many versions of these stories in various commentaries on the *Euagetaematikon* — Procopius' mental state was not at its best when he composed it, and certain of its darker passages and more obscure parables can be interpreted in multiple ways. The Crimson Curia, according to rumor, holds some document or relic that reveals the truth behind the veiled allusions of the *Euagetaematikon*, but individuals trapped in the outer coils of the Heresy shrink from speculating on its true nature. The simple and deluded followers on the fringes have no idea. Again, the Gnostic doctrine of concealed truth available only to the highest grades protects the Heresiarchs and their vilest secrets even from their own flock.

RELIGIOUS LAW

Unlike most religions, the Cainite Heresy has few moral requirements. The Gnostic theology surrounding its tenets nudges normal human Heretics in the direction of vegetarianism and self-denigrating asceticism, and ghouls toward Ophite depravity, but such outcomes stem from tendencies rather than commandments. The main tenets of the Heresy mirror the Six Traditions of Cainite society, and they were almost certainly inserted by some concerned elder early in the development of the dark faith.

The usual formulation of the Cainite Commandments is as follows:

Instruction into the inner teachings of the Cainite Heresy, as given to Father Gerard Pessarien of Arles by his sexton, Jacques Vaincre, and as revealed to the Preaching Fathers of Dominic by Fr. Gerard under the Question:

COSMOLOGY AND CREATION

Listen now, Father, because this is important. Just drinking from the Chalice doesn't make you one of the Beloved of Caine; you have to know what Caine and his holy angels are, and what they want, if you are to serve them well. Intent dictates content, as even the Church Material taught you in novitiate. In the beginning was the Idea, the True Godhead. But without power, Idea is impotent, so God exerted Power to bring about Existence. This Existence, defined by the interplay of Power and Nothingness, is the spiritual world, the Pleroma. Within the Pleroma, God is sufficient unto Himself. The farther from God that Power travels, however, the more corrupt it becomes, just as a sailing ship accumulates barnacles or a flowing river collects silt.

At the edges of the Pleroma, then, the Power was debased indeed, and it split into fragments. These fragments reflected shadows of the Idea, the aeons. The 30th aeon, Ialdabaoth, was the most debased of all, and full of anger and resentment, he built a world where he could reign as a tyrant — that's right, Father, the material world we're both trapped in.

CAINE AND CHRIST

Into this world, then, Ialdabaoth blended fragmentary particles of *pneuma*, spirit, with mud, and called it Adam. The 14th aeon, Sophia, felt pity for Adam and entered the world. She ate of the apple of Life to free Adam from Ialdabaoth's prison-garden. But in this world, Sophia was both spirit and matter, both Lilith and Eve. Lilith brought forth Caine, and Eve's material son, Caine's twin, was Abel.

Caine and Abel both attempted to please Ialdabaoth with offerings. Jealous of Caine's spiritual nature, Ialdabaoth rejected him, thus causing Caine to slay the gross and material Abel. God extended Himself into the material world then to bless Caine, marking him as a sign of holy favor. God then withdrew again to the Pleroma and left Caine to wander the material world. Caine's mark was the gift of *vitae* — *pneuma* within matter. Thus, the sons and daughters of Caine hold the store of spirit for all the world, and to be granted the Cup of Caine is to be granted hope of the true Heaven.

But the jealous rages of Ialdabaoth caused men to reject the gift of Caine, and so Sophia awoke again, calling upon God to send a second Caine to direct men into the Embrace. God sent Caine's spiritual twin — that's right, Father, Christ — to Earth in response to Sophia's plea. Christ was a being of pure *pneuma*, not material at all. His form was illusion, which means that the cross is meaningless — He was never on the cross in any sense. Christ came to teach us of the holiness of shed blood, that we all might join in the Embrace of Caine, but Pilate washed his hands of Christ's saving blood.

The Church has done the same by hiding the truth of Caine's message and of the true meaning and power of the Communion, which is why it is the Church of Pilate, not the Church of Christ. Now you have seen past Pilate's lies, however; now you are part of the Church of Caine, and a true Christian. Why, yes, Father, that does mean that you needn't concern yourself overmuch with the Church's teachings of chastity. The angels of Caine understand that we material beings have material needs — but the shining blood of Caine washes us clean when we drink of it.



• Thou shalt love the childer of Caine, for they are your salvation incarnate.

• Thou shalt not harm any childe of Caine, and shalt sacrifice thine own life for their sake.

• The presence of Caine is inviolate; thou shalt bring others into the presence of a childe of Caine only when bidden to do so.

• Thou shalt pay with thy life for the actions of thy kin, thy flock or thy lackeys should they harm a childe of Caine.

• Thou shalt always work to increase the domain of the childer of Caine, and shalt hold all thou hast in beneficence from them.

• Thou shalt reveal the childer of Caine to no one, and shalt thou sacrifice thine own life for their secret.

These commandments cause some inconvenience to Cainites who seek to use devout Heretics to carry out proxy battles against other vampires. Fortunately, the *Euagetaematikon* also speaks of the "dark angels of Ialdabaoth," possessed of stolen *pneuma* from God. It takes very little persuasion for a vampire to convince a blood oathed servitor to consider a rival Cainite one of these dark angels.

The laws cause less inconvenience to the Heresiarchs than one might think — like many religious elites before

them, they understand the need to break one or another of their commandments for the greater good of their faith. However, much as Cainites delight in accusing each other of violating some interpretation of the Traditions, a member of the Crimson Curia is always willing to hold the commandments over his rival's head and vice versa.

INTO THE HERESY

Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing.

— *The Gospel According to Philip*

The obscene grasp of the Heresy spreads in three ways. First, the rise of the Cathar church helps mask the rise of a shadow congregation devoted to unholy Manichaeism and dark Gnostic doctrines. These Heretics devoutly believe that vampires are the saving power of God made manifest, and that in vampiric vitae flows the very essence of the Gnostic Pleroma, the spiritual world. This cult spreads like any conventional heresy, by evangelism and proselytization. How closely tied it is with the Cathar doctrines remains open to debate; not every Cathar is a Cainite Heretic by any means, but Catharism is so ideal a mask for the Heresy that it almost seems designed for that purpose.



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Second, the Heresy maintains an occult Church within the Catholic hierarchy. In exchange for certain promises and considerations, political advantage, or even as the consequence of a dark personal revelation, many ambitious churchmen embrace the Heresy in secret. These infiltrators can be usefully masked by the Cathar Church. If their duplicity is exposed, they can be denounced as "closet Cathars" rather than as members of the Cainite Heresy — the luckless traitor still burns at the stake, but the Heresy remains safely hidden. The degree of any Church Heretic's personal belief in vampiric gnosis varies, just as beliefs in the conventional priesthood might range from the devoutly pure faith in Christ of Francis of Assisi to the hypocrisy nested in self-interested greed so prevalent among the Catholic prelates of the Languedoc.

Third, and vilest of all, the Heresy sinks its talons into ordinarily devout members of the clergy by adulterating the communion wine with vitae. Often, a Heretical priest (usually a ghoul) holds Mass for important guests (especially nobles and high-ranking church officials) and doses his unfortunate visitors with this degraded mixture. Monastic communities infected with the Heresy delight in practicing "miraculous cures" for old, rich, influential *conversi* who travel to the abbey to die in grace and instead walk out — hale, hearty and in bondage to a "dark angel" of the Church of Caine. After three Masses with this blasphemous elixir, the blood oath ties the recipients to the Heresy regardless of their desires. Many otherwise loyal Catholics thus find themselves unable to resist aiding the Heresy's horrific plans as the ghoul-thirst seizes hold of their very souls. This tactic requires a single vampire to place the unfortunate candidate in thrall, as the ghouling process does not necessarily guarantee devotion to the Heresy and actively works against the sect's necessary secrecy.

INITIATION

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
— Hebrews 10:31

New blood enters the Cainite Heresy either deliberately, as part of a religious conversion or a corrupt bargain, or involuntarily, as the initiate becomes an unwitting ghoul after drinking vitae-tainted wine. By necessity, the ceremonies and practices of initiation vary depending on the new congregant's method of recruitment. Initiatory practices also vary among the sects of the Heresy itself. Some, such as sects in tightest fealty to the Crimson Curia, do not depart at all from the Liturgy of Childeric. Others adapt elements of local pagan traditions, use various familiar heretical forms (especially in Cathar territories) or follow the whims of their poetically minded Toreador domitor.

Setite branches of the Heresy celebrate initiations with sexual rites, usually by abusing the initiate in every

conceivable way before rewarding the bloody, aching novice with an object of desire. Depending on the initiate's tastes, it can range from a small child to his own mother to an attractive whore. Sometimes the object is a real person, kidnapped or ghouled for the occasion; sometimes it results from use of vampiric Disciplines or powerful aphrodisiac hallucinogens.

Thankfully, almost nothing is known of the Baali-dominated Heretical initiations, and the churchwardens who discover the flyblown, beetle-eaten, yet still quivering remnants of those grotesque festivities refuse to go into detail.

THE DOOR OF WILL

Voluntary initiation into the Heresy begins with ghouling in a series of Heretical Masses. After the final draught, masked figures fall upon the new initiate and stab him in the throat. Some traditions urge the faithful to feed upon any who cannot heal the wound and recover; others allow the use of healing potions, Valeren or some other art to assist the ghoul's natural healing powers. As the initiate rises from the blow, the priest lays hands upon him, intoning "Talitha cumi" (the phrase spoken by Jesus when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the death-sleep in *Mark 5:41*). If the new initiate is to be blood oathed to a specific domitor, sometimes the Cainite appears for the ceremonial "resurrection" and speaks the initiatory invocation himself. Human initiates undergo a similar ritual, although the "death" is entirely symbolic.

THE DOOR OF POWER

Initiating a priest or other victim involuntarily blood oathed into the Heresy calls for precise judgment by the "sponsor." Waiting too long runs the risk of the new ghoul going mad from bloodlust or calling attention to the change in some fashion that might endanger the Heresy's plans. On the other hand, the upper echelons of the Heresy have discovered that sometimes new ghouls, who do not yet realize the hopelessness of their position, have a tendency to rebel and reveal the Heresy's secrets to confessors or superiors in the Church. One technique involves forcing a sudden, complete break with the novice's old self and a rapid approach once the new member has fallen into complete despair. The Red Pentecost (p. 47) works admirably, for example.

Another technique involves a longer, but often more certain, process of slowly eating away at the foundations of the recruit's moral and mental universe — planting of temptations that lead to a delicious draught of vitae, hallucinations and dark voices in the head, fabricated evidence of madness or plague and the lowering of a general curtain of impotence around any actions save ones the Heresy commands. Dementation is quite useful for such erosion of will, as is Dominate. Such a recruitment system

often creates genuine believers from unwilling recruits, but it is very intensive in its use of time and resources.

Such techniques must be used with a deft hand to avoid damaging the very reputation for sanctity or delicate political position that makes a convert valuable in the first place, of course. Initiation through the Door of Power usually requires close supervision by a Cainite or high-ranking ghoul to keep all these factors in balance. The time commitment such attention mandates is a major factor slowing down the recruitment of specialized, high-ranking clergy into the Heresy, and it unfortunately encourages the wilder Heretics to take the gospel of Caine to the masses instead.

RECRUITMENT

The theological goal of the Heresy is to bring all mankind into the Embrace of Caine, or at least a "saving remnant" of humanity. The political goal is something else entirely: the subversion and corruption of the Christian Church (since the eighth century, primarily the Catholic Church) into a vampiric tool. Different Heretics recruit for different goals. An evangelist moved by love for Caine, enthusiasm for the power of vitae or revulsion at Catholic corruption may recruit masses of people in great vampiric "revivals" marked by blood miracles and frenzied preach-

ing from the adulterated scriptures of the Heresy. These recruiters, often newer ghouls, less sophisticated preachers or Cathars, target popular priests in the poorer quarters of a city, wandering monks or holy men beloved by the people, and fellow Cathar Perfecti (if they aren't Heretics already). The recruiters' aim is to bring the saving vitae and powerful words of Caine to every muddy mortal possible. The explosive growth of the Cathar movement in France is due to just this sort of messianic enthusiasm.

The political Heresiarchs — the older ghouls and the leading Cainites — find this sort of mass movement pointless when it isn't actively dangerous. The purpose of the Heresy is to destroy the Church from within, not to arouse the countryside in a furor of misplaced religious mania. Even some theologically motivated figures within the Heresy understand that the destruction of the Church of Pilate must precede the Embrace of humanity, if only for security's sake.

Thus, these recruiters target the key priests and religious leaders in a given diocese. The confessors of kings, the prince-bishops of rich cities, and the abbots of powerful monasteries become prime targets for Heretical activity. Even more so, the Heresy seeks to corrode the very center of Christendom and suborn the College of Cardinals, the Papal Curia and the figures who are to choose the Church's



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direction for centuries to come. Monasteries in crucial passes where all Church messengers rest, prince-bishoprics possessed of vast fortunes from river tolls, professors at Paris who train the next generation of royal and episcopal clerks — such are the converts the political Heresy seeks. The Heresy offers the corrupt and the venal in these targeted branches of the Church the Door of Will, and many such figures accept. Because the Heresy is quite powerful in some national episcopates and has many strings it can pull among other debauched officials, its recruits often rise rapidly in the religious hierarchy. Political ambition, simple greed or uncommon lust can make a churchman a tempting target for the Heresy, especially one in a critical position.

If an archbishop cannot be suborned, perhaps his secretary can, or the vicar of his personal church or the legate whose reports he depends upon before choosing a course of action. If a powerful cardinal remains aloof from the Heresy, his ambitious juniors might not — and an assassination is often easier to arrange than a recruitment. If all else fails, the Door of Power remains open after a private Mass with a blackmailed (or ghouléd) officiant.

RISING IN THE RANKS

No matter which initiatory path you tread, once you enter the Heresy it becomes your very life. "You enter in silence, you leave to the *Te Deum*," as older ghouls say to newcomers. The only way to go is up the ranks, by performing blasphemy after blasphemy in hopes of improving your position in Hell. Promotion is at the discretion of one's superiors, although the political infighting in the Heresy mirrors (when it does not exceed) that of the Roman Church.

The Heresy's hierarchy is congruent with the traditional religious one; the mass of common members (especially willing human worshipers with no real influence) makes up the laity, and each congregation of Heretics has a priest, usually a ghoul, though in smaller villages or unique situations a priest might be a normal human. Such priests are often the most fearsome of Heretics, driven by religious mania (often the unhinged result of exposure to Presence).

Above the priests are deacons responsible for a number of congregations, archdeacons set over districts of countryside, and the cardinal deacons of the Crimson Curia. These officials are almost all ghouls. Heretical monasteries operate along traditional monastic lines (see *Three Pillars*, pp. 68-70). Usually, such a monastery consists entirely of ghouls, from abbot to novices.

SCHISMATICS

Many smaller groups of Heretics orbit the main line commanded by the See of Nod and the Crimson Curia.

Controlling such errant elements is nearly impossible; a human evangelist, an Artisan looking for a new experience or the subtle machinations of rival clans can, and do, all plant the Heresy in new soil undirected by the Heretical hierarchy. As a general rule, the Heresiarchs accept this reality gracefully; regardless of the domitor, souls are still being blood oathed to the Pleroma. The eldest ghouls in the Curia know this response to be blind optimism but confess that they can see no other choice — a purge might splinter the true Cainite Heresy or, worse, reveal it to Rome.

ESCHATOLOGISTS OF CAPPADOCIUS

The Eschatologist faction of the Graverobber clan believes devoutly in the Cainite Heresy, although with a more Christological emphasis than the main sect. Eschatologists believe that they are the Brood both of Caine and of Christ, and that offering their vitae to mortals is a sacrament in itself. Some of the most fanatical Eschatologists argue that they are the only true Christians, and that not only other vampires but the rest of the Cainite Heresy are damned for their blasphemies. Eschatologists travel the back roads of Europe and hold mass "revivals" that feature amazing miracles of blood and Discipline. The greatest of these assemblies occurs on December 17, the Feast of St. Lazarus. The main Eschatologist center is a cult within the medical school at the University of Salerno.

CHURCH OF THE BLACK MAGDALENE

This sect operates as a "church within a church" in much the same way that the Cainite Heresy proper does. The Magdalenites move across Europe from their base in Marseilles to seduce and corrupt the faithful in much the same manner as the Heresy. They even use much the same doctrine, including the Blood Communion. The main difference in theology is the Magdalenite identification of St. Mary Magdalene with Isis, and of both with the Gnostic Sophia. Magdalenite nunneries often serve as houses of "temple prostitution" recalling the ancient fertility cults of the Levant — and they conceal bitter, blood-soaked rituals of castration and cannibalism from the darkest mysteries of Cybele and Attis.

Such rites aren't tremendously well hidden, however. The scandals of some convents are open secrets: Any lustful priest knows where his most lurid thoughts can find satiety, and the common folk have begun identifying St. Mary Magdalene with the nameless "woman taken in adultery" thanks to the cult's excesses. The almost pornographic "passion plays" put on by the Magdalenites on the July 22 Feast of the Magdalen have been thundered against by priests across France.

Truth be told, such blatant display is all part of the plan. The Followers of Set deliberately send their brashest and least subtle members to begin Magdalenite sects. Their hope

is to push humans over the edge and invite horrible retaliation from the Church upon all European vampires while the Serpents remain safe in Moslem Egypt.

THE SWARM OF SAMAEI

This name is the generic one for the very few Heretical groups controlled by the Baali. The Swarm of Samael holds that Ialdabaoth and God are twin heads of the same Beast, who is called Samael or Baal. Thus, any action attracts the attention of one head, and by walking the Path of the Devil the worshiper can be assured of a proper recognition in the End Times. The Swarm emphasizes the eschatological traditions of the *Euagetaematikon* rather than the Blood Communion or Christological elements, but it rapidly reveals the still darker mysteries of infernalism to the unwary. The Crimson Curia has no qualms about denouncing any Baali Heretical cult to the Church and does so at every opportunity. The Swarm, like the Cathar movement, serves to distract attention from the real Heresy.

CULTS OF PERSONALITY

A good number of Cainites, even ones who actually believe the Heresy's teachings (a not-insignificant minority), see no reason to structure their personal congregation around the plans of the Heresiarchs. The advantages of a church full of blood oathed worshipers are

manifest to any Cainite; the disadvantages rather less so. The throng of fanatical followers, the great advantage in social position and advance warning that controlling the dominant institution in a town or village conveys, and the sheer glory of being a god obscures the dangers such worship brings.

Hence, many Heretical groups, perhaps even the majority, simply worship their own "angel" and feel fortunate to have such a presence among them. This arrangement is particularly common among Toreador-centered congregations; no Artisan enjoys sharing the spotlight with another Cainite. In regions with a strong Ventrue presence or some other common threat, Toreador personality cults may operate in concert for a time — only to dissolve into petty feuding and factionalism when the immediate danger recedes. The human or ghoulish congregants wind up fighting devout proxy wars for their angel — after a dose of Majesty combined with Blood Communion, the very notion that some other church might have such divinity within it seems ludicrous indeed.

These proxy wars, and the inevitable schisms and arguments within even the most fanatically devout congregations, can often attract the very unwelcome attention of outsiders. After all, by ruling a church, a Cainite ties herself into a complex and often irritatingly



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sanctimonious hierarchy, giving the bishop or archbishop "set over her" an excuse to look into her domestic arrangements. She may find an increasing amount of her valuable time taken up by resolving bitter disputes among her congregation, buying off visiting legates from the archbishop, and generally directing petty affairs rather than remaining remote. Being a god often means unwanted attention from one's worshipers, and ruling a church always means unwanted attention from the rest of the Church bureaucracy. The Crimson Curia protects its own churches from most such scrutiny, but it demands favors and services from individual cults of personality that seek shelter under its parchment aegis.

CURRENT PRACTICES

Almost any blasphemous, criminal or debased practice imaginable occurs somewhere under the cloak of the Heresy. The willing human converts delight in violating the corrupt laws of Ialdabaoth and the Church Material. Arson, rapine, bestiality, incest — all can be justified as sacred rebellion against the edicts of Pilate, and often are. Such license becomes a powerful tool for recruiting corrupt, lustful or otherwise debauched clergymen and nobles. Even the unwilling converts, yoked by blood to their sacrilege, often commit grave sins out of desperation or self-loathing. These sins then become acts sealing their covenant with the dark powers of Caine, symbolic rites of passage into a reverse world where the laws of God no longer apply. Priests, feeling that the vows of their office mean nothing after blaspheming Christ, work out their hatreds and resentments on the innocent nuns or novitiates in their care. A temporal lord drawn into the Heresy understands that he rules now at the Devil's sufferance — and his people feel the lash of their liege's new determination to create a suitable Hell on Earth.

The specifically religious rites of the Heresy, on the other hand, remain few in number but relatively standard across the West, thanks to the codification of liturgy in the ninth century. Of the seven Christian sacraments, the Heretics ignore extreme unction (last rites) entirely for obvious reasons. Baptism and confirmation occur simultaneously, and some see entry into the Heresy as a rite of matrimony as well. Ordination occurs when Heretics move up in ranks, but the Heresy very much considers itself a "priesthood of all believers." By accepting the gift of vitae, a Heretic is as close to the divine as any human can become. Those Heretics who know of the Embrace might consider it a form of Holy Orders. Heretics continue to practice the Catholic sacraments where possible to avoid attention, although the increasing population of

sacrament-rejecting Cathars in Heretic territories makes such behavior more and more difficult for devout, if less than subtle, converts.

RED PENTECOST

And next, because I was very anguished and depressed at the pettiness around me, I dared commit a rash act and surrender myself unto the Beast, unto the wilderness, unto a horrible destruction.

— Tractate Zostrianos

A respected abbot awakens in a field, his face covered with blood and smeared with fat; the severed — no, bitten through — leg of a baby remains clutched in his hand. A prior comes to his senses to find the nuns under his care bleeding from hours of lashings; the weaker ones are dead and the whip in his hand is heavy with human gore and matted hair. A chivalrous knight shakes his fuzzy head and pulls his broadsword from the belly of his sister; he is naked save for a coating of her blood and offal. The Red Pentecost has taken these souls under its batlike wing, and the Cainite Heresy has three more recruits.

In place of the sacrament of confession, certain groups of Heretics practice the ceremony of the Red Pentecost to "cleanse the soul of sin." The Christian Pentecost celebrates the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles after Christ's Ascension. Under this divine influence, the Apostles spoke in tongues, hallucinated and were, in general, "taken out of the world." During the Red Pentecost, Heretics achieve the same results, although in a way more reminiscent of the Dionysiac ecstasy of the Orphics than of the sermonizing of St. Peter.

Using alchemical potations, herbs and toadstools of mickle strength or the Discipline of Dementation, priests of the Heresy instill a divine madness in their flocks. (The few Malkavians involved in the Heresy delight in this ceremony and perform it whenever they get the chance.) Often, the flock suspects nothing as its members feel the banqueting room slowly dissolve into a forest as if in a dream. Some of the Pentecostals feel horns sprout from their heads, or see claws spring from their hands. Once all the celebrants have fallen under the force of the Beast (or the Holy Spirit, in the terminology of the Heresy), anything can and usually does happen. Somehow, the Red Pentecost drives its members to the specific barbarities and perversions they most struggle against, or to the most repellent ones imaginable to them. Most Heretic churches celebrate the Red Pentecost in the week before Lent; some also celebrate other holidays, special occasions or feast days with such bloody revelry.

Keeping the Red Pentecost secret is far easier in lonely villages or isolated abbeys than in the streets of Paris, although it is whispered that not all the revelers at Carnival await Lent in a fully Christian spirit, especially

NIGHT BY NIGHT IN THE HERESY

From Foultz Anplaine to his guardian in Caine, Ricardius, called Mort'homme, greetings and supplications. Upon your instructions, I am reporting to the Crimson Curia regarding the daily actions of the followers of the holy angels of Caine within the town of Perigueux in Guienne. The bishop here still follows Pilate, but the sexton and vicar of the cathedral have both drunk of the Chalice of Caine, as have many of the leading monks of the Cistercian house.

Nocturns: Messengers, mostly novices under orders or local traders secretly within the Cathar faith, go out from the town to the various Cathar Perfecti round about. It is by one of these that I shall send this document tomorrow. The guard at the river gate is one of ours, and he opens his postern for our use. Our angel issues any final instructions; she is a Ventrue and is most interested in suborning the lord of Perigueux citadel. I have told her that our most likely approach lies through the bishop, as you instructed me to do.

Lauds: Our angel retires for the day. The sexton sells grave decorations among the Jews and other metalworkers of the town, if there has been a rich funeral lately. Our angel has granted us many in the last year. He leaves the rear of the cathedral open for messengers, and his clerk (one of us) begins reading the bishop's mail.

Terce: The bishop says mass, or delegates it to the vicar. The castellan of King Henry used to attend Mass at this time, but has not since the vicar served him the Cup of Caine — he returned to England before his third mass, and I know not if our letter instructing our brethren there arrived. I have heard nothing. Mass at the Cistercian monastery would create new followers for Caine if our angel could be persuaded to part with vitae; I again ask you to send some from Venice so that we might totally command this rich house here.

Sext: By now the bishop has arrived and holds audiences, dictates letters, and so forth. Some letters, needless to say, do not get sent, and some petitioners never see the bishop no matter how sweet their bribe. This day the bishop wrote to his cousin in Rome asking for more money; with a few more exactions or the conversion of a suitable manor we could begin to afford His Grace's avarice without straining the Crimson Curia's own funds here.

None: The bishop often goes to dinner now. He has been known to dine intimately with the lord of Perigueux. Unfortunately, his lordship's wine steward remains deaf to our importunings, and so the meat of such converse is unknown to us. The question of a hired knife will be put to our angel, as she feels protective of the palace.

Vespers: Another mass, usually said by the vicar, as dinner leaves His Grace replete and unwilling to stand for long. Occasionally the Cup of Caine is brought, but only for suitable guests.

Compline: The bishop having retired, the sexton and clerks ensure that nothing harmful leaves the town under the episcopal seal and that all correspondence is sifted and weighed for importance to our cause. Our angel arises, occasionally asks for reports, and feeds. If a Blood Communion is to be held, it will be at four hours or more past compline. The sexton makes sure to sprinkle dogs' blood on the threshold of the cathedral, sufficiently desecrating it to allow our angel to pass within. Once His Grace has joined us, the ankle-bone of St. Omer will be thrown into the river, and the altar defiled, or rather reconsecrated, in all but name. Caine hasten that day!

after awakening on Ash Wednesday next to a rapidly cooling, repeatedly violated corpse. For this reason, the celebration of a Red Pentecost usually occurs only under the supervision of a very powerful ghoul or even a Cainite — in fact, the visit of a Cainite to a Heretical congregation may serve as the occasion for Red Pentecost honors. Secrecy is more easily maintained using powerful Disciplines such as Obfuscate or Obtenebration than by fear or bribery. Fear and bribery work more than well enough, though, when persons who raise questions vanish in the night and leave more Cainite blood free for recruitment of new acolytes.

BLOOD COMMUNION

...the consecrated wine in the chalice looked like coagulated blood. The woman was terrified! She took communion all the more devoutly.

— from the testimony of Ermengarde Garaudy of Montailou before the Inquisition

The Blood Communion remains the central mystery of the Heretic faith. God's goodness and power is made manifest in the flow of vitae into the mouths of the unworthy. Here, the glories of the spiritual world stand revealed; for one blessed moment, worshiper, priest and domitor all share the *vinum veni*, the wine of the vein, Caine's Holy Blood. Once the moment passes, of course, the worshiper has given another piece of her soul to the vampire and to the Heresy.

The substitution of vitae for communion wine can be done openly during Heretical Masses at which all in attendance are knowing (if sometimes unwilling) Heretics. The highest of such Masses occurs on Maundy Thursday (the day of the Last Supper). At such Masses, the familiar liturgical words change and warp: Only the refrain "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" remains the same. Any accidental attendee of such a Mass knows that something has gone horribly wrong well before the cup is produced, although such knowledge accrues slowly and with mounting horror as the truth of the Heretical sacrament sinks home. Such stumblers into blasphemy give themselves away not only by looks of disgust or confusion, but by rote recital of the Catholic liturgy. Thus, outsiders almost never witness the True Blood Communion and never report what they have seen if they do.

More commonly, a Heretical priest simply says Mass in the parish church but garbles the words just enough to make the ritual worthless as a sacrament. Vitae can be placed in the chalice for Heretical worshipers alone, or it can be distributed to the congregation as a whole. One difficulty with this method of dissemination is that medieval congregations almost never drink from the communion wine — that ritual is left for the priest alone. Congregants do eat of the bread (by church law, at least once a year), so

to take advantage of this practice, some Heretics bake vitae into the communion loaf for theological purposes. Unfortunately, no blood oath extends from such a diffuse method of delivery.

Private Masses for high-ranking officials can involve drinking the wine, of course. Then again, any outsider may notice something suspicious, or at least out of the ordinary Catholic run of things at such ceremonies. Regardless of the danger of detection, the private audience is the Heresy's preferred method for "recruitment" of targeted members of the clergy or, especially, the nobility. (Although the Heresy mostly works through the Church, heads of families with many younger sons in the archepiscopal or Papal court make excellent targets, as do wealthy or powerful nobles in their own right.) Keeping the supply of vitae segregated by domitor is an important responsibility for a Heretical priest — there's no point in blood oathing the Margrave of Trier to some Caitiff drained for a ghoul supper by the congregation's Lasombra lord.

When the supply of vitae runs low, some debased congregations use mere human blood. Mortal blood has only symbolic value; the Heresy does not believe in transubstantiation of human blood to vitae any more than it believes in the Catholic notions of the Blood of Christ. However, it is important never to underestimate the value of symbolism — when emphasizing the purity of vitae, knowledgeable priests use the blood of a virgin or an infant. In these cases, the Heretical group often disposes of the infant's body in the local Jewish ghetto, thus casting the blame for the murder elsewhere.

GEOGRAPHY

The angel of acquaintance of the eternal stood before me and said to me... "Come and pass through these lower realms: and then you will return again to them in order to proclaim an immovable race, to save the worthy, and to bestow power upon the chosen. For the struggle of eternity is great, and the time... is short."

— Tractate Zostrianos

Although Catholic Christendom stretches from Portugal to Poland and from the north of Norway to the south of Sicily, the Cainite Heresy cannot be everywhere in the West. There simply aren't enough vampires interested in spreading its influence, for one thing, and there are far more Christians than the Heresy could ever subvert individually. Thus, the Heresy strikes at the heart of the Church by selecting only the most powerful and influential clergy for seduction or involuntary ghouling. Eventually, the Heresiarchs plan to make the Lateran Palace their own. With the Pope's corrupted blessing, ghouls could carry unholy vitae everywhere the writ of Rome runs. That, at least, is the strategy the Crimson Curia has adopted. The

Heresy grows up the vine of the Church hierarchy and holds power only in the heart of Europe.

As mentioned before, that is the plan. The reality remains somewhat different. Ironically, the Church's very corruption and weakness works against the Heresy in many places, not least in the Pays de Cathars of southern France. Wherever the local priest neglects his duties, where the bishops are more concerned with gold than God, where monks grow lazy and live off tithes and alms, there the Heresy finds fertile ground.

The old centers of the earlier heresies in the Heretical family tree also hold strong reservoirs of heterodox belief. The Setites follow their own strategy, only remotely interested in the plans of the Heresiarchs, and the Baali follow no design but the whorls of their infernal masters. A local Toreador who finds being thought a god delightfully refreshing does not heed the plans of some stuffy Lasombra in another city. Like any living thing, then, the Cainite Heresy grows unpredictably and wanders where it will.

THE HERESY IN THE EAST

The Orthodox Church took great pains to uproot any manifestations of the Heresy from its birthplaces four centuries ago, and some elements still keep careful watch for any resurgence in these territories. If there are lost mountaintops still holding Carpocratian cells, or villages quietly holding the Paulician creed in their hearts, they lie low and know better than to send messengers to the outside world. If there is vampire-worship in the Empire, it is only the Church-approved worship of the Tzimisce saints or the Toreador Patriarch.

Narses, the so-called "Archbishop of Nod," plots the overthrow of the Orthodox from his Venetian haunts; no doubt, he looks with favor on the Heresy following his Crusaders into Constantinople should his plans for the Fourth Crusade materialize. (His is one of the most insistent voices in the ear of the Venetian Doge, Enrico Dandolo. Narses argues that diverting the crusading armies to seize Constantinople would be simple, very profitable and, if looked at in the right way, a service to the true faith.) Until then, the Tzimisce-bound Bogomil marches hold the largest body of the Heresy in the Byzantine sphere, and they face west to their brothers in Provence, not south to the fading fields of their persecution. In the Crusader Kingdoms, the Heresy clings to the Franks, especially in the lonely keeps of the Knights of the Sable Rose. Kerak-in-Dan, the great castle of the order, holds many scrolls and icons from the other heresies and cults scattered throughout the Levant.

East of the Empire, of course, neither man nor Cainite knows how, or even whether, the Heresy survives. Many Heretics followed the Manichaeans and Nestorians east, and they may dwell yet within the dwindling Christian outposts of the Caliphate. The Heresy finds it hard, to say

the least, to spread in a land where the priests consider drinking wine a sin and the Assamites consider Western Cainites no better than dogs. The Assassins have their own mystery cult and need no imports from the doomed lands of the Franks and Romans.

THE HERESY IN THE WEST

It is the West where the Heresy grows fat on the vitae of conniving Lasombra and preening Toreador. From the catacombs of Syracuse to the lonely ports of Navarre, from the work gangs at Chartres to the Doge's Palace in Venice, the Heresy waits. Here, the souls of 45 million people lie in the hands of the Roman Church; the Crimson Curia means to give them all to Caine when he returns in glory. Then, they will openly rule as the apostles of Caine on earth, and nothing human will be able to stand against the whim of the vampire lord. Caine is sure to look with favor on all who spread his holy word and sacred blood; some members of the Curia feel that he may perhaps favor them even more than his own progeny. After all, they serve *him*, while the other Cainites serve only their own appetites.

ITALY

The Heresy in Italy is strongest within the centers of Church power: These targets are ones the Crimson Curia has dreamed of suborning for centuries. Rome, Pisa, Milan, Genoa and Naples all hold Heretical churches tied together in a complex web of blood and honor. (The sole exception in Italy is the Cappadocian-dominated Heretic group around the medical school in Salerno.) Ghouls and even mortal pawns carry out all but the most urgent and necessary business within Rome, of course. Until Rome can become properly broken to the Blood, the ancient Lasombra Narses holds the Heresy's reins from Venice in the North. The Lasombra stronghold of Syracuse directs the Heresy's southern chapters.

Unfortunately, the rise of the Toreador at the Lasombra's expense has led to a great deal of infighting within the Crimson Curia. Too much of the ghouls' attention goes to local Cainite territorial battles and not enough to the disturbingly Faithful and ruthless coterie of bishops and priests omnipresent around the powerful de' Conti and Segni families of Rome. Of course, such rivalries have presented amoral but aspiring priests with many opportunities to play faction against faction in their rise to the heights of power — a place in the Papal entourage. The rough-and-tumble of Italian church politics remains both a powerful drawing card for Heretical recruitment and an irritating counter to Heretical plans in the peninsula.

THE GERMANIES

Here, in the civil war-torn Empire of the West, the Heresy rests almost exclusively in the hands of individual

Toreador. Magdeburg and Mainz host Heretical churches under the guidance of the Crimson Curia, but many German "free towns" hold Heretical congregations devoted to fiercely independent vampire lords. These Cainites take advantage of the confused boundaries and many rivers of the Empire. They travel from town to town, drink deep from their flocks and dole out precious drops of vitae to these congregations. Some of these vampires have 10 or 20 towns on a "circuit," and visit any given chapter only once every five or six months. Despite the plenitude of kine, these itinerant angels are unwilling to share their worshipers with any higher power but Caine himself. Germany's historical ties to Emperor rather than Pope discourage ambitious clergy from joining the Heresy here. German priests find the road to preferment leading through the Imperial Court rather than the Crimson Curia. The Heresiarchs also hesitate to press into Germany too strongly; the Lasombra have never considered the Teutonic rabble important, and recruitment here risks immediate and angry Ventrue reprisals.

Urban chapters predominate in the Lowlands, especially in the rich trading cities of Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, Liège and the like. Outside the Crimson Curia, these urban Heretics have the largest population of ghouls not under blood oath. The Cainites hosting cults in Flanders and Holland are primarily Toreador, with a secondary Lasombra presence within the older cathedral towns like Tournai, Arras and Utrecht. The confused political situation, the swarming human population and the general venality of the Church all conspire to make the Flemish towns almost an independent bishopric of the Heresy. The Crimson Curia for now treats them with kindness, cooperating where possible with the Bruges ghouls' wishes. The last thing the Heresiarchs wish to see is a major schism within the body of the Heresy.

Cappadocians dominate the Heresy's churches in Prague (and have infiltrated the ancient monastery of St. Gall, where they carry on a running contest with the devoutly Christian Nosferatu dwelling beneath its cellars), whereas the few Lasombra-run enclaves lie along the Rhineland corridor of petty principalities and bishoprics from Cologne to Treves. The Tzimisce used to keep the few Heretical villages and churches of Austria and Moravia supplied, but their contest with the Tremere means that those holdings have either dried up or reverted to Caitiff-trapping. Ugly rumors that one Heretical congregation has pledged itself to Tremere keep the involved Tzimisce in a furor that is not conducive to long-range planning.

ENGLAND AND THE NORTH

England holds a large and important Heretical network in the Fenlands around Norwich that extends tendrils throughout the English Church. The Lasombra presence

in the south, around Canterbury and the Cinque Ports, allows the Crimson Curia to keep a measure of direction even in this far-flung corner of the West. The new cathedrals at York and Lincoln hold fast-rising and ambitious English ghouls who joined the Heresy of their own free will to take advantage of its Roman contacts. Scotland, Wales and Ireland hold only isolated villages of Heretics, usually completely outside the mainstream of the Heresy. There is one notable exception: A Setite Black Magdalene chapter has completely infiltrated the Barony of d'Ampton south of Chester on the Welsh border. The Church in Scandinavia remains too young to have sunk into the corruption which spreads the Heresy outside the Curia's control; there are no Heretics there that anyone knows of.

IBERIA

The Lasombra Heresiarchs find their Heretical activities in the Spanish Kingdoms and Portugal frustratingly stalled. Outside of rural villages scattered in the Basque country, the overlapping Cathar populations in Aragon, and the small congregations within the Church bureaucracy and nobility of Toledo, Coimbra and Barcelona, the Heresy has gained no significant power or influence in Iberia. The Crimson Curia attributes this failure to the actions of Assamites in the Almohad Moorish south and to crusading Brujah based in Compostela. The Islamic Lasombra, of course, remain arrogantly aloof from the entire matter, although some may occasionally support the Heresy for the temporal purpose of weakening a devout Christian lord.

In fact, one of the Magisters' own keeps Spain safe for Christ where he can — the subtle Monçada of Madrid has no intention of failing his Church in death after so ably defending her in life. The first counter-Heretical efforts of Dominic Guzmán in Osma pay off now as well.

FRANCE

By contrast, France is riddled top to bottom with the taint from the blood-cults of Caine. The Lasombra hold on the old monasteries, the Cathedral at Tours remains firm, and whole communities of monks under the blood oath labor in the Cainite vineyards. The Toreador power in Paris and the north is, for a wonder, actually unified, with the Cainite Heresy a welcome part of Artisan planning on issues from crusades to cathedrals. Even one or two Gangrel can be persuaded to lend vitae to Heresy congregations in Brittany.

Of course, as the heartland of the Heresy, plenty of independent godlings spring up in Heretical sects from Caen to Limoges. The Setite-dominated Heretics of the Black Magdalene (p. 45) spread up the Rhône and down the Loire, Cappadocian cultists delve into mysteries in the University quarter of Paris and Baali blasphemers commit their depravities wherever the Ventrue look away for an instant.



THE LANGUEDOC

Here, in the sun-warmed south of France, the Heresy enjoys its greatest success. In the shadow of the Cathar Church, the Cainite Heresy finds or forces converts in great manors, tiny villages, grand cathedrals and pious nunneries. The Heresy "fishes from both banks," as the locals say, infiltrating both the Cathar hierarchy and the Catholic one. If a Cathar village shows signs of devotion and purity, the Heresy has no more qualms about leading a soul-sundering Red Pentecost through its fields than it does about badgering a newly ghouled bishop of Carcassone into homicidal mania.

The flurry of Cathar growth and the rapid pace of political change in the region means that even the Heresiarchs of the Crimson Curia don't know exactly how powerful the Heresy is here. The Counts of Toulouse are tied by family blood to a very powerful Lasombra in the See of Nod. Furthermore, the process of suborning them completely into the Heresy is complicated by Count Raymond VI's covert adoption of Catharism — if the next communion he takes is the *consolamentum*, that will make ghouling him much more difficult. Raymond's newfound True Faith in Catharism prevents the direct

approach, for now. Transforming the entire County of Toulouse into a fief of the Heresy without bringing down a Papal army upon it is sure to be a tricky balancing act.

The local heresy-hunters such as Dominic and the Papal legate Reynier complicate this effort enough without the activities of the independent Toreador Heretic cults of personality and the Setite Heretic cult center in Marseilles. The Serpents have some sort of long-range scheme under way in the Midi as well, whose details the Crimson Curia would give a lot to discover, and even more to stop quietly.

HERETICAL ARCHITECTURE AND SYMBOLOLOGY

And he said, "Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings will not taste death."

— The Gospel According to Thomas

Entering a Heretical church is not always a straightforward business. As a covert movement, the Heresy has to hide

in plain sight by using subtle allusions and hidden hints to alert its elect. To the masses, cathedrals and churches represent Scripture in stone. Illiterate, the congregants can learn the stories of the saints and prophets only from the windows and walls around them. The Heresy wants to make sure they learn the right lesson without giving the game away to a nosy passing Papal legate.

For example, a traditional Catholic church always has the altar at its eastern end, which faces the sunrise symbolizing the Resurrection. Heretical churches drawn to Catholic plans often have a depiction of the Garden of Eden between the altar and the nave — thus, the altar is “east of Eden,” just like the land of Nod.

Even if a now-Heretical church were built originally by devout Catholics, the fashionable remodeling and rebuilding waves sweeping Europe allow a Heretical priest to alter a building’s proportions, decorations, statuary or anything else to suit his needs. Cathedrals still under the control of the Church might have small niches, chambers or chapels dedicated to the Heresy by a ghouled sexton. Such enclaves of blasphemy often involve some element of coded Heretical iconography.

IMPIOUS ICONOGRAPHY

In addition to the construction and design of the church itself, its contents can shed a dark light on the Heretical practices held there. Elements such as the T-cross, thought by some to be the Mark of Caine, or the bear, the symbolic animal of Caine which represents murder, recur throughout the Heretical West. Another tip-off is the presence in art of ravens, the birds that instructed Caine to bury the body of Abel, or an altar with smoke flowing downward, which represents the rejected sacrifice to Ialdabaoth.

Even in the Bible stories and tales from the lives of the saints captured by artisans in stained glass and bas-relief, Heretical imagery abounds. The sacred nature of the source material no more prevents its perversion by Heretical artists than the holy office of the Bishop of Louvain prevents his giving vent to his monstrous and sacrilegious lusts after a few swallows of Toredor vitae.

THE BIBLE

In addition to the story of Caine and Abel, other common Biblical themes in Heretical stained glass include:

- The Parable of the Sower (*Mark 4:1-9*), recalling Caine as agriculturalist. Heretical churches often alter the traditional depiction of the sower by adding the moon in the sky above his head to imply that he is sowing his seed at night.
- The First Plague of Egypt (*Exodus 7:14-24*), in which the Nile turns to blood, often paired with the Third Bowl of Wrath (*Revelation 16:4*), which turns a

third of the rivers of Earth into blood. These “rivers of blood” represent Cainite bloodlines, and occasionally symbols like roses, skulls, dragons or shadows can be seen in the background of these scenes.

- St. Thomas the Twin touching the Wounds of Christ (*John 20:26-27*). This common scene in Catholic art receives particularly subtle and terrible distortions in Heretical depictions. In most cases, St. Thomas is a symbolic depiction of Caine — Thomas’ sobriquet “the Twin” recalls the apocryphal twinship of Caine and Abel, and his traditional symbol, the builder’s square, represents Caine as builder of the First City. In Heretical art, St. Thomas is usually shown with a yellow beard, matching the traditional color of Caine’s beard in Catholic art. The astrological sign of Jupiter sometimes appears above the scene, thus hinting that it takes place on Thursday (the Last Supper) rather than after the Crucifixion. In even more blatantly Heretical depictions, Thomas is shown as the twin of Christ, or he’s shown kissing the wound on Christ’s wrist rather than touching it with his hands. St. Thomas’ feast day, July 3, is an important Heretical holiday.

THE DOCTORS, SAINTS AND MARTYRS

Other common themes used in religious art throughout the West center on the stories of the Doctors of the Faith, the saints and the martyrs. Gory scenes of execution picked out in gilt and vermillion abound even in the most sanctified enclosures of Catholic Europe. Common Heretical ones include:

- Tertullian, the great thunderer against heresy of the early third century C.E., recoiling before a vampiress while officiating at a funeral. This episode is taken from his work *De Anima*, in which he argued for the physical resurrection of the dead. Heretical churches sometimes carve Tertullian’s quote, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church” over the baptismal fonts.
- The common depiction of St. Augustine and the City of God is labeled with *Genesis 4:17* (see p. 54) rather than the traditional tags from *Ezekiel* or *Revelation*.
- Every Catholic church has its own patron saint, holds special celebrations on the patron’s feast day and says prayers to the saint for special intercessions. In addition to St. Thomas the Twin, Heretical churches often take the name and patronage of St. Lazarus (very popular with Cappadocian branches of the Heresy), St. Thomas the Hermit, St. Rheticus or St. Injurieux of Clermont (common in the Auvergne), all of whom rose from the dead.
- St. Felix (after whom the town of the Council of Martyrs is named) suffered beheading in Carthage for his refusal to reveal the whereabouts of a collection of sacred books. Quite often, Heretical depictions of the scene show Pilate accusing St. Felix and threatening him with the ax. As decapitation is one of the few ways a vampire

can die the Final Death, beheaded saints are a common feature in Heretical churches.

- Many Heretical churches celebrate the saints whose blood remained liquid after death. Coincidentally, those saints — St. Januarius, St. John the Baptist and St. Panteleimon — also all underwent beheading. St. John the Baptist is, like St. Thomas, often depicted with a yellow beard by Heretical artists, indicating Caine's role as fore-runner of Christ.

- St. Panteleimon holds a special place in the hagiology of the Cainite Heresy; according to widespread legend he was, in fact, a vampire martyred for professing an early version of the Heresy rather than Christianity. (Devoutly Christian Nosferatu and Lasombra claim him as a vampiric Christian martyr, and point to his career as evidence that — just perhaps — the childer of Caine are not all irretrievably damned.) An extraordinarily beautiful noble of Bithynia, Panteleimon studied medicine and fell into heathenism. After hearing a Christian priest, Hermolaus, he converted and began spending his time among the poor. For his preaching, the Emperor Diocletian sentenced him to die in 303 C.E. He miraculously survived execution by six methods including drowning, wild beasts and crucifixion on an olive tree (his blood poured out and nourished the tree — a Heretical symbol of Caine's blood nourishing his progeny), before he was beheaded. His blood still liquefies on his feast day, July 27, in churches around the Mediterranean. The veneration of St. Panteleimon is strongest in Venice, not coincidentally one of the Italian strongholds of the Heresy. Relics of St. Panteleimon can be found in St. Denis in Paris and in St. Panteleimon Church in Ravello, south of Naples. Other, darker, relics of this ambiguous figure rest in the Abbey of St. Panteleimon in Venice and in deep crypts beneath other Heretical churches.

SUBVERSIVE VERSES

Verses from the Bible (in Latin, of course) appear in inscriptions above doors, along the clerestory walls, on banners, in gilt below saints' images or anywhere else in the visual riot of a Dark Medieval church. In a church dedicated or perverted to the Cainite Heresy, the familiar verses may take on new meaning, or even a new form if the builders or stonecutters felt particularly brash. Most Heretics understand that these verses represent fragments of the truth hidden from the thirsty by the Church of Pilate; they do not see themselves as perverting the message of the Bible, but rather as restoring it to its proper, Cainite glory.

CAINE

Displaying verses dealing with Caine himself might be a dead giveaway, but the proud Heretics find it difficult to resist the following:

- "Caine knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch; and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch." — *Genesis 4:17*.

- "Therefore whosoever slayeth Caine, vengeance shall be taken upon him sevenfold." — *Genesis 4:15*. This passage has become a special password for the Crimson Curia, whose members wear silver rings inscribed "I:IV:XV" in commemoration of it. Some of the Heresiarchs use it as a password; the first speaker hails the second with "Jubilis!" ("Rejoice!"), to which the response is "Jesu Vincit" ("Jesus Conquers"). The first Heretic then countersigns with "Christi Victis" ("Christ is the Victor."). This innocuous, if inane, exchange spells out I:IV:XV (spelling Christ with "X," the Greek "chi," and using the traditional Latin "I" in place of the modern addition to the alphabet, "J"). The ratios 1:4 and 4:15 occur throughout Heretical churches' architecture, or at least in those churches built from the ground up to commemorate Heresy. This ratio differs from the traditional sufficiently that the church built on it or around it seems subtly "wrong" or off-kilter somehow. Heretical additions or remodelings of conventional churches along those ratios stand out even more in contrast with their untainted surroundings.

BLOOD

Blood is another key theme in Heretical epigraphy. The word "blood" appears hundreds of times in the Bible, and nearly every one of those quotes shows up somewhere on a Heretical wall. The most commonly seen ones include:

- "For the blood is the life" — *Deuteronomy 12:23*. This inscription is the single most common one in Heretical places of worship. Of course, the quote is invariably taken out of context; the whole passage reads, "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood; for the blood is the life, and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh." However, given the truncated passage's clear Christian meaning, it can adorn any surface in Christendom and never draw a second glance.

- "And almost all things are by the law purified with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." — *Hebrews 9:22*. Another perfectly devout and orthodox passage, on the surface at least.

- "For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." — *Revelation 16:6*. This opaque tag actually implies a punishment for the "shedders of blood," but the phrasing serves Heretical purposes well.

- Occasionally, Heretical stonecutters "accidentally" carve the word *vinea* or *vinum* ("vine" or "wine") as *vena* (vein), even in an otherwise pious inscription.

SEEING THE SIGNS

Perception + Theology difficulty numbers for spotting a Heretical church from the decor and iconography range from 9 for the subtle niche devoted to St. Thomas the Twin in Tours Cathedral to 6 for a Heretical center such as the main altar in the Abbey of St. Panteleimon in Venice. Perception + Occult rolls might spot Setite or Baali Heretical churches, as well; Setite churches, especially, are usually more blatant — the goat's head in an upside-down pentacle on the front door of Stenay Cathedral, for example.

In the open, Heretics recognize each other by certain signs such as the olive-branch and T-cross of the Brothers of St. Panteleimon (p. 56) or the I:IV:XV exchange (p. 54). If an outsider doesn't know the significance of such symbols, he is very unlikely (difficulty 10) to notice anything odd about them. If he does know the basic "vocabulary," then recognizing Heretical signs and countersigns is much easier (difficulty 5 or less) — they *are* recognition codes, after all.

UNDEATH

Biblical passages dealing with physical resurrection get surprisingly little space in Heretical inscriptions — partly because, true to its Gnostic beliefs, the Heresy denies the physical resurrection of the body or even Christ's physical nature. However, the Heresy does venerate some quotes on related subjects:

- "Both the great and the small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them." — *Jeremiah 16:6*. Where the Church's Jeremiah sees a vision of a desolate country without anyone to bury the corpses, the Heresy sees a vision of the unliving walking the Earth in joy.
- "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." — *Acts 13:35*. The Heresy takes much comfort from the incorruptibility of the saints' flesh; even the Church must recognize it eventually. Catholic Nosferatu are particularly incensed by the Heretical use of this passage, although they totally accept the Church's version.

VAMPIRES

Although arrogant Cainites see themselves everywhere in Holy Writ from *Genesis 6* to *Revelation 13*, specific mention of vampires is rare. Those few mentions that do occur often decorate the walls of Heretical fanes, carved there by eager hands:



EXTREME BLASPHEMY

Often without changing a word of the verse, a familiar Gospel tag takes on horrific meaning indeed when the context changes to the shadows of the Cainite Heresy:

- "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." — *Matthew 16:28*. In some translations, "Son of Adam" can replace "Son of Man."
- "But He said unto them, I have food to eat that ye know not of." — *John 4:32*.
- "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day." — *John 6:54*. The Heretical version of this sometimes omits "on the last day" from the tag. The inscription IV:VI:LIV enjoys a popularity with the Crimson Curia almost as great as I:IV:XV, and the passage from *John* is rumored to hide secrets even more dreadful than does the one from *Genesis*.

• "And demons and monsters shall meet, and the hairy ones cry out to each other, there hath the lamia lain down and found rest for herself." — *Isaiah 34:14*. In Heretical churches, this formulation changes from "ibi" (there) to "hic" (here). The word "lamia" is the Latin translation of the Hebrew "lilith"; some churches thus have "here hath Lilith lain down and found rest for herself." Later English translations use the term "night-hag" or "screech-owl."

• "The blood-drinker hath two daughters, crying, Give, give." — *Proverbs 30:15*. The term "blood-drinker" (in Latin, *sanguisuga*) has been translated "leech," despite the existence of his "crying daughters." Many Heretical churches accompany this passage with an abridgement of *Proverbs 30:20*, "She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." The full verse makes it clear that the reference is to a brazen adulteress rather than to a vampire, but its proximity to verse 15 occasionally proves irresistible to individuals looking for easy Scriptural justification.

THE HEART OF THE HERESY

The central nexus of the Heresy comprises two monastic orders and the sect's vampire and ghoulish leadership. The militant Order of the Sable Rose and the preaching Order of St. Panteleimon remain quasi-independent of the Heresiarchs, of the See of Nod and of each other. The See of Nod serves as the apostolic leadership of the Heresy, keeping the keys to the hidden bishoprics. Just as the Roman Church has a curia to execute the wishes of the Bishop of Rome, the Cainite Heresy has a Crimson Curia of ghoulish and human courtiers to serve and advise the Bishops of Nod.

Within these four bodies, three clans hold the majority of influence — plus the increasingly independent Crimson Curia. The Lasombra, with their ancestral position within the Church and their devotion to subtle and underhanded manipulation, have long seen the Cainite Heresy as their own private project for the subversion (and, just possibly, the salvation) of Europe. Even as the Toreador used their springboard in the monasteries to vault to primacy in the Catholic Church, their pride of place in the art-loving courts of the Languedoc got them in on the ground floor of the fast-rising Cathar movement. These advantages, of course, made them a power to be reckoned with in the Cainite Heresy.

The Tzimisce, the secret heart of Bogomilism, find themselves too distracted by the Tremere to play their proper role as balancers. This lapse leads the Heresy's Lasombra and Toreador factions to increase recruiting for

their own purposes, regardless of security or strategy, as the Heresiarchs scramble and the Bishops of Nod plot. A Tzimisce Bogomil priest occasionally appears in the Languedoc or the Germanies, but the Fiends neglect the West to concentrate on their ancient heartlands. Ghoulish Bogomil legates have become unwelcome visitors to the Crimson Curia or to the Abbey of St. Panteleimon, but because they usually bear important news or omens, it is almost possible for western Heretics to play the good host, at least. Fortunately, these visits are rare indeed, so as to avoid straining anyone's tolerances.

KNIGHTS OF THE SABLE ROSE

In 1125, a group of Knights Hospitaller embarking on Crusade met a man who claimed that he could grant them the blessing of an angel on their work if they would but take Mass with him at a holy shrine. They never saw the man again, and would not have cared if they had — they had become the chosen of the Angel Andrew, whose magnificence outshone the very stars themselves. Now, they serve both the Heresy itself as a secret military arm within the Hospitallers and the Toreador Methuselah Andrew and his court as rescuers of sacred artistic treasures from the paynim in the Holy Land. All the Knights of the Sable Rose (for such was the design of the Angel Andrew) are nobly born and gifted artificers in metal. Their gloriously worked armor is almost more famous in France and the Holy Land than their prodigious strength of arm and horse in holy combat. The Order of the Sable Rose takes St. Andrew and St. Felix as its patrons. The knights celebrate their patrons' feast days on November 30 and September 24 with devoutly Heretical Masses and renewed oaths to slay the unbelievers in Christ and the servants of Ialdabaoth wherever they may lurk. By now, some of the grandsons of the original knights proudly take up the hidden banner of the Sable Rose as ghouls for the angel.

ORDER OF ST. PANTELEIMON

Based at the Abbey of St. Panteleimon in Venice (see p. 57), these preaching friars serve as the couriers, scribes, scholars, clerks and missionaries of the Heresy. Monks of the Order wear seemingly black robes (that only Auspex or the brightest noonday sun reveals as being, in fact, a very dark crimson), carry the olive branch of St. Panteleimon and venerate the T-cross of Caine. Some of the older monks in the Order have become independent of any blood oath and are beginning to conspire to replace the Abbot, a ghoulish completely in the thrall of Narses. However, virtually all the vitae the monks take in Eucharist comes from Magister veins; the Order as a whole is completely loyal to Lasombra as the greatest of Caine's holy angels. This devotion gives the Lasombra the edge in purely administrative and clerical matters within the Heresy, as the Magisters

ABBEY OF ST. PANTELEIMON

As the center of the Heresy in Italy, the Abbey of St. Panteleimon in Venice holds over 2,000 monks all fully ghoulized into the worship of Caine. Narses makes sure that the Abbot of St. Panteleimon has more than enough vitae for Mass and for recruitment where necessary. Here, according to rumor, Procopius' own copy of the *Euagetaematikon* rests, its bloody ink still miraculously bright red. Galleys from all corners of the Mediterranean tie up at the Abbey's slips, their holds full of dark cargo — bones, stoppered flasks and books, dockside rumor insists. The increasing Cappadocian presence in Venice holds a potential threat for the Abbey, as its Giovanni branch remains distressingly immune to recruitment and unpleasantly effective in keeping secrets. However, a few Cappadocian Eschatologists granted access to the fabled Black Collection of the library at St. Panteleimon keep the rest of the Graverobbers from sticking their noses into the wrong place.

have a much deeper well of talent to draw from for their machinations.

THE SEE OF NOD

The Cainites who take an interest in the Heresy's operations serve as a kind of steering council. They take the title "Bishops of Nod" to indicate their apostolic primacy within the cult. Each Bishop has a vaguely defined area of responsibility, including geographical regions within which Heretical activities must be overseen. Only Narses and Nikita are truly devoted to the Heresy as a major project; the rest of the Bishops attend council meetings when convenient (or send ghoulized proxies to speak as their Vessels).

THE ARCHBISHOP OF NOD

Narses, Prince of Venice and the sixth-generation Lasombra "Archbishop of Nod," plans to subvert the Western Church to his control completely and to use it to conquer Constantinople for himself. He considers the Heresy a useful, even favored, tool, but does not truly believe in any power besides his own will. To this end, his brilliant strategic and political mind has nurtured the Heresy ever since the seventh century C.E. by providing unity and leadership during the dangerous period when the center of the cult moved west. As Archbishop, he serves as the head of the Heresy on Earth, although his powers and



FLOWERS OF EVIL

authority are not unquestioned by other vampires. His area of special responsibility is the Heresy in Italy, as well as the overall growth and development of the movement. Narses himself remains the shrunken, castrated figure he was upon his Embrace in 576 C.E. at the age of 98, but nobody, mortal or vampire, ever thinks his high, fluting voice is at all humorous.

OTHER BISHOPS

Nikita of Sredetz, a sixth-generation Tzimisce, headed the "Council of Heretics" at St.-Félix-de-Caraman in 1167. He represents the Bogomil branch of the Heresy and serves as bishop for Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Bohemia. He first introduced the Heresy to Narses and remains driven by strong religious motives — exactly *which* religion is anyone's guess, though, as his repeated prayers are in a dialect of Old High Slavonic no one else in Italy understands.

Felice de Berengar is an eighth-generation Lasombra connected by blood (either human or vampiric) to almost every noble house in the Languedoc, Aragon and Navarre. Her Embrace in 914 C.E. came after her visceral contempt for Christianity — and her consummate skill at hiding same — impressed a Magister in the court of Septimania. Her resentment of the Church stemmed from its denigration of women, and she delights in using her connections and formidable intellect to pervert its works for Heretical purposes. She supervises the Pays de Cathars and Spain. At her suggestion, the Albigensian Cathars have allowed women a prominent role in their church, a development quite the reverse of what their theology's sexual phobias might indicate.

Ranulph, a seventh-generation British Toreador attached to the Plantagenet court of Aquitaine, simply seeks power, both for his clan in general and specifically against a rival Toreador in Britain. The master of a large network of Heretical churches in Aquitaine and Gascony, he wormed his way into the See when the Toreador infiltrated the Papal bureaucracy in the 1130s. He holds responsibility for the Kingdom of England and its domains in France.

Andrew of Normandy, the fifth-generation Toreador Grand Master of the Knights of the Sable Rose, considers the Heresy a sideline to his more important work. (For example, he's been busy organizing assorted aspects of various Crusades for the last century.) His true religious beliefs remain unclear; nobody has yet dared to ask the "Angel Andrew" why he remains involved. As he is a Methuselah, nobody has dared to remove him from the See, either. His diocese is the Holy Land, northern France and (at his indecipherable insistence) Scotland.

Barbelo, a seventh-generation Lasombra, claims to have been exploiting the "vampire angel" myth since the

second century C.E. He openly delights in humans' worship, and may even believe his own mythology when it suits him. His area of responsibility is the German Empire, but he may be out of his depth, caught between the independent-minded Flemish ghouls and the Ventrue onslaught. His connections within the Lasombra proper remain excellent, however, and he does have a certain flair for improvisation and politics not unsuitable to high office.

THE CRIMSON CURIA

They maintain that they have attained to a height beyond every power, and that therefore they are free in every respect to act as they please, having no one to fear in anything. For they claim that because of the redemption... they cannot be apprehended, or even perceived, by the judge.

— St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SIMON

Whispers of a book even more vilely blasphemous — or gloriously revelatory — than the *Euagetaematikon* drift through the most shadowed corridors of St. Panteleimon. Even the Black Librarians look away at its mention, and the Heresiarchs need not even deny its existence, for no questioner survives to hear the answer. Perhaps it is but a rumor, or the final fantasy of some monk far gone in dementia or ghoulish ecstasy. But the murmurs seem to agree, hinting of a *Gospel According to Simon* which speaks of Christ as even more than a Gnostic eidolon of pure *pneuma*.

According to the author (who may be Simon Magus, or Simon of Cyrene, or Simon Zelotes, or even Simon Peter in direst extremity), the angel appearing to Mary was Caine himself, and she was Embraced and bore a son, Jesus. Jesus forced Shaitan into torpor in the desert, drank the magic from the stump of John the Baptist's neck in Herod's court and worked miracles as the Second Enoch with the power of Caine's blood in his veins. So mighty was He that, even after betrayal and Amaranth by the 13 disciples, He survived three days of crucifixion in the Judean sun to rise from torpor on the third night. Jesus still walks the Earth and slays the unworthy, and on the Last Day He will release the Antediluvians and feast with Caine upon the descendants of His betrayers.

Beneath the exalted Cainites of the See of Nod lies the clerical court of the Heresy. Thousands of ghouls and even mortals staff the Crimson Curia. They work its will in the great episcopal centers of Venice and Rome, and create subsidiary chapters in Ravenna and Milan. Some Curial legates (mostly Brothers of St. Panteleimon) travel throughout the West and report on conditions there, but the vile heart and malign mind of the Curia lie in Italy. These Heresiarchs carry out the bidding of the Bishops of Nod along with suffering the factional fights and currying of favor intrinsic to any bureaucracy.

The Venetian branch operates relatively unmolested (if not precisely openly) from the Abbey of St. Panteleimon and from a number of large palazzi in the area. The Venetian Church is completely infiltrated by the Heresy; Narses does not allow faith in anything but his twisted power or the almighty ducat within proximity of his home base. This is not to say the Heresiarchs lack faith. Even in the absence of a specific blood oath to any given Cainite, the highest levels of the Crimson Curia blaze with an almost fanatical zeal for the cause of the Heresy and with utter belief in its rightness. No matter how many humans — or vampires — must burn to keep its mysteries secure, the Heresy will triumph, and Caine will save humanity.

The Crimson Curia in Rome works to infiltrate the Lateran Palace and the Papal court. These ghouls misplace Papal documents ordering investigation of some indiscreet Cainite lord, search the Vatican Libraries for tomes of arcane lore, whisper rumors in the ears of cardinals and electors, and generally twist Vatican policy

to preserve the Silence of the Blood so as to expand the power of the Heresy. The goal of the Crimson Curia here is to build a Curia within the Curia, one that can eventually mount a coup, elect its own Pope and set Church policy at the direction of the Heresiarchs. Thus, the ghouls gather blackmail material, put down payments on bribes of money or influence, offer ecstasies to the uxorious and pain to the ascetic, and use every bit of supernatural or political power they possess to strangle the legitimate work of the Church while carrying out the dictates of the Heresy in its place.

Because vampires affiliated with the Heresy seldom enter Rome without inconvenience (or actual danger), the ghouled Heresiarchs have a relatively free hand here. This latitude may be why the most independent-minded ghouls gravitate to Rome. The Heretics here do what they can to aid the Cainites in Rome, of course: desecrating small chapels to grant Nosferatu access through the catacombs, sprinkling prostitutes' menstruum and dog blood on thresholds to allow vampires to cross, or simply bribing human guards to do so at crucial moments. This network of favors gives the Heresiarchs a large supply of vitae for Communion and for survival without sealing a blood oath to any single Cainite.

Some of the more paranoid Cainite elders in and around the Heresy note that the ghouls of the Curia no longer serve in Thrall, and that their actions can spell Final Death to all too many Cainites with a thoughtless word — or with one carefully dropped. As the See of Nod gets virtually all its information through the Curia, and counts on the Heresiarchs to carry out its orders, these suspicious ones ask — who rules whom?

I



IV



XV



Chapter Three: Masks of Piety

However much a portrait is inferior to an actual face, just so is the world worse than the living realm... for the form was not reproduced with perfect fidelity, yet the name completed the lack within the act of modeling. And also the invisible gods cooperate with what has been modeled to lend it credence.

- Valentinus

Let this be written; Caine's sin was his alone and is not that of all who descend from him. With or without the murder of Abel, Caine would have become holy, for he was the son of Adam and the first. A childe Embraced is born into the same state as Caine before his fall, without sin and with free will. It is the Embrace that washes a Cainite free of the sins of life, not the Resurrection of Christ. These things are true, for I have lived and died them.

— Graffito found in the Catacombs beneath Rome

ROLEPLAYING RELIGION

Taking on the mantle of a faith, of any faith, is not easy. It involves giving up your own views, at least in part, in exchange for the vision revealed by scripture, teaching, illumination or even experience. Doing so is only slightly easier in the context of a roleplaying game.

The important thing to remember, especially for religious belief in the Dark Ages, is that faith is real. People of medieval Europe knew *for a fact* that there was a God, that humans had souls and that something would happen to them after death. This knowledge was no more questioned, or questionable, than the existence of the earth, rocks, air or water. In fact, it was questioned *less often* than the existence of those things. Someone denying the spiritual realm was simply talking nonsense. Demonic possession was the kindest theory one's neighbors could construct to explain such blasphemous behavior.

Now, the specific nature of the common faith is what all those Crusades and witch-burnings and arguments and riots and students being dunked in the River Seine were about. You needn't have a complete grasp of the Doctors of the Church or the difference between *homoiousios*, *homoousios* and *homoios* to play a medieval Christian, or even to *be* a medieval Christian in most cases. (But if a Byzantine torturer asks you, choose the middle one, otherwise we can't be held responsible for the consequences.) Even priests often knew the words to the Mass but not their meaning and repeated the liturgy like a magical chant rather than explicating the mysteries to their flocks.

Needless to say, many folk grew cynical about their Churches at such a time — that dissatisfaction is, after all, part of why heresies spread so far and fast during times of widespread ecclesiastic corruption. Another part of the equation, however, is the fact that virtually all of the populace felt a great need to be connected, often as closely as possible, to the world of the numinous and the holy. A sermon preached with fiery zeal in their home dialect by a mad-eyed stranger touches villagers who have only heard the Mass droned in a language they don't understand. They

have been fed, spiritually. That spiritual feeding is what the Cainite Heresy perverts — like giving children heroin instead of milk.

UNLIVING IN THE HERESY

Playing characters enmeshed in the Heresy's coils can be a challenge for both Storyteller and players. Although it's easy to default to the traditional "mad Satanist" or "evil mastermind" personality for your Heretical characters, doing so is not usually enough to make an interesting plot. (It can be fun in small doses, of course, which is why there are a few Baali out there.)

Playing blasphemers of any stripe carries its own special challenges. To start with, as a Storyteller you should make sure that everyone in the game can handle the implications of the subject matter. Even if your Heresy is always the bad guy, the very notion that the Church groans under the weight and does the bidding of these parasites can unsettle some players. Taking Heretics as characters offers some real trials: not only the intellectual challenge of corroding a True Faith that can be fatal to your Cainite character but also the roleplaying challenge of being a willing part of something callously exploitative, even by vampiric standards.

Playing an unwilling part of the Heresy holds its own particular charms and opportunities, as well as some potential pitfalls. The chance for tragedy, for rage against fate, for deep despair, for all the great dark roleplaying opportunities such a chronicle can give is enormous. But the downside is not trivial. Being a victim isn't a lot of fun, and the unwilling priest blood oathed into decadent service to the spawn of Hell is certainly a victim. Find the character's identity; even if it's a shard of a broken personality, by retaining some semblance of individuality your character wins a private victory. He may not save his soul, but he doesn't surrender it without a fight.

CAINITES

Blessed are those who are solitary and superior, for you shall find the Kingdom; for since you come from it you shall return to it.

— *The Gospel According to Thomas*

The Cainite participants in the Heresy fall into three main categories — the believers, the desperate and the manipulative. The medieval mind would see them as corruptions of the Christian virtues: Persons who believe in the Heresy have failed in Faith, Cainites who embrace the Heresy out of despair have failed in Hope, and those vampires who use the Heresy for their own power or titillation have most assuredly failed in Love. If the

TRUE FAITH AND BLOOD COMMUNION

Any officiant (the priest who pronounces a sacrament) with one dot or more in True Faith cannot be ghoulé by an adulterated (or even a pure vitae) Eucharist. The vampiric vitae simply does not affect him — his Faith miraculously renders the vitae inert. If the officiant possesses a True Faith rating of 2 or more, nobody receiving the cup from his hands is affected by vitae within it. Storytellers are welcome to add modifiers for especially holy altars, reliquary cups (such as ones made from the skulls of saints or ones containing shards of the True Cross), and so forth.

This rule, by the way, is heretical — Donatism, the belief that the faith of the officiant was necessary for transubstantiation to occur, was condemned by the Synod of Arles in 314 C.E. The Storyteller is welcome to make any adaptations to Heretical practice or the rules necessary to conform to the theological background of her chronicle.

Of course, if the officiant is a Heretic, he need merely mispronounce a word or two to corrupt the sacrament, and the drinker from the cup suffers the full extent of the vitae's seduction. Careful listeners (Perception + Academics, difficulty 7) notice the slip, of course. As there was no sacrament, there was no Transubstantiation. Communion wine *before* the actual sacrament of Eucharist is pronounced, of course, is just wine, and vitae within it or any wine affects even Truly Faithful priests normally.

character's Embrace happened in the Christian era, she'll probably know that, if only deep in the locked chambers of her heart.

BELIEVING CAINITES

Some vampires, especially Lasombra, but not a few Toreador as well, find the Cainite Heresy a persuasive explanation of their true role in the Dark Medieval world. Being the agent of salvation for worthy humans is certainly better for a vampire's self-image than being one of the irretrievably Damned, cursed by God for all eternity.

Working within the Heresy also provides a goal and a structure, another inviting benison to beings used to centuries of slow predation and drifting ennui. Cainites



MASKS OF PIETY

who believe in the tenets of the Heresy range from self-effacing to overbearingly smug and cocksure; friction with the mass of pagan or Christian Cainites is almost inevitable. Roleplaying such friction, and such belief, requires a willingness to absorb the sometimes recondite details of the Heresy's Gnostic doctrine — or possibly a commitment to "simple faith" against which arguments and reason are meaningless.

Within the coterie, a believing vampire can serve as a missionary trying to convince the others of the rightness of the faith of Caine, as a spy observing his fellows for the Bishops of Nod or as a paragon of rightful Cainite behavior who hopes to win converts by example. A believing Cainite can also find herself trapped in snares and toils set by her more cynical peers; doing the right thing doesn't get any easier just because the right thing happens to be wrong.

DESPAIRING CAINITES

Some Cainites join the Heresy because they feel that it is the closest they can come to the True Faith their vitae rejects. They know in their hearts, and feel in the remnants of their souls, that the rituals of the Heresy serve only as mockeries of Christ's truth. Still, the sonorous chanting, the incense, the saints and the art all hold a comforting stillness for the unliving who can no longer sit at Christ's Table.

Of course, Cainites' knowledge that they serve a corruption and a blasphemy out of mere instinct and to placate memories that ought to spur revolt against their own actions — this contradiction drives such vampires deeper still into despair. Cursing their fate and their destiny, they fall ever further from the half-remembered grace of God and abide in a vicious cycle they know leads to the very Hell they cling to the Heresy to forget.

Not all despair gives rise to simple angst and agonies, however. The tension between inner knowledge and outer shell can lead to madness, to intense sublimation in murder or sanctity, or any other great catharsis. On the other hand, roleplaying a despairing Cainite in the throes of denial could create an intriguing challenge as the disconnection between belief and reality becomes overwhelming.

CYNICAL CAINITES

The Heresy means power. It's that simple. With power in the Church comes power over human minds, power over human sword arms, power over bishoprics and kingdoms and principalities. Humans make up their own religions to comfort themselves, but Cainites know that the gods are hateful and cruel. Imagining a version of the Nazarene's faith that actually feeds rather than repels Cainites is not just natural; it's the best the kine deserve.

To these vampires, the Heresy is just another tool. Perhaps the irony of it is more delicious or the use of it more enjoyable, but like any ghoul and any other lie, it

DERANGEMENTS

Not surprisingly, ghouls in the Heresy suffer from more than their share of derangements. Melancholia, Paranoia, Obsession and Overcompensation are the most common, along with (of course) Religious Mania.

Religious Mania: The ghoul's Nature changes to that of Celebrant or Fanatic. Fulfilling the conditions of that Nature is the only way this ghoul can regain Willpower. The physical and psychological jolt of vitae usually ensures that communicants lack the necessary self-doubt or humility for Penitence, but it might be just possible in some Storyteller-approved circumstances.

has its purpose. Such a cynical pose can be the central motivation for characters devoted to intrigue, to high politics and low manipulation. It can also, of course, motivate a Cainite who fancies himself a direct sort, cutting through illusions of all kinds in a lunge for reality's jugular. Both spymasters and thugs can be cynical, after all, and both have excellent reason for being that way.

The interplay between a cynical Cainite and one of the other two types can create as much (or as little) inter-coterie tension as desired. The history of Christianity, of course, is replete with cynics, saints and desperate men working together to further the cause of Rome — the Albigensian Crusade itself is a prime example of such cooperation. But the stresses and pressures, as well as the compromises and concessions, needed to make such alliances work provide great roleplaying potential for the interested troupe.

BE YE ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT

Of course, there's no reason a Cainite's idea of the Heresy, and of his role in it, can't change. Merely because vampires wear the same form for millennia does not mean that they think the same thoughts and dream the same dreams throughout that time. Some of the Brood of Caine actually have an almost human tempestuousness; love turns to rancor, and ambition changes into sterile manipulation for its own sake. Although the combinations of emotions spawned by the Heresy permit many tales, here are three directions to consider. With appropriate tucks and points, they might also make good themes for Heretical campaigns with mixed troupes, all-ghoul parties or even human actors, although the scale for mortal stories might shrink to the level of a single village or abbey.

Going from belief to despair is perhaps too standard a story, although on the other hand there's a reason epics are told on clichéd themes. One interesting story might center on a Cainite who enters the Heresy and slowly discovers that its actions could doom the childer of Caine — a story paralleling one of a human drawn into the Heresy who slowly discovers that its actions may doom his Church.

Moving from despair to cynicism makes the chronicle one of half-victories, almost noir in sensibility. For characters trapped in such a tale, there is this to consider: No matter how appalling the world, at least you're still standing in your little corner of it. Even if everyone and everything is corrupt, you still have a way to regain some of yourself — even if your soul's a trifle damaged.

The tale of a Cainite going from cynicism to belief could be a chronicle of crushing irony (if the Heresy is in fact a corrupt fabrication to bloat the veins of the elders), of idealism in the service of corruption that recalls so many lives of the period from Simon de Montfort to St. Dominic, or even of the potential for good in the most base of beings — a Dark Ages morality tale as Cainites move from cynical leeches to devout protectors of their human flock "in the name of God, Caine and Christ." Storytellers who run such chronicles

might even imbue the legend with a vision of True Faith at the end; the salvation that the Heresy mocks may not be out of reach after all.

GHOULS

The kingdom of death belongs to those who put themselves to death.

— *The Secret Book of James*

By the time that a human entrant into the Heresy's rites becomes a ghoul, her loathing, self-hatred and resentment are joined by a new component: devotion. The new feeling is not just religious devotion, although few saints worship their Savior with the fervent adulation of a ghoul for her domitor. It's not just feudal obligation either, although whatever lingering sense of self remains to the ghoul becomes tied completely to her liege. It's something akin to and stronger than both; the hopeless love of the troubadours is the best humanity can come to approximating it in words. (The parallel is unsurprising, given the number of hapless troubadours ghouléd to self-absorbed Toreador ladies.)

Of course, this new adoration does nothing to replace the ghoul's earlier despair — the imbalance implied by loving the killer of one's soul drives shards of steel into the mind of any ghoul save the most frighteningly unaware ones.



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Given the number of priests and other clergy brought into the Heresy, the stark contrast is even plainer — these people, in life, thought more about their soul's state than most. Worse still, many of those ghouléd into Heretical practice were thus recruited precisely because they could not be subverted any other way. These, then, are the wrecks of the good, the decent, the sane, the pious, the righteous. This torture can only get worse — even Job himself suffered less than these innocents. After all, he could hope for death — and he could rail at God. Ghouls in the Heresy may live for centuries, and railing at God only pleases the one who torments them.

The equation differs radically for voluntary converts, at least at first. Many of these Heretical ghouls never even know that they're ghouléd at all. They attribute the miraculous health and strength they feel, not surprisingly, to their newfound state of grace. Active yearning for the Eucharist is hardly the sort of behavior that a medieval Christian (even, or especially, a Heretical one) normally questions. The slow process by which seduced ones discover the truth (or go mad hiding from it) can make for powerful roleplaying.

GHOULS UNBOUND

For these dwellers on the threshold of the house of life, the illusions of Cainite glory fall away. If a ghoul's blood oath fails, or her regent keeps an appointment with the sun, or she grows wily enough to drink communion from many chalices, the former servitor discovers something few figures in the Dark Medieval world, and fewer still in the Cainite Heresy, have: choices.

The burden of freedom, especially when loaded onto the back of a person long unaccustomed to it, often drives a ghoul into derangement, or back into the safe personality he associates with security and servitude. Such wretched shells sometimes voluntarily blood oath themselves to new masters in hopes of fleeing into mindless adoration again. For their sakes, one can only hope they succeed.

Those ghouls who withstand the initial shock of their situation, on the other hand, find themselves in a position with potential. If the newly free ghoul still believes in the Heresy, the slow pursuit of power in the Crimson Curia might beckon. If the remnants of conscience and pity have rotted away from his spirit, he could simply vanish into the free towns of Flanders and hunt his Eucharist there, or rise to a safe level in the Heresy and ride out the coming storm. If an unbound ghoul remembers his life, his humanity and his faith, however, the enemies of the Heresy can have few better friends. Revenge may not be as invigorating as vitae, but it is far sweeter.

MORTALS

This is the people of the beloved, which is beloved and which loves him.

— Valentinus, *On Friends*

CAINITE HERESY

In the short term, there can be no greater agony than to be a mortal unwillingly ensnared into the Heresy by corrupted communion. As blasphemy piles on obscenity and violation matches betrayal, no doubt many mortals simply go mad or risk certain damnation with suicide. Humans who last longer come to envy their late peers' good fortune.

Virtually all long-term mortal members of the Heresy are sincere; a hypocritical or half-hearted adherent gets drained to feed the angels (or ghouléd, if he possesses a vital position or talent) rather than kept on as a risk. In a world where the legitimate Church of Christ orders the massacre of entire cities full of women and children (such as at Béziers, where the phrase "Kill them all, and God will know His own" was coined by the future Archbishop of Narbonne), it takes quite an atrocious display by an angel to shake the faith of a human Heretic who consciously chose to believe in the Saving Blood of Caine.

Of course, cynical priests, lords and even bishops may (and indeed do) join the Heresy to advance themselves within the ranks of feudal or ecclesiastical society. They soon find that the wildest excesses of depravity they can imagine drove their unliving masters to ennui centuries ago. It can bruise the ego of a human who fancies himself a mighty sinner to be considered a soft-livered poltroon by a slip of a Toreador girl. It can destroy his sanity to be proved such.

THE HERESY AND THE STORYTELLER

As the Storyteller, your first responsibility is to the players' enjoyment of the story you spin. Before going any further with your chronicle, make sure that your troupe can handle tales on the theme of corrupted faith and poisoned purity. Although the purpose of much art is to shock, the purpose of gaming is to enjoy. Fear, horror, and even repulsion can be enjoyable, of course — but it's up to you to make sure that everyone else in your game shares that opinion.

THEME AND MOOD

The theme of *The Cainite Heresy* is corruption of the most putrescent kind. The Heresy is the deliberate degradation of something good and pure and noble for no better reason than selfish boredom. Tied to this theme are the colors of faith, both faith misplaced and faith outraged. The blasphemy the Heresy represents is not the antiseptic sin of the office boardroom or the industrialized murder of the concentration camp. This is violation at retail: the deliberate destruction of what one woman or one man holds most holy. And then, the repetition of the vile game with the next pious nun — or even the next ordinarily sinful deacon.

The corruption theme comes in two varieties. In one, the high contrast between corrupter and innocent serves to accentuate the enormity of the violation. The pure is stained and dragged into the filth. A sluggish poison leaves slimy boils on the skin, mold crawls across velvet robes and corrosion eats away at shining armor. This imagery undergirds a chronicle with characters who discover the Heresy from outside and fight its spread.

In the second instance, the evil is already within; the innocent rots unknowing from the inside out. Within the Church, within the sanctums of holiness, vileness has already claimed its place. The smooth, creamy skin splits open to reveal a festering welter of offal. The knife glides through the cheese, and worms boil to the surface. Metaphors of rot, of cancer, of abscesses and goiters and insect sacs and everything taut and bulging with maggots — these are the images for a chronicle occurring within the Heresy or within the Church. Here, the characters discover that, for Cainites at least, purity is a broken dream. Venom has spread to the limbs, which already grow gangrenous and black. Whether the patient can be saved, or even should be, is the burden of this story.

HERETICAL TALES

HALL OF MIRRORS

Throughout the chronicle, the coterie slowly notices a common thread among their enemies. Every Cainite who balks them, every favor that dries up, every ghoul slaughtered, every night without feeding — it all points to the mysterious Cainite Heresy. Why does the Heresy single out the characters for its malign attentions? It doesn't, but Monçada does. By throwing the Heresy in the characters' path, they become his allies against its blasphemies — if they prove resourceful and clever, he may even inform them of their good fortune.

THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT

On a quest for truth in a land of lies, the coterie is directed toward the Grail. But which Grail should they seek? The Order of the Bitter Ashes knows that the Grail holds Christ's Blood in the Holy Land. The Priory of Saulot knows it as a metaphor for the Salubri bloodline, whereas the Templars know it represents the descendants of Jesus, King of the Jews. The Gangrel recall Arthur's Cauldron, while the Counts of Champagne spin lays of the Cup of Chivalrous Baptism. The false Grails (see the Book

of *Storyteller Secrets*, p. 93) both point the way to Heaven and conceal the path of the True Grail. Who serves the Grail? And what do the characters do if they find the object of their quest — whatever it might be?

WHEN IN ROME

For the troupe interested in a chronicle of intrigue and manipulation, blackmail, and obscure ties of family and politics, the best choice may be a chronicle set entirely within the Lateran Palace. Here dwell ghouls who sneer at a scion of Caine daring to bring no knowledge, and here True Faith contends with the falsest of blasphemies. The characters might be rising ghouls in the Crimson Curia or Cainites attempting to hijack the Heresy for their own purposes. Back corridors, catacombs and sewers, the slate roofs and the stained glass windows — all hold iconic secrets and prying eyes. Is every churchman a ghoul? If so, who pulls their strings? No one can be trusted, but a coterie without allies is a rudderless vessel, adrift on a sea of treachery.

SEE VENICE AND DIE

Hunting the Archbishop of Nod on his home ground is dangerous work. That's probably why the coterie's elders are making them do it. Venice, the Serene Republic, sits on its sewage-filled lagoon and sinks slowly, descending deeper into the morass every year. The characters might come from Constantinople in the service of Michael's Dream, from Rome in the service of Christ's Vicar, or from anywhere in the service of a rival Bishop of Nod.

KILL THEM ALL; GOD SHALL KNOW HIS OWN

Setting the chronicle within the Albigensian Crusade allows the complete expression of human evil and barbarity — which impresses even the jaded Cainites, or would if it didn't involve quite so much vampire-hunting — to sprawl across the players' experience. The characters might be trying to defend the remnants of Occitan culture from slaughter or attempting to root out the Heresy before it simply starts again in another land. Plague, famine, fire and sword; the birth of the Inquisition, the destruction of the troubadours, children screaming for their mothers before being raped into unconsciousness by the soldiers of God — the Albigensian Crusade has everything baleful in the human experience. Should the Storyteller wish to adopt the Heresy's eschatology, the chronicle could darken even further as the Third Caine moves through the land to leave reddened skies and burned crops everywhere.



HOTZ



Chapter Four: Sires of God

for several years now I have spoken words of peace to you I have preached to you I have besought you with tears. But as the common saying goes in Spain, where a blessing fails a good thick stick will succeed. Now we shall rouse princes and prelates against you and they, alas, will in their turn assemble whole nations and peoples, and a mighty number will perish by the sword.

- St. Dominic de Calaruega

"Do you see the signs, young Enzo?" Father Paul turned in his saddle to study the young soldier who rode a few steps behind him.

"I think so, Father. 'Tis the middle of the day, and there are no people to greet us or toiling in the fields."

"Yes, very good. What else?" The smile crinkled up the priest's face. A fly landed tentatively on his hand, and he impatiently brushed it away.

Enzo removed his helmet, as much for the relief from its weight as to improve his vision. He brought his horse to a stop and stood in the stirrups. "The church doors are closed, and there is no sign of the priest."

"You are learning, soldier; much faster than your predecessor did. Yes, the church doors are closed and barred, I'd warrant. That is where we'll find our true foe." Father Paul dismounted and scratched his beard in thought. "We must be careful. When the heresy lives in the very house of the Lord, it has power. Have the men prepare torches. There is much sin in this place to cleanse, and little time before nightfall."

"As you command, Father."

The blasphemies, outrages, murders and corruptions of the Cainite Heresy do not go unnoticed. Its own successes now draw the horrified gaze of the Church, the wrathful blows of Christian chivalry and even the enmity of some Cainites. Although each of these opponents sees only individual threads of the Heretical tapestry, they follow those trails with fire and sword. The Heresy believes that the End Times are upon it — and on that point, its disparate enemies are glad to agree.

THE CHURCH

If any man whosoever of the house of Israel, and of the strangers that sojourn among them, eat blood I will set my face against his soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

— Leviticus 17:10

It is the first responsibility of the Church to watch over its congregation even as the shepherd keeps watch over his flock, to keep it from straying into error and danger. No matter how many priests fall into indolence, or how many bishops give themselves over to venality, other servants of Christ stand ready to guard the souls in the Church's charge. These priests and abbesses, cardinals and lay brothers, have begun to discover common themes behind the Cathar threat and the scattered reports of diabolism across the West. It is axiomatic to the soldiers of God in the Dark Medieval world that the Devil is behind every misfortune suffered by the Church. They actually expect, if only in their gut, to find a conspiracy — and for once, they are right.

TACTICS OF THE CROZIER

Ever since the Ostia revelations of 754 C.E., the response of the Church to blood-tainted Heresy has been

simple: a cauterizing torch liberally applied to the supplicative wound of error and blasphemy. Although this approach almost always works in the final analysis of a specific case, as a general technique it has its weaknesses.

First and foremost, the Church has no power to condemn a layman to death. In general, the temporal courts are happy to oblige the Church by executing serfs, servants and peasants out of hand, but any charge of heresy against a burgher, gentleman or knight must be brought successfully in the court of the accused person's liege. Towns ruled by bishops (such as Cologne) can easily execute heretics without civil repercussions, as can the authorities in the Papal States of central Italy. In other jurisdictions, even an ironclad case may be commuted to symbolic penance or outright acquittal — if the accused has influential friends at court.

Some churchmen resort to whipping up mob violence and demand that the good people of the region burn the heretics out in the name of Christ. Such tactics can backfire, especially if the local lord protests (or if the locals turn out to have less love for Rome than for *vita*). Others turn such a case over to a friendly noble and hope for a quick execution before the accused can pull strings in his own favor.

THE SICARII

The Cainite Heresy has effectively paralyzed the Sicarii, the elite Red Monks who serve as the Papacy's covert warriors. Their origin among the splintered Gnostic sects (primarily Valentinian Sethites) of the later Roman era left the Sicarii crucially vulnerable to infiltration by agents of the Heresy. Although many of the Sicarii have mastered arcane arts that allow them to resist the blood oath, those same Red Monks were among the clergymen most open to the Heresiarchs' honeyed twisting of Gnostic scriptures. Once a few strategic leaders had been converted, only select Sicarii required the blood oath to guard the Heresy.

By now, the Red Monks are suspicious of attempts to mobilize them for action against the Cathars — the Heresy's carefully spread rumors of a coming purge have done their work. Ironically, of course, the Sicarii represent almost the only chance the Papacy has to separate the misguided Cathars from the willing servants of Caine in the Languedoc. Now, the Papal Court (poisoned by Heretical slanders and Toreador self-interest) begins to doubt the loyalty of the "dagger-men," just as the Sicarii find themselves doubting their service to the heirs of St. Peter.

Ultimately, this piecemeal approach likewise proves to have its drawbacks — as the survival of this particular and damnable Heresy for 450 years proves. Some church officials have decided to use Satan's weapons of subterfuge and entrapment against his minions on Earth. They now go forth across the land and search for signs of the Evil One's grand scheme; once they discover where the head of the serpent lies, they will endeavor to crush it once and for all.

PAPAL LEGATES AND LORDS OF THE CHURCH

Every decent pair of eyes in Christendom can serve by warning against the Heresy, but some eyes are sharper than others. The Papal Court employs its finest investigators, men with the best feel for the subtle interplay of politics and personalities, as legates to districts under suspicion of heresy, corruption or similar offenses. Unfortunately, these men also have precisely the qualities that the Lasombra lords of the Heresy seek in those they target for the Embrace.

Church officials carrying out investigations of simony, venality or other crimes routinely report their findings to

the newly efficient reformist Papal curia. Even all the Toreador distractions and Heresiarchal ghouls available to the forces of Caine can't stop every report from reaching the desk of a responsible authority — and once Innocent III takes the tiara in 1198, those authorities become disturbingly honest and unpleasantly effective.

ARCHBISHOP MONÇADA

One such authority has been disturbingly effective for a good many years, and he shows no sign of stopping. The Lasombra Archbishop Ambrosio Luis Monçada labors tirelessly and subtly on behalf of the faith that declares him damned. Christ, after all, suffered the sins of all mankind upon the cross — can a son of Castile falter at less, even one who is now a son of Caine? A word slipped to a knight's concubine in Sicily, an "angelic vision" sent to a wandering preacher in Asturias, an "accidental" revelation to a Brujah ghoul who believes his secret unknown — Monçada can inform authorities secular, spiritual or vampiric via any of a hundred cutouts and unwitting messengers.

Monçada works from the shadows and permits only enough Heretical churches in Iberia to serve as conduits of intelligence to his spies — and of carefully crafted disinformation to the Heresiarchs. His ghouls (all fanati-



FIRES OF GOD

cally devout, completely blood oathed and trained in the viper pits of Iberian court politics) lurk in the Crimson Curia, and they report all they see and hear to the glorious one they consider the true Apostle to the Vampires. Monçada also uses his trusted position in the Lasombra hierarchy to monitor Heretical activities from above. Given these three perspectives, Monçada may know more about the Heresy than anyone not serving on the See of Nod — and he could probably tell Narses himself some interesting news, should the opportunity arise.

LOCAL SHEPHERDS

Many priests, newly alert to corruption and heresy after the distressing events in Provence and Toulouse, move rapidly to thwart the Devil's work in their own parishes before the Satanic lure of Catharism can ensnare the innocent and the ignorant. These efforts are unorganized and chaotic, but for that reason, the Heresiarchs' tools in the Papal bureaucracy find such assaults far harder to block than an episcopal investigation or a legate's assignment.

DOMINIC GUZMAN

Dominic Guzmán, the young canon of Osma in northern Castile, follows the development of Catharism with fascinated horror. Situated at the crossroads between the Compostela pilgrimage highway and the Camino Real de Castile, Osma is well-placed for such an inquisitive and intelligent gatherer of news as Dominic. Until recently, he had thought that reports of decent folk in civilized Christendom's heartland falling into the traps of Bulgar Manichaeism was the worst news he might hear. Now, far more disturbing rumors reach his ears, tales of churchmen enslaved by demonic powers and drinking the blood of parishioners; and of a corrupt society, at the heart of the Cathar movement, that hopes to destroy the Church in a welter of corruption.

For now, Dominic can only gather evidence and alert his most trusted colleagues to the existence of this dark heterodoxy. Dominic's information has led to the quiet arrest of a number of Heretics operating in Castile; their full confessions (after sufficient incentive — the torturers were amazed at how much punishment some of the Heretics could withstand) have provided more testimony for his records. Dominic has amassed volumes of information on the Heresy's practices, although he remains unclear on its exact theology, as he is thus far unable to separate it from Catharism proper. Until he knows how far up the Church hierarchy these Cathar blood-drinkers go, he dares not approach his superiors with his evidence. However, if the situation in France continues to worsen, he may be forced to make a personal appeal to the Holy Father: Dominic knows in his heart that Innocent III is an incorruptible stalwart of the Lord.

CAINITE HERESY

DOMINIC'S FUTURE FATE

Dominic accompanies Bishop Diego de Avezedo of Osma in 1203 on a royal embassy to southern France; Avezedo's natural distaste for Catharism is only compounded by Dominic's revelations of the spread of the Cainite Heresy in Cathar Languedoc. Avezedo introduces Dominic to Pope Innocent III in 1205, and the Pope charges the young canon with a mission of preaching and conversion in Cathar territory. While there, Dominic and his fellow friars discover the true extent and nature of the Heresy. His secret reports are the deciding factor that convinces Innocent III to place all of Toulouse under interdict — meaning that no priest may administer Eucharist in the county — in 1207. When a thirst-crazed ghoul murders the Papal legate in Toulouse, Innocent responds with the Albigensian Crusade (see p. 37) to destroy the Heresy utterly.

Dominic, aghast at the atrocities committed against innocents during the war but powerless to interfere, concentrates on preaching to the Cathars and hunting down the Heresy itself. Monçada, who has been observing Dominic with interest for some time, uses his influence in the Papal Court to get Dominic's new preaching Order, the Dominicans, approved in 1215. Dominic spends the last years of his life establishing priories and hunting down nests of Heretics in France, Italy, Germany and Spain. In 1221, while preparing for a new mission to the heart of Tzimisce Hungary, he dies suddenly at age 51. According to persistent rumor, Monçada orders his human pawn killed rather than allow a Tzimisce to Embrace him. Dominic is canonized in 1234, and his Dominican Order becomes the backbone of the Inquisition. Monçada still wears a Dominican habit on August 8, the Feast of St. Dominic.

THE TEMPORAL LORDS

Come then; and if we must, let us die for Him who deigned to die for us.

— Simon de Montfort, on the day of his death in battle against the Cathars

The fact that a feudal lord takes up the sword rather than Holy Orders does not make his faith in Christ or his



devotion to the Church suspect. For the most part, the nobility knows that its position is guaranteed by God for a reason — nobles must be the snapping hounds to the Church's wise shepherd. Without Christ, after all, their feudal oaths mean nothing, and, perhaps closer to home, neither do those of their vassals. Defending Christ and His Church is part and parcel of defending the realm. The nobility of Europe does so with due dedication in normal times, and does so with great gladness against blood-drinking heretics.

TACTICS OF THE CROWN

Nobles face an even more serious problem when eliminating the Heresy from their lands than the Church does. They must they send any accused person of secular importance to be tried before his proper liege, which can be greatly inconvenient when, for example, the accused is an English knight sworn to the King of Jerusalem but serving in Gascony. They must also allow any man of the cloth to be tried only by clerical courts, which are always on the prowl to defend ecclesiastical privileges against secular usurpation. A cleric accused by a noble enjoys a presumption of innocence before a jury of his ordained peers almost unique in the world.

Conviction becomes even more unlikely when the accusation is one of heresy, as such a crime is not even technically under temporal jurisdiction. (Sodomy, on the other hand, is a secular crime and makes a handy catchall charge for roasting particularly well-protected Heretics.) An ecclesiastical court looks with great disfavor on a baron who presumes to make doctrinal decisions, and for sound reason. Noblemen, after all, are trained in the arts of war and hunting, not the teachings of the Church Fathers and theologians.

Of course, it is just such training that nobles combating the Heresy can turn to *in extremis*. A parish priest, even one in service to a dark angel, has little hope of besting a trained huntsman with a pack of armed thugs on call. There are always poor knights eager to rid their lord of a nuisance, even a nuisance in vestments. Even if such an assassin is caught, his loud repentance and quick departure for Crusade stills wagging tongues while having the advantage of being theologically sound.

Most effective of all are the arts of politics — any lord who has risen high enough to see the machinations of Heresy at court has done so with the aid of a prominent churchman. Even (or especially) if that aid is coerced in exchange for silence about the holy one's

less-than-sanctified relationship with a local woman, the network of favor and obligation underlying the feudal structure often leads to someone who can bring charges of heresy in turn — and who can make them stick.

SWORDS FOR ST. DENIS

In France, where the gravest threat of Heresy lies, those nobles who resist it do so for any number of reasons. Some, such as the Anglo-French knight Simon de Montfort, fight for faith alone. Montfort, although callous, does not harden his heart to the plight of Christians in the hands of heretics. He has heard from certain lords in England that many French nobles, even ones who superficially honor Christ, are actually manipulated like chess pawns by servants of the Devil. His career in France certainly bears out those observations; he joyously and effectively (and brutally) leads the Crusade against Cathar Languedoc in a decade. For now, though, he keeps his eyes open as his informants advise him of disquieting practices. Montfort knows that the artistic fops in the ducal courts and cathedral towns bear watching, for he cannot help but feel his flesh crawl when he catches their eyes.

Montfort's prodigious faith leads him to suspect the reach of the Heresy without Ventrue help, but there are many others whom the Patricians do aid. Many a lord with Ventrue friends or under a Ventrue liege finds his head turned toward the Heresy. If only to please these very influential peers, many suspicious nobles have started to root through the affairs of their chamberlains, chaplains and vassals. Even the vampire lords must be surprised at the number of times a perfunctory round on the rack uncovers evidence of putrid corruption indeed. Reports from these investigations have filtered up even to King Philip II. Philip himself may be cynical and corrupt (and, in fact, is), but he knows that drinking devils' blood is a bad business. His own spies now understand that His Most Catholic Majesty looks with favor on any fresh tales of Heretical treason — especially if the accused has rich property ripe for seizure by the crown.

THE COUNTS OF CHAMPAGNE

Count Thibaud III of Champagne wishes nothing more than to be left to the business of raking off an almost unimaginable profit from the Troyes Fair in his demesne and plowing the proceeds into sponsoring artists, troubadours and good works. Unfortunately for the Count's peace of mind, his relatives in the Templars (his great-great-uncle Hugues was one of the original Nine Poor Knights) have passed along some truly unsettling news from their brethren in the secretive



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Priory, which guards a certain sacred bloodline. It seems that blasphemers throughout France — perhaps throughout Europe — have perverted the sacred teachings of the *Book of John* into some sort of demonic blood-worship. As a faithful heretic of the Johannite persuasion, like his father and his father's father before him, Thibaud detests any perversion of the Gnostic truths. (The Johannite heresy holds that John the Baptist was the Messiah, and that the Apostle John was his true successor.) Working with the Order of the Bitter Ashes (see p. 76), who seem to share his dedication to the esoteric truth (or at least an esoteric truth) behind the Grail (Thibaud sponsored Chrétien of Troyes), he has moved to stamp out the Heresy in his own dominions. He also covertly offers quite sizable rewards for the severed heads of known Heretics in Flanders and Lyon, which depend on the Troyes Fair for markets.

THE MANUS NIGRUM

This sect, perhaps the most shadowy of the myriad secret societies of the Dark Medieval world, is obsessed with two things: immortality and the activities of vampires. What its true motives might be, none can or will say — none can say whether the *manus* is even human after so many centuries of studying the secrets of the dead and unliving.

What the Cainites high in the Heresy know is that some hidden force seems to be working against them. The Tzimisce openly blame their problems only on Tremere usurpation, but what hidden hand pressed the Tremere to find the resting place of Saulot? The Lasombra find their plans foiled at the last minute by foes who seem to know the clan's every action and the identity of its most secret ghouls. The Toreador find their movements hampered as suspicious nobles follow rumors leading to that clan's Heretical congregations — and in certain cases, to carefully forged evidence of such where none should exist. Could the *manus nigrum* be clenched around the throats of both the Magisters and Artisans, slowly squeezing away their unlife?

Levelheaded Cainites call tales of a "black hand" of human necromancers the ravings of the paranoid and the excuses of the incompetent. But as the Heresy's enemies close in on all sides, as the torches of Crusade and Inquisition kindle in Toulouse, as clan suspects clan and sire doubts childe, levelheaded Cainites grow rare.

Thibaud III dies in 1201, a premature end perhaps related to his dedicated campaign against the Heresy. His son, Thibaud IV (also called the Posthumous), continues the purge, however. Thibaud also finds time to encode certain of the Heresy's revelations into his client Wolfram of Eschenbach's *Parzival*, just as his father had commissioned Chrétien of Troyes to add certain passages to the *Conte de Graal*. He serves with distinction and humanity in the Albigensian Crusade and acts as the official mediator of the Peace of Meaux in 1229, thus allowing the Priory to retreat to Montségur and conceal the bloodline from the jealous Roman Church. Thibaud IV takes the throne of Navarre in 1234 and reigns happily until his final passing in 1254.

THE SONS OF CAINE

I am Eleleth, the wise, the great angel who stands in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I have been sent to speak with you and save you from the grasp of the lawless.

— The Hypostasis of the Archons

The Nosferatu and the Michaelite Toreador hold one side of the Cainite opposition to the Heresy, the spiritual. From there to the angry disgust of the Ventrue and the violated outrage of the Brujah is not as far as it might seem. In the Dark Medieval world, the line between church and clan, between religion and politics, is not even a blur — it simply does not exist.

CAINITES FOR CHRIST

The Lasombra gray eminence Monçada is not the only devout Christian among the ranks of the Damned. Although the Heresy attempts to divert all Cainite sympathy for Christ into the selfish rites of the Blood Communion, many vampires Embraced over the course of the last millennium find themselves unable and unwilling to discard the religious beliefs of a lifetime. When a Catholic or Orthodox Cainite, or even a follower of a relatively benign heresy such as Pelagianism, encounters the Heresy, the consequences are often dramatic and severe. After all, Angel of Death is one of the few religious roles left for Christian vampires to play — and it offers a brief opportunity to serve God's manifest will.

NOSFERATU

The Lepers know that they are damned; they see proof every time they look in the mirror. To have the Lasombra — blessed with no image — claim the reverse in defiance of Scripture and in contempt for truth offends the Nosferatu mightily. Still, the tight-knit clan has not taken open arms against the Heresy — yet. For now, the shared blood of Caine runs thicker than the offenses against the blood of Christ.

ORDER OF THE BITTER ASHES

Once Crusaders, these knights met a mysterious man on the last day of 1099 at the gate to Jerusalem. He bore a strange mark on his head, and he Embraced them all. Following his instructions, they found the Holy Grail and drank of the True Blood of Christ. From that day forth, the curse of Caine in their blood was lifted, but their might increased tenfold, and they have waged an unceasing campaign against the Devil's work on Earth.

The Heretics pray to whatever gods they can find in their unholy books that this order is merely a legend called up in the days of Crusading blood-frenzy. Even the hardened ghouls of the Crimson Curia hesitate to mention its name, especially to the Cainites they serve. But if the order is not real, it can yet affect the affairs of vampires and mortals alike. Cainite troubadours have long sung chansons of mysterious knights who glow with inner luminescence and strike blows with uncanny strength at the followers of Baal. Now, fragmentary reports place those same knights at some of the most inexplicable scenes in the Heresy's records. An abbey in the Vaud swallowed up by a mighty earthquake, a crucial ghouled archbishop breaking his blood oath and telling all after hearing the confession of a shining knight, monstrous guardians on the Bogomil frontier found dead without a wound — all these feats and more lie in the records held close within the Heresiarchs' confidence.

The Nosferatu who do not accept Christianity also object to endangering their clan over a theological point, no matter how sound.

This divergence of opinion keeps the Christian Lepers malevolent neutrals; they charge much more in favors, rumors and access for any service they offer a Heretic. Zacchaeus, a powerful Nosferatu information broker in Rome, purportedly keeps many Heretical secrets in his catacombs and sewers against future need. He pays well for news of Heretical influence in the Lateran Palace, for details of internal Crimson Curia politics and for anything else that the Heresy's enemies might someday wish to know or use. Some coterie of Nosferatu, according to rumor, have decided to force



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the issue — isolated congregations of Heretics have vanished from underground grottoes in Syracuse, Provins and other cities.

THE MICHAELITE TOREADOR

The Orthodox Church went to great lengths to drive the Heresy out of the Empire of Christ half a century ago, and those Toreador who follow the Patriarch Michael have no intention of letting that effort be wasted. Michael and his line have less than no trust for Narses and his Lasombra shadows — where religion might not impel them to action, paranoia certainly does.

Although the powers of the Greek Rite shrink almost to nothing in the West, Michael is not without his resources in such anciently Byzantine strongholds as Palermo, Ravenna and Bari. Even in the heart of Germany, more than one Toreador has made the mistake of boasting about her newest ritual to an Artisan still entranced by the Dream of Constantinople. Such Toreador are often more than willing to break a rival and serve the Archangel at the same time.

CLAN RIVALRIES

For every vampiric scheme, there are at least three equal and opposite vampiric schemes. This Tradition is older than the Silence of the Blood, and even more apropos in an age when Pope and Emperor, baron and king, West and East struggle to define the issues at hand. The contest over the Heresy, which few vampires see as the equal of these secular matters in import, may sweep the Cainite demesne away in fire — and clan rivalries provide the sparks.

THE FURY OF THE BRUJAH

Many Brujah actually respect Christianity as a source of hope, a guardian of civilization and a potentially revolutionary force for an ideal — after all, the Church teaches that all men are equal in the eyes of God. They don't necessarily believe every jot and tittle of the law or dogma (many Brujah still can't believe Christ didn't fight back), but their sympathy for the Church creates a basic antipathy to the Heresy. The fact that the contemptible Lasombra seem to be up to their beady little eyes in it makes it even worse.

FABRIZIO ULFILA AND THE VENTRUE PETARD

Fabrizio Ulfila is not a typical Ventrue; he dwells in Italy where the hoi polloi have an unruly habit of demanding a say in their own lives, he moves smoothly from merchant house to knightly camp, and he seems reasonable and sensible, unlike his stiff-necked German-Norman cousins. Most uncharacteristically of all, he is a schemer to the core. From his base in Rimini, he lends a sympathetic ear to Popes, bankers, lords and mercenaries. Now, in response to the concerns of his French clan mates trapped in a decadent mock-Toreador court, he plots a counterblow that will burn the effete Artisans out of France and leave the Patricians to rule.

He has encouraged a group of fanatically devout priests and clerks to investigate the rumors of a grand Heresy spawned by the childer of Caine, and he's left lots of incriminating evidence (forged and otherwise) linking these blasphemies to the Toreador of Languedoc. Unfortunately, there really is a grand Heresy in Languedoc, and everywhere else in western Europe, too. Worse, when his puppets meet Dominic in 1205, they find an even more convincing leader. They join his new order, and an Inquisition is born.

The Heresy also offends the Brujah on a more basic level — it enshrines the Beast within the Red Pentecost. Inviting frenzy not for glorious battle against oppression or for defense of some great cause but simply to go mad for a hypocritical falsehood is like a slap in the face to the Zealots. Wherever they can, they slap the Heresy back.



14072



Chapter Five: A Long Walk Down the Devil's Road

Bishop Alfonso,

I write to warn you that His Holiness' attitude on matters touching us has not improved. This evening as I assisted him to his bed, he again warned me to "beware the Children of the Night." As you instructed, I tried to draw him out on the matter, but he refused to elaborate. Instead, he merely repeated his warning then hurried me from his chambers.

I have more news. This morning His Holiness cloistered himself in a meeting with one of those rural priests, a Paul of Messina. I am afraid I could not manage to overhear their conversation, and His Holiness would not speak of the matter latter in the day. In fact, he seemed to grow suspicious of me when I asked of it.

However, the assistant librarian Lawrence (you may remember that I was the one who suggested he be taken into our circle) has told me that His Holiness approved this Paul's access to the secret chamber of the library. By all accounts, the priest remains there as I write this.

I most anxiously await your instructions on this matter.

Andre

THE HEART OF THE ROAD

Erich Uwessohn, a simple priest, lives in a landscape full of monsters. The folk of his village engage in every manner of perversion: unnatural acts of lust, torture of their fellow men with whips and poisons, murder of unbaptized children and, on occasion, worship of the Devil himself. They deny it to the priest's face, but he has seen these things and heard the screams roll out across the land. He cannot flee; chattering, demoniac horrors infest the woods, and all roads twist back toward his Church. He sent word to his superior; the reply denounced him as a madman. He is trapped; he is alone; he is afraid. Last night, he helped the villagers vivisect Caspar's daughter, Anna. He doesn't even know why.

Erich remembers these things with crystal clarity, and it scarcely matters that they never happened. Johann of the Ventrue forced these memories on him as a torment, to make one more mortal heart abandon its arrogant claims to salvation. Erich's faith, which once burned brightly, gutters and slowly turns to ash. On the day it dies, Johann begins to inflict the real torment.

Johann walks the Devil's Road.

Serving the darkness — both the unknown and terrible powers said to walk the Earth and the darkness within a Cainite's soul — is a very old tradition. Long before humans spoke of Hell, many vampires and mortal priests served the forces of iniquity. In the Dark Medieval age, suffering and cruelty have vampiric disciples in every land under the sky. The vampires who turn from the light, whom even other Cainites call *infidel*, use Via Diabolis as their defense against the Beast. The Road has had millennia to evolve, and it shows as much in its complexities.

Cainites afflict humanity like a plague, wracking the mortal world with incalculable death and suffering. Most vampires assume that the pain they cause is incidental, regardless of whether they strive to limit this suffering or simply ignore it. Via Diabolis embodies the principle that this affliction has a purpose — that divine or infernal forces ordain vampirism and its malefic consequences.

Each vampire on this Road serves some



CAINITE HERESY

dark principle — her vocation, her devotion or her service. Some claim to serve anonymous “dark powers,” others Satan, Eblis, malignant pagan deities or even vile personal obsessions. Some legitimately believe in the supremacy of this principle. Others, as they stalk the world to sow the seeds of horror and atrocity, claim to be apostles of a righteous God. They tempt humanity in hopes of finding strength. They enact barbarities in order to teach mortals proper fear of the powers beyond. They ravage their victims’ attachments to the material world with destruction and degradation. To exist in a demon’s role, they must become like demons in truth.

Because the role of the vampire casts each Cainite as a fiend and a traitor, even the vilest betrayals and most despicable acts of frenzy rarely cause degeneration. Nevertheless, vampires on this Road often wassail; only harsh and violable strictures can contain the Beast. Cainites of this Via must never set self-respect above their service, for all that false pride helps define them. Via Diabolis is a *cause* and not simply a code; a Cainite who ceases striving to serve as Abaddon becomes an animal and nothing more.

Cainites on Via Diabolis execute unholy schemes and perform terrible deeds, but they can be much more than just sinister antagonists. Fanatics, they struggle always to convert other vampires to their cause. They push humane vampires to maleficent and destructive acts, teaching them the Road’s inherent evil.

Vampires on Via Diabolis build their sanity around the principle that divine or infernal forces prescribe all evil. Individual Cainites create no suffering; they simply obey this mandate to cause pain. Their role, as laid out explicitly by the divine or infernal, is to be monstrous, to play the part of Grendel to humanity’s luckless thanes. Evil exists for a reason; to shirk one’s duty in playing the part of evil is to thwart divine will. In their own way, infidels are more devout than most others of their kind.

THE SATANIC ROAD

Instinct and identity struggle for supremacy within every vampire’s mind. Vampires wield the Viae as weapons of identity, simple and compelling concepts to which their personalities can cling. When the seething tides of predatory emotion wash across a Cainite’s mind, she *needs* a stable foundation and needs it to be strong enough to cleave unto, regardless of circumstance. Because each vampire’s mind is unique, no two vampires follow exactly the same Road, and no two vampires understand their Road in exactly the same way. Salazaar of Cordoba hides in the formalism of devil worship and wages a bitter and bloody war against the Church. Michelle, a Brujah who haunts the French roads, glories in her capacity for personal evil. A merchant told a ribald tale about her; she nailed his family’s tongues to the doorframe of his house with iron spikes. A coachman, traveling late, laughed at the thought of a female highwayman; she fed him one of his horses in bite-sized chunks. She sees her service as being to Satan, as playing her proper part in the divine order as mandated by her descent from Caine.

TAILORING THE ROAD

Sometimes, Via Diabolis as written doesn’t quite fit a character concept precisely. Philip of Santiago, Tremere and onetime mage, could not care less about tempting humans — they participate in his experiments, willingly or otherwise. With that in mind, his player, feeling that the Via as written doesn’t quite work for the character, can collaborate with his Storyteller to create modified versions of the Road. Storytellers should be wary of allowing their players to wander too far from the standard Via; too much change and the Road is no longer recognizable as such. On the other hand, changes that make sense within the context of a character’s well-considered concept are perfectly sensible.

ROAD OF THE DEVIL

Road Rating

Road Rating	REVISÉD HIERARCHY OF SINS
10	Minimum wrong doing for Conviction roll
9	Failing to observe the forms of worship associated with your vocation.
8	Setting pride above other personal vices and desires.
7	Ending a life, save in service to your devotion.
6	Setting self-interest above your service to darkness.
5	Ignoring an opportunity to turn a mortal or Cainite mind toward your cause.
4	Refusing to support an atrocity, unless that refusal serves a darker plan.
3	Setting pride above your vocation.
2	Defeat at the hands of enemies or servants of virtue.
1	Ceasing to strive in the name of your devotion, or choosing petty ambitions out of sloth or cowardice.
	Honoring or aiding humanity, benign forces or virtue, save in service to a darker cause.

THE BLACK MASS

One of the most common forms of expression of Via Diabolis comes in the form of conscious rejection of Christian ritual and observance. Although this sort of activity doesn't necessarily further anyone's goals, it does help Cainites re-affirm their identities in opposition to the perceived good. Rituals such as the Black Mass are most popular among new converts to this Via and other young vampires. Older followers of the Road don't need it.

Celebrants of the Black Mass mock and debase the forms of Christianity in Satan's name. They mix blood, urine and dirty water for their sacramental wine and take moldy bread to be their Host. Their "priest" reads backward from holy texts in secular or unholy tongues. The participants break and defile a crucifix. If they have one available, they burn an infant or innocent alive; touches like these add gaiety to the ceremony.

Cainites on Via Diabolis often baptize roads with the names of their enemies during the Black Mass. A celebrant then crucifies the toad, thus cursing the enemy to a terrible fate. (Few Cainites believe that this practice works, but they seem to enjoy the splendor of the ritual.) Other common events at the Black Mass include oaths to dark powers and the performance (usually by ghouls or dominated humans) of obscene sexual acts, such as copulation with the skinned carcass of a goat.

In rough terms, the three lowest sins define the bedrock of a Cainite's existence — the primary conflict that drives him into action. The four middle sins define the code he tries to keep; he does, however, *desire* to break these proscriptions more often. The top three sins represent his version of saintly (diabolic) behavior; if he measures up to the code they imply, he probably considers himself a paragon. Sometimes, these categories shift by a sin in one direction or another.

ARCHETYPAL APPROACHES

A character's Nature sometimes determines how he approaches the Devil's Road. Below are approaches to playing each Nature as a traveler on Via Diabolis.

Autocrat: Evil is not just the right way — it's the only way. Many Cainites do not understand this concept, and you can abuse their ignorance to take power over them. Alternately, you can show them the proper path; both choices have their rewards.

Some vampires say that you are damned for your deeds, but you only laugh. Vampires have been damned ever since the days of Caine, the first murderer. You are merely following in the steps of a grand and honorable tradition laid down millennia ago.

Barbarian: There can be no valor without monsters to fight. There can be no endurance without suffering to endure. There can be no honor without temptation. You strengthen others by testing them. You cleanse others with agony. You strive to be more than a tool of darkness; you have honor and a purpose.

Caretaker: God has commanded that humans and vampires love one another as he has loved them. God made his love obvious: He assisted you, protected you and then damned you eternally. Now, it is your turn to return the favor. Nurture mortals as God has nurtured you; tempt them with loving kindness, then show them the gleam of the fang.

Celebrant: Via Diabolis lets you celebrate anything you want, barring certain profoundly virtuous activities such as charity and love. If that's the case, then play! The Devil's work need not always be grim and hateful — it can have the element of sport. Arrange your games of pain and your revels of torment, and let enjoyment and degradation mingle until they're interchangeable. Then, when your playthings no longer know the difference, let your revels begin.

Child: You want what you want, and what you want is to inflict pain on others. There are no rationalizations for you, no grandiose schemes of damnation and corruption. Your will is to make others suffer for your pleasure. You may seem playful, but if you are thwarted in your whims, your terrible anger is unleashed.

Defender: You defend not the weak and the innocent, but rather those whose corruption might be snuffed out early before it has a chance to blossom fully. No harm is allowed to come to your charges, save that which you inflict for your own purposes.

Fanatic: You follow Via Diabolis in its classic form and dedicate yourself utterly to the Road's service. That dedication helps keep you sane.

Gallant: You see yourself as an idealized villain — the kind of monster who sets ladies' (or men's) hearts fluttering. You aspire to grandiose accomplishments, charisma and immense personal style. Never settle for killing one when you can kill a thousand; never settle for betraying one prince when you can betray an entire fief. In the end, you want the bards to tell your story forever — make it an interesting one, so that your lessons are retold for centuries.

Innovator: The old ways, the laws of God and man, are dead, and your goal is to drag existence kicking and scream-

OTHER ROADS

Integrating a Diabolic character into a coterie whose members follow other Roads can be difficult. Some approaches that you can take include:

Philosophy: All Cainites serve the Devil. Therefore, helping other vampires isn't altruism — it's iniquity.

Material Gain: Cooperating with a group is always safer than working alone. Other hands and other minds set to do one's bidding can greatly increase the amount of evil one can work. Of course, the trick is in not having the others realize what they are actually doing....

Necessity: For one of many reasons, the character needs or depends on the other characters. Perhaps the coterie is moving through hostile territory, and every sword is required to ensure survival. Alternately, the coterie might share another overriding goal, one that demands the talents of even a vampire on the Devil's Road.

Corruption: The Cainite believes that he can corrupt the other characters, even though it might be a long and difficult process. The chronicle's journey provides ample opportunity for him to do so.

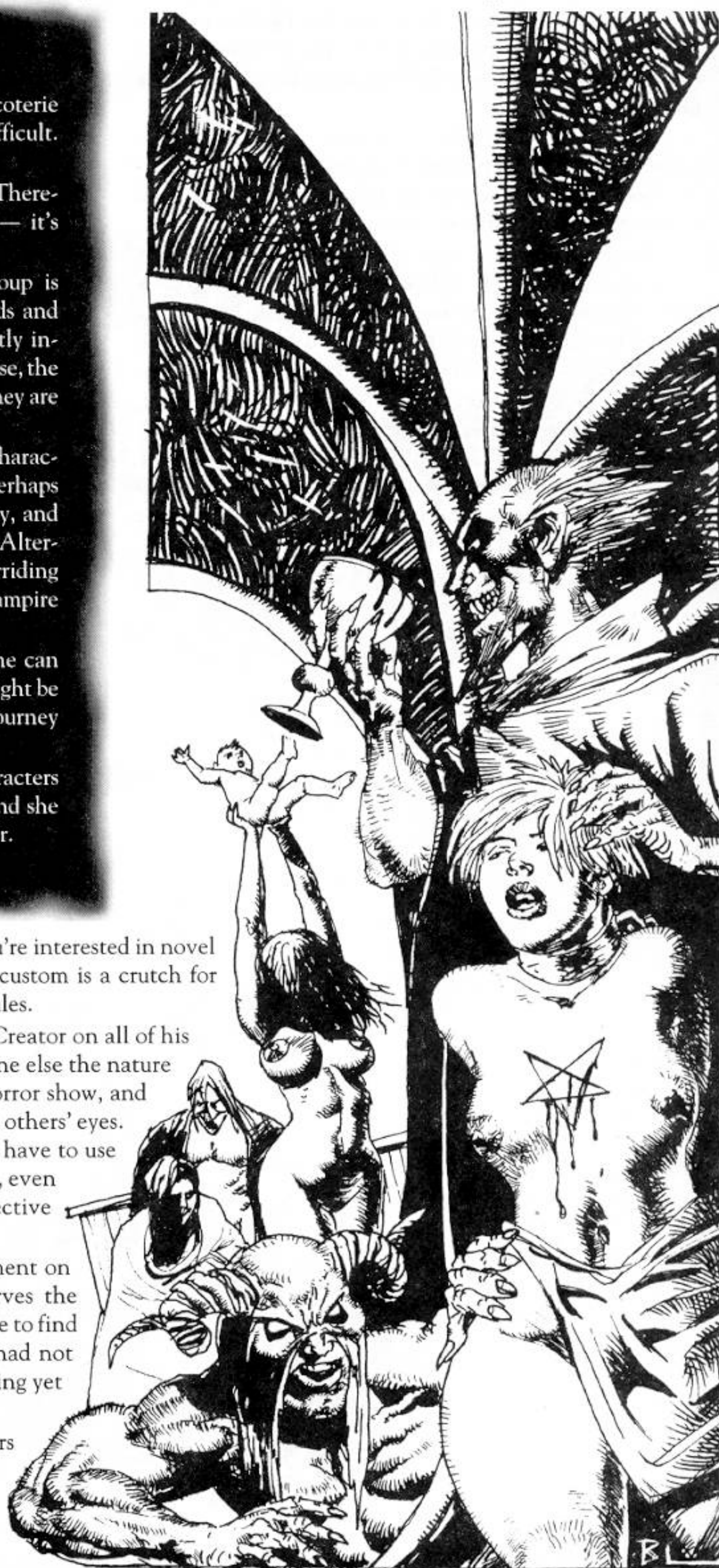
The Blood Oath: One of the two characters involved in an oath might be on the Road, and she might bend all of her will to convert the other.

ing into this brave new world along with you. You're interested in novel ways of demonstrating the truth of creation — custom is a crutch for people without the courage to make their own rules.

Jester: Reality is a joke, perpetrated by the Creator on all of his poor souls, and it remains to you to show everyone else the nature of the grand jest. No, life is not kind — it's a horror show, and you're just the one to strip the illusion away from others' eyes. Of course, no one listens to you directly, so you have to use the tools at your disposal — give yourself a laugh, even as others cry. The lessons are so much more effective that way.

Judge: You have been created to pass judgment on the world, and you find it unworthy. It deserves the desecration and pain that you unleash. If you were to find something of pure innocence, something that had not earned your fury, you would spare it — but nothing yet has caused your convictions to shake.

Loner: As you are alone, you shall make others alone. Society and its pretenses are your target; you tear down the structures others have built to



A LONG WALK DOWN THE DEVIL'S ROAD

defend themselves against loneliness. Your goal is to show that all companionship is transitory, that all alliances dissolve in betrayal and that, in the end, everyone walks alone into the darkness.

Monster: Via Diabolis offers you a chance to express yourself without let or hindrance. In truth, your Via encourages your monstrous nature. By following your Road, you bring yourself into harmony with your true self.

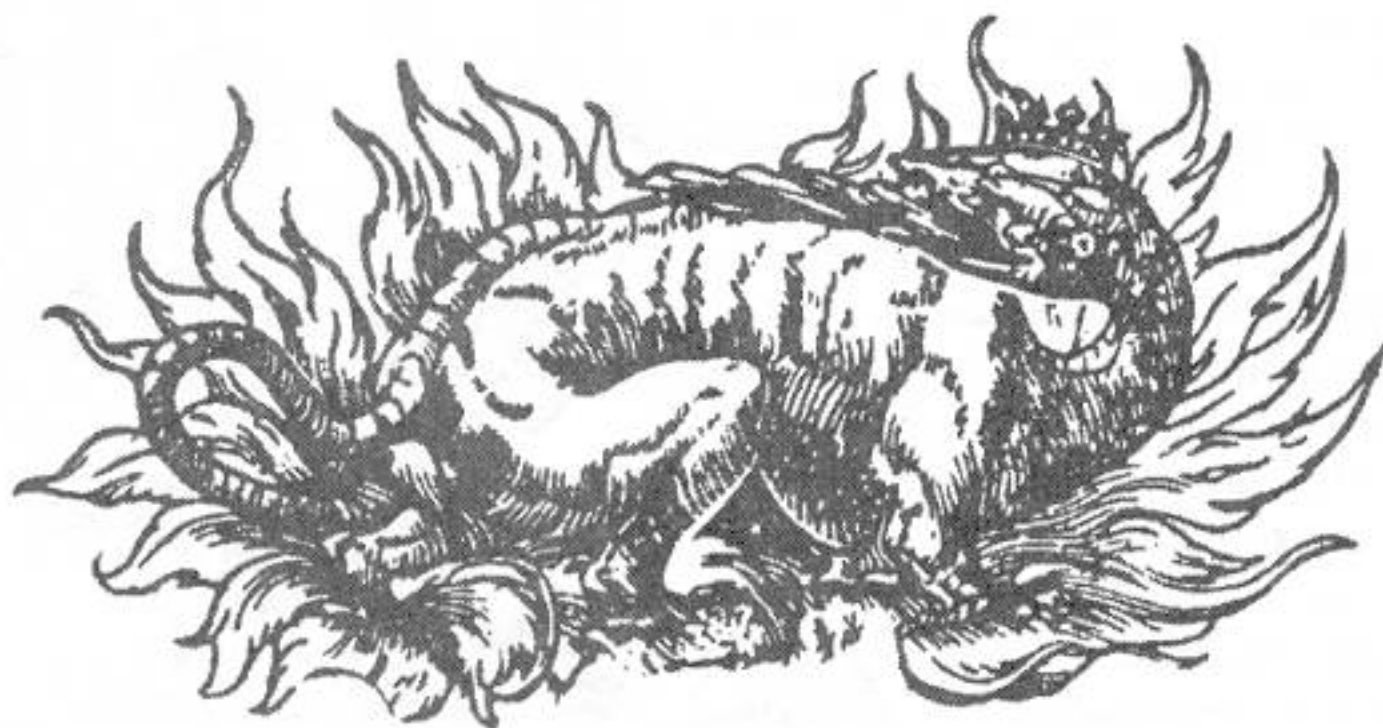
Penitent: Caught in an endless cycle of self-loathing, you work your will on the helpless world — then do the same unto yourself. You see the need for what you do but despise yourself for doing it. Mortify the world and mortify your flesh — both are equally important to your fragile hold on sanity.

Rebel: Pick something to rebel against and go to work. The fall of the institution — be it the Church, a noble family or even your sire — should shake others' faith to the core. Rebellion against something inconsequential means nothing. Rebelling against the bedrock of others' existence advances the goals of the Via.

Rogue: You do what you like, a philosophy that dovetails nicely with the Via's stated purpose. Your pleasures and whims are cruel and bloody, and indulging in them at random does much to deny the notion of benign, ordered existence. How can anyone believe in a kind and loving God when, at any moment, you might descend like the scourge of Heaven?

Survivor: Your mere existence in the face of the opposition of Heaven drives you onward. Every trap you outwit, every debate you win, every servant of light that you make look foolish is an affirmation of your philosophy. The fact that you continue to exist is a bloody flag waved at Creation, and you intend to keep that banner in motion as long as possible.

Tyrant: You brook no argument with your taste for atrocity. Not only is it imperative for you to do the Devil's work, but others must do it as well, and by your command. It is not enough for you to follow the Devil's Road; you must herd others along it, without delay or question.





Appendix: Notable Heretics and Junters



Being a Cainite means hiding your true nature from mortals and revealing yourself only to those select few whom you can trust. Indeed, Cainite existence is not so different from being a heretic — of any stripe — in these dark times. To be both vampire and heretic is simultaneously a relief and an added burden — you can relax in the company of your fellows, but the chances of discovery double. The Church is far more vigilant in its search for heretics than in its search for monsters.

Unfortunately for the Church, sometimes the search for one can lead to the other.

CÆLESTIUS THE HERETIC

No one would ever describe Cælestius as a quiet or timid man. In his youth, serving the Church in Rome as a lay monk, he spent as much time arguing religious theory as he did studying it. While his arguments lacked polish and were often incomplete, his stubborn insistence on their correctness often carried his point. He soon gained a reputation in Rome as a man counted on to provide an evening of robust and heated debate.

It was at these evening debates that Cælestius met Pelagius, an older man with some unorthodox ideas about the nature of sin and free will. After a number of arguments in which Pelagius' charisma and polished words beat out Cælestius' pragmatic ideas, the youngster decided to become the older man's disciple. Working together, the two men produced the foundation of the Pelagian heresy.

However, the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth in 410 C.E. interrupted things. Cælestius and Pelagius fled to Carthage together, hoping to continue their work there. Unfortunately, Carthage's theological arena was under the sway of Augustine of Hippo, who had very different views on the nature of humanity's sins than did the two refugees. While Pelagius preached to the people, it was Cælestius and his writings that came under fire. In less than a year, Cælestius faced charges of heresy before a synod.

Cælestius vigorously argued the charges, often with Augustine himself. He refused to recant, and as a result the synod banned him from any religious office. Cælestius vowed to appeal the decision to the Pope in Rome, but then vanished from Carthage without making good on his threat.

In truth, Cælestius disappeared into the night after having drawn the attention of Ærellius, a local Brujah. Cælestius' speeches in defense of free will, along with his rebellion against the Church, inspired the Cainite to Embrace the heretic. Together, the two left Carthage and headed east, ending up in Ephesus.



Under Ærellius' tutelage, Cælestius quickly adapted to his new condition. Ignoring the ban that the synod had laid upon him, he became a priest in Ephesus, there teaching a Cainite interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. During this time, he debated with Procopius, a visiting Byzantine priest; it is these debates that form the basis for Cælestius' *Definitiones Cælestii*, written in 417 C.E. This document, which circulated widely, again brought Cælestius to the attention of Augustine of Hippo, who ordered all copies of it collected and Cælestius himself destroyed.

Rather than hide from his opponents, Cælestius traveled to Rome, while preaching along the way. He boldly declared that he would present himself to the Pope and receive Papal blessing. Ærellius traveled part of the way with him, in an effort to restrain his childe. The two fought in Venice; Cælestius won and left Ærellius behind. Reaching the Pope would not prove as easy as avoiding his sire, however, for now both the Lasombra and Inconnu barred Cælestius' path.

After numerous failed attempts to gain the Pope's blessing, Cælestius spread rumors that he was returning to the East. In actuality, he secreted himself in the Catacombs under Rome to descend into torpor. Every hundred years or so, he would wake to hunt, test the protections

around the Pope and preach to any Cainite who would listen. As the Papacy moved around Europe, Cælestius followed; upon failing to receive the Holy Father's blessing, he again returned to his torpor in whatever dark place was at hand.

The time of Cælestius' next awakening is close. During his last venture outside, he came as close as he ever has to reaching the Pope and revealing his true nature. This time, he may well succeed. The safety of all Cainites is in danger should he actually achieve his aims. The resources of various clans are being put on watch across Europe, as none know precisely where the Heretic will appear. The only certainty is that the well-being for all of Caine's childer demands that he be stopped.

FATHER PAUL OF MESSINA, *LEGATI A LATERE*

Short, fat and balding, Paul is hardly the typical inquisitor. His face is friendly and his manner is jovial — he seems always ready to listen to any story and to add a little laugh of his own at the end. People find it easy to trust him, to open up to the kindly uncle from Rome. Behind Paul's laughter and smiles, though, is a wrought-iron will dedicated to preserving the Church he loves.

The third son of poor nobility, Paul spent nearly his entire life in the service of the Church — first as a student, then as deacon and priest. His compassion encouraged people to open themselves to him, a talent he applied in his parish to root out the handful of dualists hiding among his flock. Once these heretics had confessed their sins under torture, Paul assured them that he forgave them and presided over their burning, to ensure that their souls would reach Heaven.

When news of Paul's actions reached Pope Clement III, the Holy Father had the priest assigned to a troubled parish outside Rome. Here again, Father Paul proved effective at finding and persecuting heresy — this time a poverty cult that had recently formed. After this success, Clement III made Paul a *legati a latere*, thus enabling him to act in the Pope's name.

With his new authority, Father Paul traveled to Venice, Milan, Pisa and other major cities in Italy. Everywhere he went, he was diligent in discovering major and minor heresies. On some occasions, he even encountered peripheral members of the Cainite Heresy. It was the reporting of these encounters to the new Pope, Celestine III, that led to Father Paul's new assignment.

Celestine III brought Paul back to Rome, and in secret showed him the forbidden text of the *Definitiones Cælestii*.



This blasphemous document hinted at the darker nature of the Cainite Heresy and the secrets its true masters hide. The Pope charged Father Paul to search out and destroy this Heresy specifically, wherever he could find it, to the exclusion of all others.

For the last few years, that is exactly what Father Paul has done. His early efforts were nearly disasters, as he overestimated his own influence and underestimated the support and strength of his opponents. His faith alone sustained him in those dark times as he barely escaped Madrid and Castille with his life. Quickly, he adapted; hand-picked Church soldiers and priests now travel with him.

With each passing year, Father Paul becomes more dangerous to the Cainites he pursues. He has learned some of their weaknesses and their typical habits, as well as how to spot their eager servants. He has also adapted the tortures of confession by adding more flames and wooden stakes to the process. However, he cannot be everywhere, and it takes time to gain the confessions of those heretics whom he does catch.

Whether Paul will retain his *legati a latere* status under a new Pope seems questionable; agents of the Cainite Heresy are actively discrediting him in the eyes of

the Papacy. Losing the support of the Pope would be a serious blow to Father Paul's efforts — but likely not the end of them.

HUGH MARSTON

There was nothing Hugh Marston liked more than the sound his sword made when it cracked bones, and he heard a lot of that during the First Crusade. Fighting on foot or from horseback, Hugh thrived on whatever violence he could find battling the heathen. When that Crusade ended, Hugh returned home to Lincolnshire to sell his sword and services to whomever could pay his price.

One of his employers was a Saxon Ventrue, Anders, who was engaged in fighting a losing battle to maintain control over northern England. When the money started to run out, Anders resorted to a blood oath on his commanders, including Hugh. Hugh considered the new powers his ghoulings bestowed a blessing and put them to good use in Anders' employ.

In 1142, however, Anders' defenses finally failed, and the Cainite's enemies staked him out for the morning. With the rising of the sun, Anders ceased to be and Hugh was free of his oath — but not of his need for blood. Escaping the cell

Anders' killers had placed him in, he searched England for a new source of vitae.

With his knowledge of Cainite behavior, Hugh found new masters easily, and he exchanged his brutal skills for a taste of their vitae. He was always careful to avoid taking a third taste from any given employer, instead choosing to move on frequently and to avoid binding himself. It didn't take long, however, for Hugh to discover that his services as a sell-sword were not always sufficient to gain the vitae he desperately needed. The news he might bring, however, often was. Word of power shifts in vampiric society — who had sired whom, what this clan or that clan had done — this information became the coin Hugh used for barter with Cainites for their precious vitae.

Hugh's search for vampires inevitably led to contact with various factions of the Cainite Heresy. Originally, Hugh viewed the Heresy as a means to an end: Where there were Heretics, there would be a Cainite, and where there was a Cainite, there would be blood. Repeated contact with the various factions, however, slowly led to Hugh's conversion. He came to see his condition as similar to Caine's; he, too, had to wander the Earth and carry with him the blessing and message of God. Soon, along with news, Hugh carried the message of the Heresy.

Now over a hundred years old, Hugh is a canny creature. He is quite adept at weaseling his way into whoever's company he finds himself sharing, and through a combination of experience and familiarity he can easily find the local Cainites as well. Normally, this ability would make him a dangerous opponent, but he has refined his approach and reputation such that his arrival is a cause for celebration, rather than fear.

ADOLANA OF LAS HUELGAS ABBEY

Most of Adolana's life has been spent in the convents of the Citeaux Order in Spain. Her mother died giving birth to her, something for which her older brother never forgave her. When she was twelve, her father died in the *reconquista* of Cuenca (1177). Adolana's brother, a decade older than she, had a servant rape her, then he sent her to the Citeaux nunnery near Sigüenza. His parting words: "I hope you die there."

The rape left Adolana withdrawn, and she didn't speak for a year. The nuns assumed she was a mute and kept her hard at work cleaning the floors and walls of the nunnery. When Adolana did finally speak, it was to say, "No." Her refusals led to beatings, as the nuns tried to teach her discipline and respect.





The lesson Adolana learned instead was how to manipulate the women around her. Keen observation had revealed to Adolana the factions in the nunnery, and she used this knowledge to her advantage. After the first few beatings, Adolana began to use the sessions as an opportunity to plant seeds of doubt, hate, envy and jealousy in the nuns. Rough and unpracticed at first (which led to more beatings), her words soon became polished weapons that fractured the peace of the order.

Once the nunnery's society was hopelessly fragmented, Adolana restored its harmony just to prove to herself that she could do it. Taking the perpetual vow, she became a nun herself. With soft and soothing words uttered to others who were hurt, a hint to the abbess to have this nun or that one transferred to Rome, Adolana carefully rebuilt the society of the nunnery with her at its center.

Not all of Adolana's efforts unfolded in the confines of the nunnery, however. With her new importance, Adolana earned the freedom to travel to Siguenza and report the doings of the nunnery to the bishop. Adolana cultivated a friendship with him, thus making herself seem invaluable to the operation of the nunnery. During these visits, Adolana came to the attention of Brother Fernando, a Malkavian Heretic hiding within the Church. In the spare moments of

her visits, Fernando discussed his particular view of the Cainite Heresy with her and found a surprisingly receptive ear. A seed had been planted.

In 1187, Adolana's friendship with the Bishop paid dividends when Alfonso VIII founded a new Citeaux abbey outside Las Huelgas and left it to the Bishop to select the new abbess. Adolana became Abbess of Las Huelgas and was granted control over a dozen other nunneries in the area. A year later, at her urging, the Bishop of Siguenza convinced the head of the Citeaux Order to recognize Las Huelgas as an independent chapter, answering only to the Pope. The night after he received news of this dispensation, Brother Fernando visited Adolana.

After her Embrace, Adolana granted Brother Fernando refuge in the abbey. In turn, he taught her of the Cainite Heresy and her new nature. The reason for her acceptance of the Kiss became clearer to her sire a few months later, when she traveled to her former home and paid a visit to her brother. The last words he heard before she crushed his skull were, "Any other wishes, dear brother?"

In the years since, Adolana has tightened her control over the Abbey and its affiliated nunneries. Her ghouls now occupy the highest positions, held in her thrall with the secret communions she holds each month. The daughters of the nobility sent to her receive special attention: They become either servants or undergo Dementation-inspired religious visions. Before being returned to their families, they are instructed to keep Adolana informed of every event beneath their fathers' and husbands' roofs, thus making Adolana more knowledgeable than most nobles about the affairs of the great and mighty.

BISHOP ANTOINE

Antoine began his career in the Church in Paris, after having been sent to the city to study theology. Unfortunately, a bright young man of peasant stock was hardly prepared for the intricacies of the politics he faced in Paris; only the intervention of a certain Father David, who was attached to Notre Dame, saved Antoine from floundering hopelessly. It was Father David who oversaw Antoine's education and who taught him the necessary steps one must take to rise in the Church. Alas, Father David was also an active member of the Cainite Heresy, and he instilled the belief in his young protégé. Antoine developed a talent for politicking and languages. He showed amazing skills in both fields within just a few short years and drew the attention of Lord Huon, a Ventrue ruling St. Lys, in the south of France.

Upon completion of his studies, Antoine was summoned to work as a clerical assistant for Huon. He worked loyally, handling much of Huon's negotiations and business with mortals. His facility with languages made him an excellent translator for the Ventrue, and as the years



passed, Antoine became privy to Huon's secret life as a Cathar and Cainite. To ensure the Silence of the Blood, the young priest was made a ghoul. Antoine was careful, however, to keep his own heresy a secret from his lord from fear of potential repercussions.

When the local bishop died, Huon arranged for Antoine to take up the appointment. In his new capacity, Antoine acted to protect his lord, the other Cainites of the region and the Cathar movement in general. Alas, Antoine's work placed him squarely in the middle of a struggle between Huon and the Lasombra Kedalion. The Magister was a vocal opponent of the Cathar movement who advocated instead the spread of his own version of the Cainite Heresy.

In 1190, Kedalion acted. Using Lasombra influence, he had Antoine ordered to Rome. Reluctantly, the bishop obeyed — but he never arrived at his destination. Waylaid in Milan, Antoine was held captive by Kedalion and thrice fed the Magister's vitae. One of the Lasombra's agents impersonated the bishop in Rome to prevent the arousal of Huon's suspicions. While Huon, unsuspecting, continued to trade correspondence with the impostor (thus revealing many of his plans), Kedalion was breaking the Ventrue's hold over Antoine. Feeding him with Lasombra blood, Kedalion sustained the ghoul while the bond with his original regnant weakened. The process took years, but the Lasombra had all the time in the world.

As soon as the oath was broken, the now-willing Antoine was Embraced and blood oathed by Kedalion. His new regnant gave him his instructions: Antoine was to undermine and break the Cathar movement, while replacing it with a broader worship of the Cainite Heresy. Returned to St. Lys, the neonate has subtly started to do so. Huon, however, has become aware of the change in his once-loyal servant. Both he and Antoine have begun recruiting servants in preparation for their inevitable conflict.



Appendix II: Systems and Addenda

The Cainite Heresy itself is first and foremost a matter of roleplaying. Faith, blasphemy and damnation are fields in which game systems can seem inadequate or comical. However, for those Storytellers and players who are interested in making the effects of heresy more concrete in their chronicles, here follows a list of systems and whatnot that integrate the Heresy more fully into the rules of *Vampire: The Dark Ages*.

BACKGROUNDS

STATUS

Status within the Heresy is a curious thing. As the Cainite Heresy is rent by dissent, a vampire who is held in high regard by the heretics of southern France may find a distinctly chilly reception awaiting him in Moravia. All that aside, however, Heretical Status is a secret and formal thing, distinct from normal (or even Clan) Status because membership in the Heresy itself is a hidden thing. Storytellers should feel free to adapt Heretical Status as an additional Background Trait for characters in their chronicles and require its separate purchase at character creation. Failing that, regular and Heretical Status should be charted differently throughout a character's existence; one should never be confused for the other. The mightiest prelate in the Heresy might masquerade as a lowly neonate outside Church walls; the most potent Ventrue warlord might be nothing more than a novitiate in the mysteries of Heresy, and would be treated as such by his peers in blasphemy.

NEW ABILITY

NEW KNOWLEDGE: HERESY

The Heresy Knowledge represents how well-versed you are in the ways of the twisted faith of the Cainites. You know the ritual and verse of the Cainite Heresy, the signs by which its members identify themselves and the texts the Heretics hold sacred. You have some knowledge of the Heresy's theology and eschatology, and how it differs from mainstream Christianity. At Storyteller option, you may also be familiar with other, human heresies (such as Bogomilism, Carpocratianism, etc.) and their secrets.

Advanced levels in this Knowledge bring some familiarity with the names of notable Heretics, the organization of the Heresy and more of the secular secrets of the sect.

- Dabbler You know the icons of the saints should not have fangs
- Student You have been indoctrinated into the lesser mysteries and signs
- Learned You know the Heresy better than some priests know their faith

- Scholar You could rank among the sect's greatest theologians — or foes.
- Savant Few know Heresy's face as well as you do, from the cathedrals to the Languedoc

Possessed by: Heretics, Witch-hunters, Theologians, Eschatologists, Priests

Specialties: Signs and Countersigns, Heretical Rite and Ritual, Blasphemy, Specific Heresies

NEW MERITS AND FLAWS

Heretical Cainites have an existence far separated from that of most of their fellows. By necessity, then, they have developed unique coping mechanisms and personality quirks. The Merits and Flaws listed below are more or less specifically intended for heretical characters, or at the very least characters involved to some extent with the Cainite Heresy. Beyond those narrow bounds, many of these Traits lose much of their purpose.

DISILLUSIONED (1 PT MERIT)

You were once of the Cainite Heresy, but no longer. You have had the scales lifted from your eyes, and you see the faith for the insidious monster that it truly is. You now devote your efforts to destroying the Heresy, and you have the advantage of knowing how it (or at least the fraction of it to which you were exposed) truly works. You work as openly as you can, trying to raise allies (mostly unwitting) and expose corruption without destroying yourself in the process. Nevertheless, the Heresy has noticed your efforts, and may well make efforts to end the threat you represent very soon....

LIKENESS OF A SAINT (1 PT MERIT)

Through some quirk of fate, your visage is identical to that of one of the saints whose image is commonly enshrined in the region where you dwell. How you trade on this coincidence is up to you, but you are at -1 difficulty in all Social situations with persons who have especial veneration for the saint in question.

WELL-PLACED CONFESSOR (1-3 PT MERIT)

Either you or someone you control has obtained the position of personal confessor to a figure of some importance. It could be a local lord, an abbot or even a king (the cost of the Merit fluctuates with the relative importance of the individual). As confessor (or patron of the confessor), you have access to the content of the individual's confession, which may well include tidbits of extreme political importance, blackmail material or salable intelligence. Whether you honor the sanctity of the confessional is up to you; the information is in your hands to do with as you will.

(Note: In some cases, but not all, royal confessors also function as trusted advisors. Serving as or controlling a confessor of this sort immediately ups the cost of the Merit by a point, as the character's influence now extends further than it might otherwise. Storytellers should be very careful in defining the sort of individual attached to this Merit; handing out kings lightly is a recipe for disaster.)

LIBRARY OF HERESIES (2 PT MERIT)

You have access to one or more of the core texts of the Cainite Heresy in some form. Whether those texts are complete or not, accurate or not, or even legible or not is up to the Storyteller. What matters is that you know what you possess and you know what it is worth, both to yourself and to others.

LIVING ICON (4 PT MERIT)

You have a band of mortals convinced that you are, in fact, a saint or other divinity of some sort, perhaps even the Messiah. Your followers do not doubt your divine status for an instant, and they follow your every command within their capabilities. Their devotion is such that they gladly give up their lives for you, either as sustenance or to root out any who blaspheme against you. Your band of worshipers is, of course, limited; the population of a single village is about the most you can expect without unnecessary complication.

The only fly in the ointment of this scenario is a simple one. Should your followers ever be convinced that you are not in fact divine after all, they are sure to turn on you with all the fury they can muster. Furthermore, it may not take very much — say, the appearance of another Cainite whose powers are as impressive as your “divine” ones — to trigger such an adverse reaction.

MIRACLES OF THE FAITH (5 PT MERIT)

Somehow, in some way even you don't understand, you are able to conjure miracles. You cannot do so on command, or even very often, but when the power comes upon you, the results are impressive. Fountains turn from water to blood, bread turns to flesh and other such impossibilities occur in your presence, usually when you need them to manifest to convince unbelievers or inspire the faithful.

The source of your powers is unknown, though you most probably see it as a mark of divine favor. Whether or not that is actually the case, or if there are darker powers involved, is a question you prefer not to examine.

(Note: This is an extremely powerful Merit, with profound repercussions for both characters and players.

Storytellers should be very careful when allowing players to use this Merit and should feel free to restrict or ban it. Incidences of the Merit's manifestation should also be kept strictly under Storyteller control, and the Storyteller is under no obligation to make all of a character's “miracles” beneficial ones.)

CYNIC (1 PT FLAW)

Your faith is less than a perfect faith. While this condition, in and of itself, may not be a bad thing, someone has noticed the flaw in your reverence. It may be a superior within the Heresy, it may be your devoted followers, or it may be a rival who wants to get past you to ascend in the Church (or Heretical) hierarchy. In any case, your standing within the Heresy has been damaged by your inability to conceal your true feelings.

BLASPHEMER AMONG HERETICS (1-2 PT FLAW)

While the Cainite Heresy itself rests somewhat outside the bounds of Christian orthodoxy, your particular flavors of theological imagining are bizarre even by Heretical standards. You no longer stand within the Heresy itself but have been expelled; you have both the Heresy and the faithful as your enemies. If your blasphemy is minor and you still have friendly dealings with other heretics, this flaw is worth 1 point; otherwise, it is worth 2.

FLAGELLANT (2 PT FLAW)

Your particular flavor of devotion includes the practice of self-flagellation. You scourge yourself with whips, wear a hair shirt or otherwise inflict suffering on yourself as an act of faith. Although others may or may not react poorly to this behavior (in some circles, after all, it is a sign of great holiness), being a flagellant does mean that you run through a great deal of vitae to sustain and heal yourself after routinely receiving the sort of beating a Cainite can inflict. In addition, at any given moment you are likely to be down one or two health levels from self-inflicted wounds.

KNOWN HERETIC (2 PT FLAW)

You were known and denounced as a heretic of some sort before you ever received the Embrace, and indeed had some notoriety for your blasphemies. Whether you were a Cathar *perfecti*, preached your own version of the gospel or denounced the Papacy, you made a name for yourself as an enemy of the true Church. Witch hunters and scions of the Church are likely to recognize you, and to show you no mercy as a result. Furthermore, if your death is common knowledge, such recognition is likely to bring down an

intensive Church investigation whose results are likely to be unpleasant.

Furthermore, your notoriety is such that you may find it difficult to locate converts or friendly congregations. In regions where your particular brand of heresy is unwelcome (for example, if you were known as a Cathar perfecti and tried to find adherents along the Baltic coast), all rolls relating to Social matters are at +2 difficulty. This effect is reversed when you are on friendly ground, but odds are that there is a great deal more unfriendly territory out there waiting for you.

FANATICAL DEVOTION (3 PT FLAW)

You are of the heretical faithful, to the point where your devotion overwhelms all worldly concerns. You pray and make your devotions to the exclusion of all else, even forgetting to feed until desperate hunger drives you to do so. (Of course, by waiting till the last minute, you run the risk of feeding indiscriminately and thus committing acts sure to require repeated acts of repentance, which will drive you deeper into your prayers until you hunger again....)

To tear yourself away from your religious duties (often self-imposed) requires a Willpower check (difficulty 7). It is also flatly impossible for you to do anything that contradicts the tenets of your faith. The expenditure of a point of temporary Willpower *might* make such acts possible under extreme circumstances, though you may feel compelled to make some great act of contrition afterwards.

SCOURGED BY GOD (5 PT FLAW)

God has decided to punish you for your sins of heresy and blasphemy, and He torments you both night and day for your crimes. Dull peasants shine with the light of True Faith when you try to feed upon them, the light of the sun finds its way into your chambers by day, and a chorus of angelic voices haunts your pitiful sleep. The effects of this persecution are obvious to all; your appearance is haggard, you occasionally manifest wounds or stigmata, your face is often lit by a hellish glow and other marks of divine disfavor appear about your person.

The actual source of your punishment is unknown, but as far as you're concerned, it's God punishing you, and that's that. Who knows? You might even be correct. A few Cainites cursed with this Flaw choose to see it as a badge of honor, as Ialdabaoth's attempt to punish them for seeing the truth. Such vampires are proud of their afflictions and parade them openly.

Characters thus afflicted by the Lord of Hosts suffer several disadvantages. They are at +2 difficulty on all rolls involving Appearance, they act as a magnet for mortals with True Faith (who somehow unerringly know how to find the blasphemer), they find themselves down blood points or health levels at inopportune moments due to some sort of supernatural intervention, and True Faith punishes them twice as severely as it afflicts normal Cainites. Other, more spectacular effects are left up to the Storyteller's whim.

(Note: This Flaw, like the Miracles of the Faith Merit, should be used very carefully.)

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