

IMPERIAL DOSSIER

URTH ORTHODOX





URTH ORTHODOX

(Imperial Dossier Series)

A FADING SUNS™ SOURCEBOOK

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Pilgrims:

Almighty and everlasting Pancreator, graciously look with favor upon Thy servant, Marcus Aurelius Palamon, whom Thou hast been pleased to appoint governor over Thy Universal Church: grant, we beseech Thee, that by both word and example he may edify those over whom he has been given authority and, together with the souls committed to his care, he may one day join the Luminous Return to Thy Empyrean, after a long and faithful reign as Thy servant. O Lord of All Stars and Worlds, crush the pride of our Patriarch's enemies and humble their insolence. We ask this in the name of Thy Exalted Prophet, Zebulon, to whom Thou didst first reveal Thy Holy Flame.

THE IMPERIAL DOSSIER SERIES

These books examine in-depth the main factions of the **Fading Suns** universe. Each is presented as a primer written by a member of the faction, commissioned by Emperor Alexius' Imperial administration for the education of its members: everyone from diplomats, bureaucrats, soldiers and star-sailors, to Questing Knights and their Cohorts. Scholars of the Imperial Eye, the Emperor's information agency (i.e. spies), serve as editors and have added commentary to correct the primary author's biased perspective (and to drop telling clues about deeper conspiracies and mysteries). Some of these are classified "eyes only" — secret, "behind-the-throne" information.

Each book also includes a "factbook" about a topic closely related to the dossier's faction. These are compiled from multiple sources and edited by the Eye, to prepare Imperial functionaries for dealing with all manner of matters under the rule of the Phoenix Throne. As with the faction primer, these often include classified commentary.

Finally, there's a rules section for players and the gamemaster. These might include new Callings, perks, equipment, NPCs, and even alien creatures.

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URTH ORTHODOX: EMPYREAN LAW

Your Imperial and Royal Majesty,

I considered it both an honor and a privilege that, through your ministers, you have requested that I, a humble cohort of your illustrious Company of the Phoenix, pen a report on the history, beliefs, hierarchy, and other details of the Urth Orthodox sect of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, of which I, by the grace of the Pancreator, am blessed to serve as a priest.

In this, I have aspired to be both brief and truthful, so far as I am able. I fear, however, that, in several instances, I have written at greater length on certain subjects than Your Majesty might find helpful, let alone tolerable. If so, I offer my apologies. It is not often that I am asked, by one so august as yourself, to undertake a task such as this and my zeal for thoroughness might have sometimes got the better of me.

Nevertheless, I pray that this report will meet with your approval and serve not only to educate you and your court about the Orthodoxy and its place in the contemporary Known Worlds but also to further your own glorious endeavors as our rightful lord and sovereign.

*By the light of the Holy Flame,
Father Ninian Tennfjord*

RELIABILITY ASSESSMENT

Father Tennfjord hails from Llanfyrth on Gwynneth and has a long history with House Hawkwood. His father was also an Orthodox priest and served Duke Erasmus for many years. As such, we deem Father Tennfjord trustworthy and reliable in the main. However, he is also young, idealistic, and somewhat naive, which means that his report contains occasional errors, omissions, and, in a few cases, outright lies — not that he himself is likely aware of these. So far as the Imperial Eye is able to ascertain, Father Tennfjord is simply reporting what he genuinely believes about the Orthodoxy.

For that reason, the report that follows will contain emendations where we have deemed it necessary to correct the mistakes that Father Tennfjord has inadvertently passed on. Despite this, his report is indeed a valuable one and will prove useful to Your Majesty as you plot the future course of the Empire.

— Imperial Eye Agent Haroon Barwegen

History

The history of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun is a long one, stretching back more than two millennia, to 2723, when the Prophet Zebulon beheld the Holy Flame on the now lost world of Yathrib and first received the Pancreator's wisdom. This initiated the Age of Miracles, sometimes called the Prophetic Age, during which the Prophet and his Eight Virtuous Disciples traveled the stars, spreading the truths of this new revelation to humanity. Due to the vast gulf of time separating us from this bygone era, not to mention the social and political upheavals that have occurred in the interim, information about the early history of the Church is often

uncertain or unclear. Scholars both within and without the Church continue to scour ancient archives for details that can shed greater light on the beginning of the Age of Miracles.

The Age of Miracles

The Prophet appeared during the time historians call the Diaspora, after the fall of the First Republic and first contact with the alien shantor. In the midst of such chaos, the Prophet traveled from world to world, where his message of the Pancreator's grace was met with often wildly different reactions. On some worlds, the wealthy ridiculed it as fit only for the poor and ignorant. On other worlds, the

poor viewed it with suspicion, seeing the Prophet's teachings as the latest philosophical fad of the jaded intelligentsia or, worse, an oppressive tool of the vested elite.

Existing religious and secular authorities mocked, imprisoned, and even killed some of the Prophet's early followers. This was a time of great transition for the human race, struggling with the consequences of its first push into space. While there was much resistance in some quarters, others recognized the Prophet for what he truly was: a beacon of light offering to guide humanity through the darkness. It was against this backdrop that a young nobleman named Palamedes Alecto appeared.

PALAMEDES

Palamedes Alecto was born in 2753, three decades after the Prophet saw the Holy Flame. During his youth on Midian, he had known nothing but war; the Prophet's vision of an orderly universe appealed to him deeply. He therefore abandoned his life of privilege and joined the entourage of the Prophet. History tells us that Palamedes was particularly impressed by Lextius the Knight and Maya the Scorned Woman. Lextius was an exemplar of pious nobility, while Maya embodied the Prophet's teachings through parables about universal justice and retribution. Both disciples struck chords with him that only deepened his devotion to the new faith.

The zeal of Palamedes soon made him one of the Prophet's foremost followers. Unlike the Eight Virtuous Disciples, Palamedes retained a sense of worldliness that proved instrumental in spreading the Prophet's teachings even on worlds where they would have been unwelcome. He used his earlier experiences as a political and military leader to organize rallies and shift public opinion. Critics of the Church sometimes claim that he also controlled access to the Prophet and altered his message to serve his own purposes, but there is little evidence to support this, only hearsay.

A story is recorded in the ecclesiastical archives of Midian, describing a bold journey Palamedes undertook to spread the Prophet's words to a now forgotten world. While there, Palamedes found himself beset by a wild beast, which threatened to take his life. Mantius the Soldier, not yet a disciple of the Prophet, appeared and rescued the headstrong young disciple, after which he promptly thrashed Palamedes for his foolhardiness. The Apocrypha of the Omega Gospels obliquely reference this same incident, stating that the actions of Mantius illustrate the holy duty of the faithful to protect one another from the Dark between the stars. The story

remains a popular one among the common people, as it demonstrates that even so great a man as Palamedes Alecto needed to learn humility. Some Orthodox clergy, however, are not so fond of the story for that very reason.

THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET

Humanity first encountered the vau in 2845 and that meeting had ended disastrously. Until that point, the human race had pursued its manifest destiny among the stars without facing any serious opposition. The vau changed all that, being both technologically superior and unwilling to allow humanity to continue its expansion unchecked. These facts called into question the beliefs of many, who, perhaps for the first time, began to take seriously the words of the Prophet.

As conversions spread across space, the now-ancient Prophet reassured the faithful that this, too, was part of the Pancreator's providence. He counseled against rash action and urged the human race to walk the path of peace. Then, in 2849, the Prophet himself undertook a mission to the vau, hoping to bring an end to the fears and anxieties that now gripped the Known Worlds. Unfortunately, this mission was to be the Prophet's final one, when a jumpgate accident destroyed his vessel.

THE EARLY CHURCH

The death of the Prophet only served to raise the level of fear and despair among the faithful. Into the spotlight walked Palamedes, using his impressive oratory and formidable organizational skills to rally believers, offering them consolation in the aftermath of so great a tragedy. His actions earned him not only accolades across the Known Worlds but also ardent disciples of his own, men and women willing to follow his lead in continuing the work that the Prophet had started.

Starting soon thereafter and increasingly often in 2850, Palamedes began referring to the Prophet's faith as the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, a phrase never specifically used by the Prophet himself but derived from terms he did use. Quickly, the notion of a permanent body to carry on the mission of the Prophet gained support among not only the faithful but even secular authorities looking for a means to mollify the populace in the face of the continued threat posed by the vau. This led, in 2851, to the first Holy Synod (held on Midian), which elected Palamedes its first Patriarch, thereby establishing a succession continued down to the present day to Marcus Aurelius Palamon.

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THE MYSTERY OF PALAMEDES

Some historians believe that Palamedes was a politician at heart rather than a spiritual leader, but, true or not, there's no denying he was very successful in spreading Zebulon's faith. Of course, League archives are filled with all manner of gossip and innuendo intended to discredit him, such as, for example, that his wife was an animist or pagan of some variety and that his devotion to the Church was actually an attempt to become his own man. The Church would call such claims "psychological witchery," no doubt. When dealing with events so far in the past, it is difficult to change minds.

— Master Engineer Davos Jurge, *The New Guild Encyclopedia*, Vol. V

Palamedes immediately set out to establish the Church. Under his Patriarchy, cathedrals appeared across the Known Worlds and what are now known as the Omega Gospels began to take firm shape. By 2854, the Church had a strong following on more than two dozen worlds and considerable influence on many more. The second Holy Synod that same year would transfer the Holy See from Midian to Urth, the cradle of humanity, where it has remained ever since. This move was a potent symbol of order and unity amidst the uncertainty of those days and proved remarkably effective.

The Eight Virtuous Disciples began to scatter following the Prophet's death. Lextius the Knight is said to have shut down the jumpgate to his homeland of Dogen, while Hombor the Beggar simply disappeared to parts unknown. Others, like Paulus the Traveler and Horace the Learned Man died years later without having played much role in the nascent Church. Maya the Scorned Woman, however, was martyred on Malignatius and her cult was heavily promoted by Palamedes, along with those of others who gave their lives for the faith.

Meanwhile, Amalthea the Healer initially remained aloof from the endeavors of Palamedes. She retreated to Artemis, where she organized the Temple of Eternal Sanctuary and attempted, in her own way, to spread the teachings of the Prophet. Unbelievers mistakenly claim that her goal was to vie with Palamedes, but such is far from the truth. Amalthea had no interest in such worldly matters and, over time, her followers were incorporated into the Church, where they remain today.

PALAMEDES VS. AMALTHEA

One should never forget that Palamedes once wrote that "Amalthea should heal herself of her ambition, attempting to supplant Zebulon's teachings with her own strange mixture." Similarly, Ketcharch Nathania, the second successor to Amalthea within Sanctuary Aeon, claimed that "Palamedes was ever the noble and cast the universe through the eyes of rank and hierarchy." No matter what the Orthodoxy say, there was no love lost between the two sects and that friction continues to the present day.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, *Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)*

THE UKAR WAR

Though the vau were seemingly disinterested in expansion, the same could not be said of the next alien race humanity encountered. In 2995, the ur-ukar launched a sneak attack against Criticorum from a previously unknown jumprouete. Fear once again spread across the Known Worlds, with the ukari becoming living examples of the dangers posed by the Dark. Palamedes rallied humanity behind the nobility to stand against this new alien menace. Popular sentiment soon led to xenophobia and anti-alien hatred, tendencies from which even the Orthodoxy was not immune.

These feelings contributed, no doubt, to the promulgation of the Doctrine of the Unethical Alien in 2997 by the Holy Synod. This doctrine states that some aliens are demonstrably farther from the Pancreator's grace than others, most notably the ukari. While this teaching fell into disrepute during the Second Republic era, it received renewed attention after the Fall.

Patriarch Palamedes proved instrumental in the ultimate defeat of the ukari. Somehow, he obtained information that enabled human forces to locate the ur-ukar homeland. He then encouraged the formation of a vast armada, which went through the jumpgate and devastated Kordeth. This not only brought a swift end to the Ukar War but also cemented the power of the Church forever, as victory would have been impossible without the intervention of Palamedes.

SECRET ARCHIVES?

It's been long suspected that Palamedes had access to secret archives on Holy Terra that provided him with the means to decode the jump coordinates to Kordeth from Criticorum. Unfortunately, all attempts to confirm this have proven ineffectual and our agents within the Office of the Great Chartophylax cannot even confirm the existence of such archives. If they do in fact exist, they must be very well hidden.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

THE DEATH OF PALAMEDES

Like the Prophet himself, Palamedes showed remarkable longevity, living to the ripe old age of 267 at the time of his death in 3020. During his later years, he shied away from public appearances, entrusting the day-to-day administration of the Church to his “cabinet” of close advisors. According to his memoirs, known to history as *The Reminiscences*, he had come to prefer “the quiet contemplation of the Pancreator’s simple wonders to the adoration of the teeming crowds.” Nevertheless, his funeral liturgy attracted more than two million faithful to Rio Brasilia on Holy Terra and he was immediately and universally acclaimed a saint.

The Age of Human Ascension

The conclusion of the Ukar War turned the tide against despair, thanks in no small part to the intervention of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun. The Prophet had taught the need for a questing spirit, urging humanity ever outward on an unending mission to find the Pancreator’s grace wherever it might be hidden. Thus did humanity expand once again into the stars, seeking new worlds and new species.

Despite this renewed optimism about the potential of the human race, despotism and greed grew as well, as exemplified by the noble houses and corporations. Though the Church was often a lone voice advocating for freedom and tolerance, this did not prevent the same vices from infecting it. This was a time of great saints but also of great sinners, as the Church grappled with its new-found power and influence. The two great philosophical schools within the Church, the restrictive Hinayana and expansive Mahayana, first appeared during this period, reflecting the divisions that existed elsewhere in human society.

The Church attempted to maintain a balance between those who too blithely accepted the supposed boons of technology and those who advocated for its abolition. This sensible approach was not always well regarded, especially by zealots on both sides, but it laid the groundwork for humane social institutions unparalleled in human history. Ironically, it also laid the groundwork for the creation of the Second Republic, which would eclipse the power and influence of the Church itself over the next half-millennium.

THE FIVE HOLY PATRIARCHS

Into this environment came the Five Holy Patriarchs. These men and women were the immediate successors of St. Palamedes and, as such, their words and actions charted the course the Universal Church would follow during its first centuries of existence. So successful were they that subsequent generations held them up for particular reverence, which is the origin of their popular appellation. The Five Holy Patriarchs thus became models of what the head of the Church should aspire to be and, while many have no doubt fallen short in this goal — very far in some cases, as we shall see — many more have looked to them for guidance and strength as they undertook the difficult task of leading the faithful in uncertain times.

ADRIAN I

The first successor to St. Palamedes as Patriarch, tradition states that Adrian was born on a world called Heliodoros, which, if true, is now a lost world whose exact location remains unknown. Regardless, he served as an advisor to St. Palamedes, traveling with him both before and after his elevation to the Patriarchy. Indeed, several early documents of the Church, most notably the *Epistola ad Aragonia*, mentions his name and his role. There is thus no reason to doubt his existence, as some Second Republic historians claimed.

The relative paucity of information about Adrian as a person is far exceeded by the data we have about his Patriarchy, which lasted from 3020–3037. During his reign, he continued the work of St. Palamedes in building up the presence of the Church on Holy Terra. Likewise, he commissioned the first ecclesiastical legates, in order to remain in contact with communities of the faithful throughout the Known Worlds. Adrian also led a life of ascetic discipline and devotion, which is why he is often called St. Adrian the Austere.

WIOLD I

More is known of the early life of Patriarch Wiold, who was born into a wealthy family from Mazadarun, now known as Criticorum. Wiold was a close companion of St. Palamedes, so close that he is sometimes referred to

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as “the brother of Palamedes.” He often served as the First Patriarch’s deputy, acting in his stead while St. Palamedes attended to matters away from Holy Terra. His discourse following the funeral of the saint is considered one of the greatest compositions of ecclesiastical oratory ever written and continues to be studied even today.

Wiold I reigned from 3037–3071, during which time he oversaw the construction of the first Cathedral of St. Palamedes, which stood until the reign of Jacob I more than one thousand years later. It was under Wiold that the Holy Synod first began to consider the claims of the various sacred texts circulating among the faithful, with an eye toward collecting the most edifying of them into a devotional volume. For that reason, he is known as St. Wiold the Erudite.

NALINI I

The first woman elected to serve as leader of the Church, Nalini was, during her lifetime, called Patriarch Nalini, in keeping with the customs of her era, though today she is usually called Matriarch Nalini I, especially among the Hinayana clergy. She was a native of Holy Terra who had never left the planet until her election. Indeed, she seems to have been averse to space travel, only undertaking it for the good of the Church, which may explain why her name is sometimes invoked by those who suffer from space sickness.

Nalini I reigned from 3071–3103. Under her authority, two great ecclesiastical events occurred. First, the work begun under St. Wiold toward the establishment of a canon of sacred scripture was completed. In 3073, the 350th anniversary of the date when the Prophet first beheld the Holy Flame, the Omega Gospels were given to the faithful. Then, in 3075, Nalini formed a commission with the purpose of doing something similar for the prayers and litanies of the Church, resulting in the Celestial Liturgy. For this reason, she is known as St. Nalini the Liturgist.

NAVIN I

The fourth Holy Patriarch was Navin I, a native of Sutek and, as such, intimately familiar with the threat posed by Sathraism. Prior to his initiation into the Church, Navin had, in fact, been a religious dabbler who had briefly flirted with that foul cult. His conversion occurred as a result of a mystical experience he had when he first beheld St. Esmerelda’s Cathedral atop Hoffman’s Bluff on that world. Though he never shared the content of his experience with anyone, he frequently remarked that “even now, years later, I can still see it in my mind’s eye.”

The Patriarchy of Navin I lasted from 3103–3139. During those years, Navin called together several Holy Synods to condemn heresies that beleaguered the Church. He was particularly relentless in his denunciations of Sathraism, perhaps because he, as no

other Patriarch had before him, understood its true nature. These condemnations remain in force to the present day. Navin I is known as St. Navin the Far-Sighted (or, sometimes, St. Navin the Convert).

RIYA

The Last of the Five Holy Patriarchs was Riya, who, like St. Nalini before her, opted to use the title Patriarch despite being a woman. She was born on Aylon to a family who had been members of the Universal Church since before the death of the Prophet. As such, she had an excellent religious upbringing and brought the fruits of her training to the Patriarchy.

Reigning only from 3139–3145, Riya took increasingly bold stances against the rising power of the nobility and corporations of the Known Worlds. This earned her many enemies, but, because of her personal sanctity, few dared attack her directly. However, that changed in 3145 while Riya was touring Liberty (present day Leagueheim), when an explosive device hidden within a skimmer took her life. No culprit was ever identified nor did anyone claim responsibility for Riya’s murder, but it was believed to be the work of opponents of her anti-corporate rhetoric. For this reason, she is known as St. Riya the Martyr.

The Second Republic

The establishment of the Second Republic around 3500 marked the height of humanity’s technological and social sophistication. Perhaps for that very reason, it also marked a nadir for the popularity of the Church, as decadence overtook the Known Worlds. Travel between worlds once again became not merely commonplace but routine, which fostered a flowering of new religions, philosophies, and perspectives. The Universal Church became simply one voice among many — and far from the most attractive one.

During the Second Republic, the faithful dwindled precipitously in the face of the many alternatives and materialist consumerism. Rather than being a light to humanity, the Church became a joke, the subject of parody by the media because of its anti-materialist teachings and rigorous pronouncements. The Church’s role in unifying humanity and protecting it against external threats was forgotten in the mad rush toward “progress.”

On the positive side of the ledger, easy travel enabled the Orthodoxy to become less insular and more representative of the people it served. The Mahayana faction reached out to aliens and other disenfranchised groups. They acted as an advocate in favor of those left behind by the rapid pace of social change within the Second Republic. However, the Hinayana coalesced into a reactionary philosophy that denounced the Second Republic and all that it stood for. Though an unpopular position at first, it would soon

prove to be prophetic and enable the Hinayana to assume full command of most ecclesiastical institutions.

THE GREAT CLEANSING

The reasons for the collapse of the Second Republic were no doubt many, including political and economic factors, but it was ultimately a failure of the soul, a spiritual malaise born of the materialism that it espoused. As the situation grew worse throughout the Known Worlds, the Republic's government courted the Orthodoxy in an attempt to prop up its tottering institutions. The Religious Freedom Act of 3957, for example, proclaimed the Church to be the Second Republic's official religion — a far cry from the disdain the Republic once showed the Prophet's faith.

OUTCAST NO MORE

Not mentioned here is that the Religious Freedom Act effectively outlawed all other faiths within the Second Republic. I don't doubt that many within the Orthodoxy would love to see a similar decree issued by His Imperial Majesty.

— Preceptor Zahir Donohoe

Despite the cynicism of the Republic's government, some within the Orthodoxy advocated neutrality in the face of the ongoing social turmoil, a move even supported by the Holy Synod of 3960. However, Patriarch Adrian II (3977–3999) took umbrage at the Synod's actions and created the College of Ethicals to act as a regulatory body to stem “the excesses of the Synod.” In short order, though, it became the personal policy tool of the Patriarch and his explicitly anti-Republican sensibilities.

As the 40th century drew to a close, the noble houses once more asserted themselves and turned their sights on the Republic, often with the backing of the Church. For its part, the Orthodoxy saw the continuing turmoil within the Republic as proof of the Pan-creator's wrath in the face of humanity's overweening pride. Some clergy called such talk rash, but their numbers were few and many within the Orthodoxy openly cheered the collapse of the Second Republic.

The process of collapse, known as the Divestiture, took more than a half century to sweep the Known Worlds, with some planets holding on to their Republican institutions longer than others. Some, rather than face the dawning dark age, closed their jumpgates and so disappeared from history entirely. Those that remained slowly acclimated themselves to the new era of rule by the nobility and the Church.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL INHERITANCE

Missing from this section is any mention of the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, issued in 4067, which mandated a return to an agrarian society. The doctrine was unpopular even within the Church, but Patriarch Ustir II followed it up with the Doctrine of the Cleansing Flame in 4079, which gave the noble houses an excuse to attack and loot “intransigent” worlds with the blessing of the Church. Patriarch Ustir himself personally oversaw the bombardment of several worlds from the bridge of his flagship, the Phlogiston.

Of course, the Orthodoxy would instead have us believe that the Great Cleansing was a wholly voluntary spiritual awakening rather than a calculated use of violence to achieve its goals.

— Professor Armas Eliston, University of Lyonesse (Midian)

The Dark Ages

Around this time, the stars themselves began to darken. The Orthodoxy teaches that human sinfulness is the cause of this phenomenon, which is scientifically verifiable, and that only the embrace of the Prophet's faith offers any hope of overcoming it. The noble houses were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the new social order the Orthodoxy provided. In return, the Church buttressed their claims to rulership of the Known Worlds. Along with the guilds, the tripartite foundations of political power were being laid.

DEMONIZATION OF THE PAST

This period also saw the Church use its growing influence to rewrite history to its own liking, often using tendentious interpretations of the Omega Gospels and other ecclesiastical works to paint previous eras as wholly sinful and without any redeeming qualities. The effects of these efforts can still be felt in the present age.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

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The Church's power grew; it used its influence to enact legislation to protect the moral well-being of the population. In addition to mandating attendance at weekly liturgies, the Orthodoxy worked to ensure that books, plays, and magic lantern shows produced only spiritually uplifting material. The nobility wisely recognized that these efforts provided stability in uncertain times and were therefore supportive. This stability also enjoined the nobility to treat the peasantry well and in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet, on pain of excommunication.

THE JACOBAN PATRIARCHS

The Patriarchs of the Dark Ages are many, from earnest reformers to staunch authoritarians and even decadent despots. The 300-year rule of the so-called Jacobean Patriarchs — named for Jacob I, who initiated the period — exemplifies the latter and serves as a warning that even the Church is not immune to corruption. These Patriarchs were not consistent in anything but the disrepute in which they are currently held. Like their personalities, their crimes were varied, but several deserve special comment.

JACOB I

Reigning 4355–4377, Jacob I looks positively moderate compared to those who follow in his footsteps. His primary sins were usury and luxury, which, while far from the worst transgressions against the Pancreator, set the tone for his successors. So enchanted was he with money and the beautiful things it could buy that he became a renowned patron of the arts. Some of the Church's most splendid cathedrals were also built during his reign, such as the second and current Cathedral of St. Palamedes.

Jacob was nevertheless an able politician. He proclaimed two of the Church's most influential doctrines, the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs (4357) and the Universal Creed (4360). The Privilege of Martyrs placed the clergy under a form of "extreme penance," thereby exempting them from earlier anti-technological decrees. The Universal Creed established the statement of belief that must be held by all the faithful, from the lowliest peasant to the most exalted noble.

DIABOLICAL CLEVERNESS

You have to hand it to Jacob: the Privilege of Martyrs is an ingenious doctrine. By gaining access to previously proscribed technologies, he effectively proclaimed the clergy no longer servants of the faithful but spiritually superior to them. Decrying technology for the common folk while lounging about in air-conditioned apartments and secretly using Second Republic technological playthings! The hypocrisy of it!

— Crafter Istvan Keller, *Internal Report to the Supreme Order of Engineers* (5015)

JACOB II

Reigning 4377–4402, Jacob II was both more corrupt and less effective than his predecessor. In an effort to curry favor with the nobility, he toyed with weakening the few remaining laws protecting serfs. A hunger strike by Sister Ananda of Sanctuary Aeon convinced him to change his mind, thereby saving the Church from a grave mistake. Had Jacob's bull been promulgated, the nobility would have gained a disproportionate amount of power at the expense of the Church. For her courageous efforts, Ananda was later recognized as a saint, while Jacob II died soon thereafter from, it is sometimes joked, acute embarrassment.

ADRIAN IX

Reigning 4402–4425, Adrian IX was a brief interruption of sanctity amidst the corruption of the Jacobean Patriarchs. His most famous act was to welcome House Li Halan into the Church in 4416, following the miraculous conversion of Cardano, the Shield of the Prophet, to the faith.

VALDOS

Reigning 4521–4524, Valdós is usually given the sobriquet "the Mad" on account of his erratic and sacrilegious behavior. He is said to have hosted gambling events in the Patriarchal Palace, put the Decados ambassador to death for sneezing in his presence, and asked for advice from the portraits of his

predecessors, among other things. His inattention to spiritual matters was so great that, under his reign, numerous heresies went unchecked and illicit variants of the Omega Gospels gained footholds on many worlds. So despised was he that, upon news of his demise, the people of Holy Terra ran through the streets defacing any images of him they found.

NADRIM

Reigning 4524–4598, Alphonse Nadrim is sometimes considered one of the weakest Jacobbeans, but the truth is that his perceived weakness was in fact a penchant for stability. Since this period of the 46th century was one of tumult, Nadrim's uninspiring, yet comforting presence may have been exactly what the Church needed. Born on Leagueheim, he behaved more like a Reeves accountant than a spiritual leader; he saw the universe as a vast balance sheet and he knew how to make the sums work to the Church's favor.



THE PRICE OF POWER

Nadrim was a puppet of noble and guild interests who financed his lavish lifestyle, including a taste for ur-obun women. He also extended the Privilege of Martyrs to the nobility in 4545 and to the Merchant League fifteen years later — and he undoubtedly made them pay through the nose for it.

— Imperial Eye Agent Pebble

Nadrim is also known for his role in convincing Vladimir Alecto in 4540 to grant the Church voting scepters, thereby ensuring its role in the coronation of any future emperor. Nevertheless, his reign is remembered as regrettable, given his many personal vices, including his use of forbidden technologies, such as the longevity serums by which he kept himself alive well beyond his allotted years. His death was met with relief at first, but it soon became clear that the finely wrought web of treaties and alliance he had wrought would not last beyond his reign.

CASSIA II

Of all the Jacobean Patriarchs, none is more reviled than Cassia II. Reigning 4655–4665, she is sometimes called the Silver Matriarch and the Last of the Jacobbeans. The early days of her rule were marked by a dispute over the soul's reflectivity, which led to a personal row between her and the reform-minded Archbishop of Byzantium Secundus, Hieronymus Questor. Cassia argued in favor of a restrictive understanding of reflectivity when it came to the souls of both peasants and aliens, while Questor opted for a more expansive one, but, in reality, her position was purely political. She hoped to draw Questor's ire and thereby weaken his reputation as a patient, charitable hierophant.

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As the dispute heated up, Cassia branded Questor a heretic, excommunicated him, and declared him deposed from his see. Questor, in turn, declared himself Patriarch and called upon the faithful to “turn the witch from her cathedral.” As the two exchanged anathemas, the Patriarchal Fleet split into factions and engaged in scattered battles against each other. Stories began to circulate that Cassia practiced Antinomy and engaged in blood orgies in the cathedrals of Holy Terra.

THE FALL OF CASSIA

The stories of Cassia’s corruption are many, but corroboration is limited. A popular folktale from a later date is that she convened a Holy Synod on the moon Titan in the Holy Terra system, where she called down the wrath of the Pancreator against Questor. She began a ritual, in a strange and possibly alien tongue, which produced a great flash of light that temporarily blinded the eyes of the assembled Synod. When the clerics’ vision returned, they found Cassia dead, her body frozen solid and a look of horror in her eyes. Contemporary accounts suggest instead that she was poisoned by her syneculla, who considered her a corrupt and violent demagogue.

— Professor Guimar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

Upon her death, an ecclesiastical council took place that included clergy from sects beside the Orthodoxy. This council recognized Questor as the rightful Patriarch and, while its actions were irregular, given the circumstances surrounding Cassia’s reign, the Orthodoxy had no choice but to accept them. From that day forward, sects other than the Orthodoxy gained greater influence within the institutions of the Church.

RECOVERY AND REFORM

Questor’s election to the Patriarchy marked the beginning of a period of vibrant reform within the Church. Though he reigned only for 11 years (4665–4676), Questor established the ascendancy of the Mahayana school of the Orthodoxy, which lasted, with occasional interruptions, until 4908. During this period, the Holy Synod once again took precedence over the College of Ethicals. Likewise, sects like Sanctuary

Aeon gained new respectability, with its members often achieving high rank within the hierarchy. The Church slowly began to loosen some of its most rigid rules, especially with regard to technology, though it would take centuries to reach its full flower.

HALVOR LI HALAN — THEOCRACY

The reformers suffered a temporary but significant setback in 4690, with the election of Patriarch Halvor Li Halan, who reigned for less than a year. Supported by both his own house and the Hinayana school of the Orthodoxy, Halvor declared himself both Patriarch and Imperial Regent by issuing the Decree of Theocratic Succession. A popular revolt against him soon sprung up and he died after only eleven months in office, stricken by an unknown disease, though some say it was the Pancreator’s wrath.

Regardless, Halvor’s brief reign ended up strengthening the hand of the reform movement, as there was never again taste for another Patriarch-Regent. The Holy Synod of 4691 revoked the Decree of Theocratic Succession and the Mahayana once again took control of the Orthodoxy.

ALTAR AND THRONE

Our agents on Holy Terra reported that Patriarch Hezekiah took a keen interest in the Decree of Theocratic Succession and had consulted with learned canon lawyers about the circumstances under which it might be licitly revived, perhaps in a modified form. The canonists counseled against such a move and the matter was apparently dropped, though it’s possible that some factions within the Orthodoxy might try to broach the subject with Patriarch Palamon.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

HADARA

Reigning 4868–4877, Natih Hadara was born in poverty in a fishing village on Madoc. She was said to have demonstrated miraculous healing powers as a child, powers that she demonstrated to Archbishop Dralsey of Holy Terra, who suffered from a disease incurable even to the Amaltheans. Dralsey left Madoc healed, taking Hadara with him to become a novitiate on Urth. Under his influence, she became a priest of the Orthodoxy, though Amalthean beliefs had a profound influence over her.

Her accession to the Matriarchate one day seemed almost inevitable and so it proved to be, when the Mahayana-controlled Holy Synod elected her almost unanimously. Nevertheless, Hadara had many enemies among the Hinayana and Houses Li Halan and Decados, though few dared to express their dissatisfaction with her election openly. Her uncanny ability to detect when someone was lying only increased their dislike.

Critics of Hadara claim that she was a mere figurehead for reckless Mahayana reforms, which leveraged her personal popularity to promote teachings contrary to the deposit of faith. True or not, it is certainly the case that Matriarch Hadara showed little interest in governance, entrusting such matters to her syneculla and other trusted advisors. Instead, she traveled the Known Worlds, healing the sick and bringing hope to the dark corners of space. She died while touring Ur ruins on Bannockburn and was immediately recognized as a saint.

ASSASSINATING A SAINT

The circumstances behind Hadara's death are suspicious. A partial copy of a report filed by her syneculla, Farhan Stasiuk, in 4878 suggests that she was infected with a pathogenic retrovirus manufactured on Leagueheim at the behest of Count Domitian Decados. Stasiuk's report is, unfortunately, incomplete and lacks the portions containing evidence of his accusation. Even if true, Domitian's plan backfired spectacularly, as Saint Hadara's memory is revered across the Known Worlds and he is, at best, a historical footnote.

— Deacon Korbinian Henson

The Present

Recent years have proven the most tumultuous ones for the Known Worlds since the 46th century. In rapid succession, humanity has faced the reappearance of the symbiots, the Emperor Wars, and border skirmishes with the Vuldrok and the Kurgans. Prior to the accession of Alexius, a dark feeling of pessimism and the impending eschaton had pervaded human space.

The Orthodoxy recognizes that the Emperor has provided not only much-needed stability but also hope for the peoples of the Known Worlds. For this reason — though not without reservations — it has

supported him in his efforts. In return, His Imperial Majesty has reaffirmed the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun as the empire's one true faith.

Patriarch Hezekiah the Elder died in his sleep in 5018, shortly after learning of the birth of Princess Aurora. The Holy Synod was convened to elect his successor, with Archbishop Jordano of the Aragon Metropilae and Archbishop Marcion of the Kish Metropilae being early favorites. However, early rounds of voting failed to achieve the necessary majority, which led to much negotiation between the supporters of various candidates. After a series of compromises between factions, Marcus Aurelius Palamon of Byzantium Secundus was elected. Patriarch Palamon's reign was inaugurated shortly thereafter, ushering in the present era of the Universal Church.

PROSPECTS FOR A TRUE ALLIANCE

We must not forget that the Orthodoxy initially supported the bid of Flavius Li Halan to become emperor, only changing its position once it became clear that they had backed the losing side. Even after throwing in with Alexius, more than one highly placed cleric has fretted about the "cult of personality" surrounding the Emperor, as well as expressing disapproval for the Questing Knights and their mission. They fear that he will stir up ancient Anunnaki and demonic forces, not to mention undoing all that the Church has wrought since the Great Cleansing.

On the other hand, the new Patriarch seems to be genuinely open to a true alliance with the throne, in part because he faces dissension within the Orthodoxy itself. He was only narrowly elected, thanks to the support of a handful of Mahayana clergy who decided to take a chance on him, despite his own Hinayana commitments. This, in turn, makes him suspect to some of the most zealous Mahayana adherents, not to mention sects like the Avestites. Palamon has to walk a fine line to maintain his control over the Church and this might make him more genuinely amenable to the Emperor's goals than was his predecessor.

— Imperial Eye Agent Otmar Aldershof

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Theology

The foundation on which the theology of the Universal Church rests is the Omega Gospels. Though sometimes colloquially called a book, the Omega Gospels are, in fact, a collection of different books, all of them sacred texts associated with the life and ministry of the Prophet. Though many of these texts record his words, none of them were written by him. That task instead fell to his disciples and followers in the years following his death.

There were so many different — and often contradictory — writings about the Prophet and his teachings that it was initially difficult to determine which ones were reliable spiritual guides and which ones were not. This confusion was made worse by the fact that some of the Prophet's disciples, such as St. Amalthea, left writings of their own that could be read as making claims that were at odds with what was being taught by the Patriarchs and the Holy Synod.

The matter was ultimately resolved in 3073, when, after years of research and consultations with the learned, Matriarch Nalini I made the Omega Gospels available to the faithful for the first time. This marked a momentous occasion in the history of the Universal Church, one that had a profound impact on the subsequent development of Prophet's faith.

The Omega Gospels

The authorized, complete edition of the Omega Gospels consists of forty-seven books, divided into three distinct sections entitled (in order) the Sutra of the Disciples, the Sutra of Instructions, and the Sutra of Orisons. The version released by the Church, which is used in the Celestial Liturgy and in official documents, such as bulls, is written in Latin. However, translations into a variety of languages, from Urthish to Voroxian, are readily available. Following the example of the Prophet, the Church has always believed it vital that the Pancreator's wisdom be made intelligible to all his children, regardless of the tongue they speak.

Similarly, the Omega Gospels themselves are available in a variety of formats. The most beautiful (and expensive) are hand-written and illustrated tomes, which can take months to produce. At higher tech levels, printed copies are more common (and inexpensive). Electronic versions also exist, though their use is not sanctioned during the Celestial Liturgy or other Orthodox rituals.

ESTABLISHING A CANON

Nalini proved very canny in acting as she did. By producing a "definitive" collection of sacred scriptures, all of which had been carefully vetted by her commission of theological experts, she ensured that the Orthodoxy could more easily define what was and was not within the bounds of legitimate discussion. Furthermore, Nalini excluded a whole host of influential texts from inclusion in the Omega Gospels, some of them purportedly written by Zebulon's own disciples, like the so-called Apocrypha of Horace and the pre-reflective writings of Amalthea. In so doing, she rather neatly nipped the development of rivals to the Orthodoxy in the bud.

Of course, this didn't stop the creation of new sacred scriptures or the circulation of old ones, but it did drive both underground. On the surface at least, Nalini's actions brought unity to the Church and ensured that, if Your Majesty will forgive the expression, everyone was on the same page when it came to the scriptures. Beneath the surface, though, there remained a vibrant culture of religious expression that would bear fruit only after the rise of the Second Republic.

— Imperial Eye Agent Maqsood Schreier



FALSE GOSPELS

While the edition of the Omega Gospels produced during the reign of Nalini is the most well-known and widely circulated version of the Church's holy scriptures, it is not the only one. Down through the centuries, "corrected" editions have appeared throughout the Known Worlds. These editions subtly (or, in a few cases, blatantly) altered the standard text to promote theological or political agendas. Perhaps the most notorious example of this is the so-called "Istakhr edition" released during the reign of Patriarch Valdus, which inserted words and verses to advance republicanism.

No such amended versions of the Omega Gospels ever gained patriarchal sanction, but many were popular on certain worlds — so popular, in fact, that their textual variants have entered into common usage. It is not uncommon, even today, for the faithful of al-Malik worlds to misquote verses in the Sutra of Instructions, for example, because of the aforementioned "Istakhr edition." Similar errors can be seen elsewhere in the Known Worlds.

— Imperial Eye Agent Radha Bartosz

THE SUTRA OF THE DISCIPLES

The Sutra of the Disciples consists of seven books, one for each of the Virtuous Disciples except for Ven Lohji. These books vary in length, with the Book of Hombor being the shortest (consisting, as it does, primarily of anecdotes and aphorisms) and the Book of Horace being the longest (with its abstruse discourses on reflectivity, the Holy Flame, and the Eskaton). Only the Book of Horace was actually penned by the disciple for whom it is named; the others are all the work of later, usually anonymous, writers who knew or observed the disciples while they were alive. The Sutra of the Disciples is the most well-known and popular section of the Omega Gospels. Consequently, it is often excerpted and published as a distinct volume for the benefit of travelers and pilgrims, who find its stories of the Prophet's disciples inspiring.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF ST. VEN LOHJI

The absence of a Book of Ven Lohji is interesting. Like the Prophet, Ven Lohji never wrote a single, authoritative text of her beliefs. Instead, her followers on Velisimil collected together epistles, sermons, and reflections into a volume that they called the Omillvenlohjoille, or The Gleanings of Ven Lohji in Urthish. The obun have consistently claimed that the Gleanings are not meant as a replacement of the Omega Gospels so much as a lens through which the obun might read and interpret them.

Even so, one might expect that a Book of Ven Lohji, consisting perhaps of portions of the Gleanings, might have been included when the Omega Gospels were presented for the first time. After all, Ven Lohji had translated into Obunish many of the scriptures that would eventually be chosen for inclusion.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

THE SUTRA OF INSTRUCTIONS

The Sutra of Instructions is the longest section of the Omega Gospels, consisting of twenty-nine books. As its name suggests, this sutra is devoted to the Prophet's teachings on a variety of subjects. The range of subjects covered is vast, therefore making this sutra a constant source of enlightenment for the Church, which continues to scour its pages for spiritual insight. However, its texts are frequently unclear, or at least prone to misunderstanding by the unlearned. The Book of Galaxia, for example, is often misconstrued by proponents of unrestrained technological advancement. Likewise, the Book of Revelings is filled with esoteric metaphors and imagery whose true meanings are best discerned by the wise. For this reason, the Orthodoxy usually discourages reading this sutra of the Omega Gospels without supervision.

THE SUTRA OF ORISONS

The Sutra of Orisons consists of eleven books and, in terms of length, it is the shortest section of the Omega Gospels. Its books are devoted primarily to prayer, reflection, meditation, and parables intended

to convey the Pancreator's wisdom in a way that even the unlettered can understand. For this reason, much like the Sutra of the Disciples, Orisons is sometimes excerpted into a volume of its own for use as a personal prayer book by the faithful. The three books of Chroniculae, which present mondo (or dialogs) involving the Prophet and a variety of colorful interlocutors, are especially beloved and form the basis for popular depictions of the Prophet.

The Three Precepts

More so than any other sect of the Church, the Orthodoxy considers itself the primary interpreter of the Prophet's teachings, as presented in the Omega Gospels and other scriptural texts. Every Restday, the faithful hear the Prophet's words during the Celestial Liturgy, from which they derive solace in the face of mortal suffering beneath the fading suns. Despite this, many theological matters remain hotly debated within the Church, which leaves room — albeit limited — for different approaches to the same spiritual truths.

Broadly speaking, the Church concerns itself with what it calls the Three Precepts, which are considered a distillation of the Prophet's teaching. These precepts are: the right ordering of the soul, the right ordering of society, and the protection of the faithful from the Dark between the stars. The Three Precepts are interrelated, meaning the none can be accomplished without also accomplishing the others.

THE RIGHT ORDERING OF THE SOUL

The Prophet taught during an age of human expansion, when the universe still beckoned and the stars had not yet begun to fade. While the universe seemed huge and even frightening, it was also a spiritual challenge. The Prophet spoke of preparing the soul to face this challenge. Nowhere is this clearer than in his call to possess a questing spirit, the intention of which is to prepare the soul for the unknown challenges ahead.

The Orthodoxy continues to acknowledge this call but points out that humanity no longer lives in the Age of Miracles. What was fitting at the beginning of the Church's history is not necessarily appropriate as the eschaton looms ever closer. Thus, the Orthodoxy argues that the individual must ready his soul for divine judgment by abiding by the teachings and decrees that the Church promulgates.

THE RIGHT ORDERING OF SOCIETY

The Orthodoxy fervently believes that we live in dangerous times. Those who spurn the Prophet's teachings may damn not only their own souls but those of others. Thus, it is vital for salvation that people turn to the Church for the proper guidance needed to achieve their divinely ordained end. Without it, there can be only spiritual chaos and desolation.

PAY, PRAY, OBEY

This is a convenient perspective for the Orthodoxy, as it sets them up as the sole interpreter of the Prophet's words, leaving the ordinary faithful little scope to do anything without the direct guidance of the hierarchy.

— Professor Eliska Beckert

The Orthodoxy emphasizes that the path of salvation is a narrow one, with spiritual and physical dangers at every turn. Dark presences, aliens, and even tainted humans can lead the faithful astray, deceiving them not only with base temptations but also false theologies. Only the Church, led by the Orthodoxy, can lead the faithful successfully down the narrow path of salvation.

PROTECTION OF THE FAITHFUL FROM THE DARK BETWEEN THE STARS

The stars are visibly fading. This is not a metaphor or figure of speech, but a reality. As the darkness grows and spreads across the Known Worlds, alien presences, genetic monstrosities, and the walking dead have started to appear. These are facts that cannot be denied, even on planets whose inhabitants pride themselves on their so-called sophistication and urbanity.

To most people, however, the Church is the only light that holds the growing darkness at bay. The Church openly preaches against the dangers the Dark holds and actively works, often behind the scenes, to ensure that the faithful are protected. Prayer is a powerful weapon against evil, but it is not always enough, which is why the Church employs all its worldly resources to serve as a bulwark against the lightless tidal wave that threatens to come crashing down on the huddled masses of the human race.

Schools of Thought

To outsiders, the Orthodoxy may seem monolithic in its beliefs, but the truth is that, like all institutions filled with human beings, it encompasses different perspective or schools of thought. Since the foundation of the Church, there have been two main schools, usually named for ancient Urthish theological perspectives. The differences between these two schools, called the Mahayana and the Hinayana, are many, having grown over the millennia. Ultimately, though, their disagreements have their roots in the interpretation of the Doctrine of the Unethical Alien promulgated in 2957. In particular, the Mahayana and Hinayana clash over whether it is possible for aliens, with faith and the Pancreator's grace, to become fully reflective, with the Mahayana answering in the affirmative and the Hinayana in the negative. There are, of course, many other points of contention, some of which are now described.

MAHAYANA

Mahayana means "greater vehicle" in an old Urthish tongue and was chosen by the Orthodox school that favored inclusivity and egalitarianism as hallmarks of their interpretation of the Prophet's faith. Adherents of this school believe that the Pancreator's divine light exists in all sentient beings. Therefore, the Church must be a vehicle large enough for all believers, including non-human aliens, who are also the Pancreator's children. The Mahayana school has fallen from favor since the election of Patriarch Chanda III in 4908, though it has gained influence since the conclusion of the Emperor Wars. This school generally holds sway in urban areas and on worlds with high populations, such as Criticorum, Istakhr, Leagueheim, and Byzantium Secundus.

A PROMINENT MAHAYANA

One of the highest profile Mahayana clerics is Bishop Nyana vo Dret, the Great Chartophylax of Holy Terra, whose appointment by Patriarch Hezekiah was controversial to say the least. Patriarch Palamon has given no indication that he wishes to replace her, which is a source of worry to some Hinayana. They see it as evidence that Palamon is beholden to the Mahayana for his election and may make even greater concessions to them in the years to come.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

HINAYANA

Hinayana is also an ancient Urthish term meaning "lesser vehicle." Unlike Mahayana, it is a pejorative term and not self-chosen, though many of its adherents have since reinterpreted it to mean "vehicle of the few." Others prefer to use other terms, such as Nikaya, Asharite, Palamedean, and Prophetic. Regardless, the Hinayana school takes a more exclusive interpretation of the Prophet's words, believing that only humans possess soul mirrors capable of fully reflecting the Holy Flame. Aliens, they argue, have warped and smudged soul mirrors that reflect the Pancreator's light in obscene ways. They further believe that few aliens, if any, will ever receive any measure of divine grace. The Hinayana have been in the ascendancy since early in the 50th century, but there are signs that their hold over the levers of power within the Orthodoxy is slipping.

PATRIARCHAL ASSESSMENT

Once again, it is instructive to look to Patriarch Palamon. A staunch Hinayana throughout his ecclesiastical career — and a frequent critic of the policies of Emperor Alexius while he was archbishop of Byzantium Secundus — he has, since his election, discreetly moved away from some of the more extreme positions of this school of thought. He is still a conservative, even reactionary, clergyman, but, compared to many of his fellow Hinayana, he is thoughtful and restrained. The Emperor may find him an unexpectedly useful ally in the future.

— Imperial Eye Agent Storm

Appearance and Vestments

From the humblest priest in a rural parish to the Patriarch of Holy Terra himself, the Orthodoxy places great stock in ceremony and tradition. It is the outward and visible manifestation of the divinely ordained hierarchy of the Universal Church. Prior to the reign of the Patriarch Jacob I in the 44th century, ecclesiastical vestments varied, often considerably, from world to world (and sometimes even on a world). Some degree of variability still exists, but, thanks to Jacob I's efforts, a priest on Ravenna will dress similarly to his colleagues on Aylon or Rampart.

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In general, the higher a priest's rank within the hierarchy, the more ornate their attire becomes. Within the Orthodoxy, priests wear robes made of local or imported materials. These may consist of anything from humble Aragon cotton to Ravenna silk, warm drom-wool on Malignatius to the latest synthetics on Leagueheim. Despite the differences in manufacture, their overall appearance remains consistent throughout the Known Worlds. Likewise, all Orthodox clergy wear jumpgate crosses, though, like their vestments, they can be constructed from a wide range of materials.

Clerical headgear exists as well, though its use is less common on worlds other than Holy Terra and Byzantium Secundus, or outside the courts of the noble houses. Skullcaps of various sorts form the bulk of such headgear, the design of which often reflects historical or cultural antecedents. On Decados worlds, for example, the skullcap tends to have a flat top, while on al-Malik worlds it is rounder. Perhaps the most well-known religious headgear is the miter, which is a peaked, folding hat whose use is restricted to clergy of the rank of bishop or higher, as it is a symbol of authority within the Church.

THE PATRIARCHAL TIARA

We must not forget the Patriarchal Tiara, which was first adopted during the short reign of Patriarch Darion (3956–3958), which coincided with the passage of the Religious Freedom Act by the Congress of the Second Republic. Patriarch Darion took the Act as a “sign from the Pancreator that the Church was now the highest authority in the universe” and, therefore, its head, namely himself, was its highest ruler. What could be more fitting for such a ruler than a crown?

Darion's successors continued to wear the tiara he had fashioned or other more ornate ones that they had made during their reigns. As one might expect, the Jacobean Patriarchs created numerous tiaras and wore them with great relish. Following the deposition of Matriarch Cassia II, the tiara fell out of fashion, as it was associated with the temporal corruption of the Church. Since then, only Patriarch Halvor has dared to place the tiara upon his head, though I am sure there are some within the Orthodoxy who would love to see Palamon or some future Patriarch resume the practice.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

THE WHITE PRIESTHOOD

Deacons and novitiates of the White Priesthood (about which I will discuss more below) wear simple, conservative, black robes. Priests, on the other hand, wear charcoal-grey vestments with silver filigree. White bishops and archbishops wear completely white robes. During liturgies and other ecclesiastical functions, they wear miters and carry crosiers.

THE RED PRIESTHOOD

Deacons and novitiates of the Red Priesthood (which I will also discuss below) wear robes of a similar scarlet color to that of the Temple Avesti, though their cut is less voluminous and they lack hoods. Priests wear darker crimson vestments with gold filigree. Red bishops and archbishops wear dark burgundy robes. Like their white counterparts, they wear miters and carry crosiers during liturgies and other ecclesiastical functions.

Rituals and Practices

The Universal Church is more than a collection of writings and doctrines; it is the whole body of the faithful united in the love, service, and, above all, worship of the Pancreator. This threefold duty, which mirror the Three Precepts of the Orthodoxy, manifests in numerous rituals and practices across the Known Worlds. What follows is a primer of the most universal and widespread of these, with an eye toward aiding a fuller understanding of what the lives of the faithful are like and why.

THE CELESTIAL LITURGY

The summit of the Universal Church's religious rituals is the Celestial Liturgy, the rite by which the faithful, united with the officiating priest, offer praise and thanksgiving to the Pancreator each Restday. Attendance at the Liturgy is a duty of all followers of the Prophet. Failure to participate in the Liturgy is considered an example of oathbreaking and, therefore, a major sin that demands absolution. On some worlds, such as Holy Terra or Bannockburn, failure to attend the Celestial Liturgy is also a crime that carries with it a fine or punishment (usually manual labor in the service of the Church).

The Liturgy itself consists largely of prayers offered by the presiding priest on behalf of the faithful. These prayers are generally in Latin, though the Church has made allowances for translations into Urthish in circumstances where the priests lack sufficient training to deliver the prayers adequately in Latin. In offering these prayers, the priest is sometimes assisted by a deacon or a novitiate.

Readings from the Omega Gospels form another portion of the Celestial Liturgy. There is a cycle of readings, established by the Holy Synod, that determines which portions of the Omega Gospels are read on which day or festival. For example, readings from Paulus are used on First Jump, while those from Hombor are read during Cosmos Carnival. The officiating priest has no authority to vary the readings. He may, however, choose to preach on almost any topic he finds spiritually edifying to the congregation, though most often the priest will focus on explicating an aspect of the day's readings from the Omega Gospels.

Outside of monastic communities or in the great cathedrals, it is rare for the Celestial Liturgy to be offered outside of Restday. Over the centuries, there have been proposals before the Holy Synod to introduce more regular, even daily, Celestial Liturgies, but

they have never achieved widespread support. It has been reported that Patriarch Palamon favors such a change. However, he is unlikely to advance such a change without the backing of other senior clergy.

Also notable are Votive Liturgies. These are examples of the Celestial Liturgy offered for a special intention. The Nomocanon provides formulas for many such liturgies, such as the Liturgy for the Election of a Patriarch (offered at the start of a Holy Synod called to choose a new leader for the Church), the Liturgy for the Propagation of the Faith (offered for the acceptance of the Prophet's teaching on pagan worlds), the Liturgy in Time of War, as well as more mundane ones, such as the Liturgy for the Deliverance from Death in a Time of Pestilence and the Liturgy for Pilgrims and Travelers. There are dozens of such liturgies; priests are encouraged to make use of them whenever special graces from the Pancreator are needed.



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PRAYING FOR THE EMPEROR

For most of its existence, the Orthodoxy never needed to provide a Votive Liturgy for the Emperor. Vladimir Alecto reigned too briefly and Halvor Li Halan never claimed the formal title of emperor. When Your Majesty assumed the throne in 4993, the Orthodoxy adopted a wait-and-see attitude. This attitude has persisted for the past quarter century and only now shows any signs of abating.

Word has come recently that Patriarch Palamon has pressed the College of Ethicals to accept a liturgy for the emperor, which includes the following prayer:

“We beseech Thee, O almighty Pancreator, that Thy servant, Alexius, our Emperor, who by Thy grace, has undertaken the governance of this realm, may advance in all the virtues; that being meetly adorned therewith, he may be able to avoid the enormity of sins and to come to Thee, who art the true light that leads us through the Darkness.”

Our agents on Holy Terra suggest that the College continues to haggle over the precise wording of this prayer, with some of its members suggesting it is too “aggrandizing” of Your Majesty. In any case, Patriarch Palamon is said to be insistent that the Church needs a Votive Liturgy for the Emperor, particularly in light of the birth of Princess Aurora, which he sees as evidence that the monarchy is not going away. We have every reason to believe he will get one.

— Imperial Eye Agent Themba Mertens

The Sacred Mysteries

The Prophet taught that the purpose of life is to order one's soul rightly so that it might reflect back the light of the Holy Flame in all directions, both to other creatures and to its source, the Pancreator. We strive to participate in this Luminous Return, for it is through this that our souls may reflect more brightly and thereby brighten the intensity of successive grace.

This is a difficult path for most, but, fortunately, the Prophet did not leave us without the means by which to ease the difficulty, if only somewhat. The

Omega Gospels tell us that Zebulon, during his ministry among the stars, taught his followers eight sacred mysteries, one for each of the virtues. Sometimes also called sacraments, these mysteries are the means by which the Prophet's followers might call upon the Pancreator to infuse them with His grace. The Church teaches that practice of these mysteries is reserved to those who have been ordained to the rank of priest or higher, as they are the Pancreator's chosen messengers and instruments.

It is very important to note that the sacred mysteries are distinct from theurgic rites, even though there are sometimes commonalities between them. Any clergy of the appropriate rank is empowered by the Church to administer the sacred mysteries, while only specially trained theurges can employ those rites. Likewise, the effects of sacred mysteries are purely in the realm of grace, which is to say, the spirit and, as such, are not always immediately obvious. Yet, the Church is adamant that they are efficacious, since the Prophet himself offered them to the faithful during his ministry. To suggest otherwise is heresy.

Furthermore, the spiritual efficacy of the sacred mysteries depends not on the virtues of the priest administering it but on the Pancreator Himself, whose grace can never be thwarted. This was established during the Patriarchy of Adrian IX, who, as part of his attempted reforms of the Church, recognized that, in the face of a corrupt hierarchy, the faithful needed reassurance that at least the sacred mysteries could be relied upon. Thus, he issued the bull *Ductores Firmi* in 4410 to achieve that end.

EMBROCATION

Also called anointing or unction, the sacred mystery of embrocation is an invocation to the Pancreator to heal someone suffering from a physical, mental, or spiritual ailment. The sacred mystery involves not only prayers but washing the recipient's body with *tulay*-oil from Midian. Embrocation is connected to the virtue of Compassion. Its conferral often precedes the application of Amalthean theurgic rites or more conventional medicines.

ILLUMINATION

Illumination is the sacred mystery in which the Pancreator enlightens the mind of the recipient with grace and insight, thereby empowering them to undertake a great task. This sacred mystery is usually conferred on young adults, shortly before they enter their apprenticeships. It is also conferred on scholars, theologians, and other thinkers. Illumination is connected to the virtue of Wisdom.



INITIATION

Sometimes referred to by a number of other names, the sacred mystery of initiation is the means by which a one formally becomes a member of the Universal Church. Precisely when this mystery is conferred varies from world to world and culture to culture, but, since the 40th century at least, it has been commonplace, at least within the Orthodoxy, to administer it within a few weeks of the birth of a child. Initiation is connected to the virtue of Loyalty, for it establishes an eternal bond between the Church and the initiate, who is forever after under its care and jurisdiction.

MALEDICTION

Known also as cursing or execration, the sacred mystery of malediction is the formal pronouncement of a bane upon a heretic or someone else who has rejected the teachings of the Church. Malediction is connected to the virtue of Justice and its conferral marks an individual as an enemy of the faith. Consequently, no one may offer them aid or any assistance until such time as they have renounced their heresy and reconciled themselves to the Church through the sacred mystery of Repentance.

MATRIMONY

Also called marriage, the sacred mystery of matrimony is the joining of two individuals in love before the Pancreator, who promise to care for each other's physical and spiritual needs. This sacred mystery is connected to the virtue of Protection, in large part because the Church enjoins spouses to guard one another against the temptations of the Dark. Matrimony is distinct from a wedding, which is simply a celebration of a marriage. There is great latitude in wedding customs across the Known Worlds. So long as they do not promote anything heretical, the Church does little to regulate weddings.

One exception deserves mention. The Church does not allow, under any circumstances, marriage between the faithful and heretics or pagans. Conversion to the Prophet's faith (or repentance in the case of a heretic) is required before such a marriage would be allowed. According to Orthodox creed, marriage is impossible between members of different species. To think otherwise is to condone the sin of miscegenation, against which St. Palamedes and others have preached.

MISCEGENATION

That St. Palamedes preached against carnal relations between different species is not in question. Whether his doing so reflects merely his own personal beliefs or those of the Prophet, however, is a matter of contention among some Amaltheans and Voahvenlohjun, who firmly believe that the Pancreator blesses all loving relationships.

— Deacon Suresh Cassale, Jade University (Kish)

Ideally, a marriage lasts for the lifetime of its recipients. However, given the sinful nature of humanity, it is regrettably the case that many marriages do not. The Nomocanon lays out a number of very specific circumstances, such as adultery, under which a marriage may be dissolved and a new one entered into. The Church is strict in its judgment of these circumstances, lest the sacred mystery be made a mockery.

DISSOLVING A MARRIAGE

Special tribunals staffed by canon lawyers ultimately determine whether a marriage can be licitly dissolved. There are several levels of such tribunals, starting at the regional bishopric level, thereby making it possible to appeal an unfavorable ruling — at least in theory. In practice, though, appeals will only be heard if the applicant has status and wealth. Bribery and graft are commonplace. With the right connections or enough firebirds, any noble can get rid of their spouse and enter a new Church-sanctioned marriage without any trouble.

Mind you, Countess Vanda al-Malik thought this just last year when she was refused a dissolution of her marriage to Dame Therese Perko. The tribunal on Shaprut found no grounds for dissolution and the Metropolitan tribunal on Criticorum denied an appeal. Why this happened is anyone's guess, as Dame Therese is neither wealthy nor influential. Perhaps Archbishop Tara-leng instructed his tribunal to apply the canons rigorously and without regard for persons. Or perhaps Dame Therese had some other means of affecting the decision.

— Imperial Eye Agent Margit Ratliff



ORDINATION

Ordination is the sacred mystery by which an individual is admitted into the hierarchy of the Universal Church. For this reason, it is connected to the virtue of Discipline, for all clergy, regardless of their rank, must conform their lives to the rules of the Church, as set out in the Nomocanon and other books of ecclesiastical law. Ordination is required for each rank within the hierarchy; thus, a cleric who rises from being a novitiate to, for example, a bishop will receive this sacred mystery several times.

QUESTING

As one might expect, this sacred mystery is connected with the virtue of Questing. Its conferral enjoins the recipient to undertake a mission on behalf of the faith. Throughout much of the Church's history, questing has been equated with spreading the Church's teachings to unknown worlds, in effect missionary work. However, its origins are broader and connected with the Prophet's expectation that the faithful would seek out the Pancreator's light wherever it might be found. Since the accession of Emperor Alexius, the older interpretation of the sacred mystery is on the rise and has come to be connected to the practice of pilgrimage, a popular pious practice that involves traveling to holy places associated with the Prophet, the Eight Virtuous Disciples, or other saints.

REPENTANCE

Commonly known as confession, the sacred mystery of repentance is the means by which those who have committed sins, whether great or petty, reconcile themselves to the Pancreator and to the Church. Repentance is connected to the virtue of Humility, as it demonstrates that the sinner is willing to admit their errors and submit to the judgment of the confessor, who imposes a penance in exchange for forgiveness.

HOLY NAMES

An Orthodox custom worthy of mention is reverence for holy names, particularly that of the Prophet. The Orthodoxy teaches that names matter. In the sacred mystery of Initiation, for instance, a child is given the name by which they are to be called for the rest of their lives. In the early days of the Church, men and women frequently changed their names after receiving the word of the Prophet, as a way of demonstrating that they were, in a sense, no longer the same person that they were before hearing the wisdom of the Pancreator. This practice continues to be practiced in many monasteries and religious communities, with a novitiate adopting (or being given) a new name after finishing their apprenticeship.

For this reason, Orthodox believers hold the name of the Prophet in the utmost reverence. While it is not forbidden to speak or write the name Zebulon, it ought neither to be used lightly nor without demonstrating one's esteem. For that reason, some Orthodox simply call him the Prophet out of deference, while others, when speaking his given name, gently incline their heads or speak a complimentary phrase, such as "May his memory be eternal" or "Praised be his name." A similar custom is sometimes encountered among the truly devout when speaking of the Eight Virtuous Disciples. One might refer to St. Mantius simply as "the Soldier" or St. Maya as "the Scorned Woman" rather than pronouncing their names.

This custom is not universal, but it is common. The Nomocanon does not mandate it and there is no sin in not abiding by it. Nevertheless, it is a laudable expression of piety and to be commended.

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Within the Orthodoxy, there is a widespread recognition that fasting from food and drink for a period of time is conducive to one's spiritual well-being. For that reason, the Nomocanon demands that the faithful undergo periods of fasting throughout the year, the nature and intensity of which varies. In addition, high ranking prelates, from the Patriarch down to regional bishops, have the authority to introduce exceptional fasts for specific purposes, such as reparation for a grave sin or to entreat the Pancreator to send His graces after a disaster.

The terms "fasting" and "abstinence" are sometimes used interchangeably, even though they represent two different practices. Fasting is reducing the amount of food and drink one partakes, or even entirely eliminating it. Abstinence is restraining one's consumption of a particular type of food or drink, such alcohol or meat.

The Nomocanon provides some flexibility in the rules of fasting and abstinence, since practices vary not only within the sects of the Church but also from world to world. In general, though, there are some universal practices, such as abstinence from meat on Restday and the reduction to one meal per day during the week prior to Dies Lamentum. Priests and monks are usually held to higher standards than the lay faithful, but the Prophet himself commended fasting and abstinence for all and so the Church abides by his teaching.

Devotional Articles

Allow me a brief word about what are commonly called devotional articles. These are items which, though not formally used in sacred mysteries or other rituals, are nevertheless imbued with spiritual meaning by both the Church and the faithful. These

articles take many forms, with each sect, tradition, and world within the Church having its own. Such diversity is welcomed and lauded, for it demonstrates the multitude of ways that the light of the Pancreator manifests in the universe.

So long as a devotional article does not in any way promote or imply heretical or heterodox beliefs, the Orthodoxy has never had any difficulty with their use by the faithful. Indeed, the production of devotional articles is a significant industry in some places, especially those associated with a holy site, such as a saint's birthplace. Here are some examples of devotional articles in use today:

- **Ampule:** This is a small flask intended to hold water or oil acquired at a holy site.
- **Prayer Card:** Also called a holy card, it is a small picture (about the size of a playing card) of the Prophet, one of the Eight Virtuous Disciples, or a saint, with a prayer on the back.
- **Prayer Wheel:** This is a cylindrical wheel on a spindle, at whose core are written prayers. Spinning the wheel is believed to have the same meritorious effect as reciting the prayers orally.
- **Rosary:** Also called a prayer rope, this is a string of knots or beads used as a mnemonic device to recall a sequence of prayers or litanies. Rosaries come in many varieties and can be used in several different ways.

Rank and Promotion

Rising with the hierarchy of the Church depends on several factors: faith, dependability, popularity with the faithful, and, perhaps above all, loyalty to one's superiors. Unless a priest is a monk, they are tied (or incardinated, as we say in the Orthodoxy) to a particular cathedral or see, falling somewhere within its hierarchy of ranks. Even priests who are part of a noble's entourage are incardinated in *some* see, probably that of the noble family's homeworld.

A priest of canon rank or above possesses the faculty of ordaining or promoting a postulant up to any rank below their own, provided the postulant skips no ranks in between. Thus, all clergy must begin as novitiates and advance by steps from there. A priest must always heed the orders of clergy of higher rank than themselves within their see. The same is not true of clergy of other sees, though they must nevertheless offer due respect by virtue of their rank. Of course, the Patriarch is superior to the clergy of every see within the Known Worlds.

Advancing within the hierarchy depends greatly on becoming aware of the movers and shakers within a see. Such individuals may not necessarily be the

highest-ranking priests: the old and wizened bishop whom everyone adores may in fact be too removed from the day-to-day administration of his see, while a lower ranking deacon may know every plot whispered in the pews and catacombs. Finding the right cleric to help one's career is thus of prime importance to advancing within the hierarchy.

The personalities of clergy play a large role in deciding whom they will promote. Some priests, for example, are conservative and rarely bestow greater rank, preferring to keep the same group of underlings with them throughout their own careers. Others are more lenient, bestowing promotion on the condition that the recipient undertakes a favored endeavor, such as becoming a missionary, founding a new church, or gaining a position within a noble's entourage.

Generally, a see's needs are the best determinant of a priest's chances for promotion: a region with a growing population needs more priests than one whose population is stable or declining. Likewise, priests willing to commit to establishing a new parish in a faraway territory have a greater chance of advancement than those staying within comfortable sinecures.

Of course, an option exists for priests whose advancement is hampered within the see in which they are incardinated. The most common is to petition a higher-ranking cleric, such as the bishop of another cathedral or the archbishop of another see, for a transfer to their jurisdiction. Such petitions are usually only accepted if the petitioner shows true merit or demonstrable value (including gaining political points against a rival within the hierarchy). Otherwise, the petition is unlikely to be accepted. Conversely, a cathedral or see can request the transfer of a priest of special expertise to itself. For example, a parish that lacks a healer or one suffering under an attack by the Dark might request an expert who needs to be brought in from another jurisdiction.

While the Church is more unified than the noble houses, politics nevertheless play a role in its hierarchy, especially when it comes to promotion within it. By aiding the right higher-ranking cleric, one can often advance far; by foiling another, one can be held back. Such factors are every bit as important as matters of mere faith.

Naturally, the buying and selling of ecclesiastical ranks and offices is a violation of the Nomocanon. If the offense can be proven, both the buyer and the seller are liable for strict penalties that include deposition from one's current position, reduction to the lay state (colloquially known as defrocking), and extreme penance in a monastery for a number of years. This sin was, sadly, common during the reign of the Jacobean Patriarchs, but has largely been eradicated since the time of Patriarch Questor.

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SIMONY

Father Tennfjord speaks truly here. The Orthodoxy has indeed done an admirable job of policing itself against this crime (which the Nomocanon calls simony). Nevertheless, rumors continue to circulate that this or that high-ranking cleric bought their way into power. This charge is regularly leveled at Archbishop Nadia of the Cadavus Metropilae, as well as against Bishop Proteus Daniau of St. Kaufman Cathedral on Leagueheim, but, if true, the Imperial Eye has, as yet, found no evidence to support it.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

plays a commanding role within the Church unlike that of any other member of the clergy. His virtues and vices, strengths and weaknesses are often reflected in the whole Church during his reign.

Depending on his own preferences, the Patriarch can be addressed in one of several accepted ways. Your Beatitude or Your Holiness are commonest, but Most Reverend Lord has also been used, particularly by Patriarchs wishing to emphasize the universal jurisdiction of their office. Patriarch Palamon has opted for Your Beatitude and has instructed the hierarchy to address him in that fashion.

METROPOLITAN

A metropolitan is powerful archbishop granted jurisdiction over one of five larger groupings of worlds, known as Metropilae. For reasons of history and

Ecclesiastical Rank

The Nomocanon establishes the hierarchy of ranks within the Universal Church, as well as their responsibilities, privileges, the protocols surrounding them, and more. Most of these details are unimportant to the ordinary believer, but they are vital to the smooth operation of the Church's mission throughout the Known Worlds. A brief overview of ecclesiastical ranks is therefore essential to anyone hoping to understand the inner workings of the Church.

PATRIARCH

At the top of the Church's hierarchy stands the Patriarch, currently Marcus Aurelius Palamon, previously the archbishop of Byzantium Secundus. He is considered the Voice of the Prophet and, as such, is the unquestioned head of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun. This role does not mean he is infallible — though that is popular, unwritten belief favored by some within the Orthodoxy — let alone impeccable. However, the Patriarch (or Matriarch)



METROPILAE

The five Metropilae and the worlds either under their jurisdiction or claimed by them are as follows:

- **The Aragon Metropilae:** Aragon, Hira, Sutek, Vera Cruz
- **The Cadavus Metropilae:** Cadavus, Cadiz, Malignatius, Pandemonium, Severus, Vrilya (claimed)
- **The Criticorum Metropilae:** Aylon, Criticorum, Istakhr, Kordeth, Shaprut
- **The Delphian Metropilae:** Delphi, Gwynneth, Hargard (claimed), Leminkainen, Ravenna, Tethys
- **The Kish Metropilae:** Apshai, Grail, Icon, Kish, Midian, Rampart, Ungavorox

Some worlds are claimed by the Patriarchy directly, while some are deemed “autocephalous,” which is to say, self-governing. These worlds are generally associated with the non-Urth Orthodox sects of the Church, such as Artemis, DeMoley, Pentateuch, and Pyre, as well as Byzantium Secundus. The Patriarchy long ago realized that placing the Empire’s capital under the jurisdiction of any of the five Metropilae would be ceding a huge amount of power and influence to it. For the good of the Church, it was deemed autocephalous in 4550 and has remained such ever since.

That said, there remain jurisdictional disputes. Leaving aside the symbiot worlds of Absolution, Chernobog, and Daishan, and the world of Vau, all of which are restricted and claimed by no Metropilae, there are others that raise thorny questions. The world of Iver is claimed by the Metropilae of both Aragon and Cadavus, while Leagueheim and Madoc are claimed by Aragon and Kish. Manitou is likewise a source of dispute between Cadavus and Kish.

Ultimately, the decision over which Metropilae has jurisdiction is a matter for the Patriarch to decide. However, past Patriarchs have proven reluctant to weigh in definitively on the matter, for fear of fomenting disharmony and possibly even schism. On the other hand, these matters do demand resolution; the continued squabbling between metropolitans is every bit as harmful to the good of the Church as would a theoretical schism after an unfavorable verdict. Patriarch Palamon is consulting with the College of Ethicals on the matter.

politics, the Metropilae currently correspond to the holdings of the five major noble houses, though, in a few cases, metropolitans claim jurisdiction over worlds not currently held by the house with which they are associated. These groupings are by no means set in stone and the Patriarch could, in theory, reorganize them according to his own wishes and the needs of the greater Church. Doing so would, of course, be fraught with danger, as the great houses of the Known Worlds rarely take kindly to anything perceived as lessening their power with regard to their rivals. There is occasionally talk of widening the number of Metropilae to include seats on Byzantium Secundus and Leagueheim, but traditionalists strongly oppose such proposed reforms.

Like most high ecclesiastical ranks within the Church, most metropolitans are members of the Orthodoxy, though this is not a canonical requirement. Metropolitans are thus often contenders for the Patriarchy when the old Patriarch dies. Metropolitans are addressed as Your Eminence.

ARCHBISHOP

An archbishop usually has jurisdiction over a single planet, though there have been cases when a single archbishop exercised authority over more than one world. As with the metropolitans, most archbishops are members of the Orthodoxy. Their forms of address vary considerably, often as a result of longstanding historical custom. The most common forms of address are Your Excellency, Your Grace, and Most Revered Father (or Mother).

BISHOP

A bishop has jurisdiction over territories called bishoprics. These territories vary in size and may include anything from an entire continent to a single city. While the majority of bishops are Orthodox, members of other sects also boast a fair number as well. A bishop is addressed identically to an archbishop, as the Nomocanon considers the difference between them to be solely one of jurisdictional extent.

PRIEST

A priest is the member of the hierarchy with whom most of the faithful are familiar. Generally, a priest is attached to a single church, called a parish in the Nomocanon, as its rector (sometimes also called a vicar) or as an assistant to the rector (called a curate). Most villages have a single parish, while larger settlements and cities have several.

The Nomocanon provides for two disciplinary paths, known as the White and the Red Priesthoods. White Priests live “in the world,” which is why they are sometimes called secular priests. They take fewer and less strict vows, which affords them more social freedom (including the freedom to marry). Meanwhile, Red Priests, also known as ascetic priests, take rigorous and exacting vows, following the examples of the saints. They may not marry, but, in return, they are often promoted more quickly within the hierarchy than are White Priests.

A priest is addressed as Father or Mother. White Priests usually follow the title with their given name — Father Rodrick or Mother Maryam — while Red Priests follow it with their surname, though this practice is far from universal. Of all members of the hierarchy, priests are the most beloved of the common folk and enjoy a remarkable degree of respect and influence among the faithful of their assigned parishes.

WHITE AND RED

The divide between the Red and White Priesthoods is the result of disputes at the beginning of the Church. Since the Prophet said little or nothing about celibacy, there was no explicit scriptural citation for forbidding marriage to priests. After all, St. Palamedes himself was married, as were a number of other significant early clergy. Even so, there are dangers inherent in allowing priests to marry and have children.

By the time of the Jacobean Patriarchs in the 44th century, though, it became very clear that there had to be some way to rein in the worst excesses of the clerical dynasties that had resulted. Patriarch Nadrim, for example, appointed several of his children to bishoprics and Patriarch Adrian VI handed Church lands on Holy Terra over to his son. One of Patriarch Questor’s many reforms was the formal establishment of two distinct priesthoods, with the White Priesthood having limited opportunities for advancement, which is why no Patriarch has been a White Priest since the 48th century.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

DEACON

Lower than a priest in the hierarchy, a deacon is nevertheless a member of the clergy and subject to ecclesiastical rules. However, a deacon’s primary role is to act as an assistant to the priests of the parish to which they are assigned. In that role, a priest might call on a deacon to do any number of things, many of which involve directly interacting with the lay faithful, who address them as Brother or Sister. Many deacons never advance beyond their current rank and become jaded as a result. For that reason, the drunken or lecherous deacon is a common stock character in bawdy folktales and even morality plays.

CANON

A canon is an unusual rank in that it can be held by either a cleric or a lay person, though, in the latter case, the canon is still bound by most ecclesiastical rules. A canon handles the day-to-day temporal affairs of a parish, such as, for example, contracting guild workers to perform specialty labor beyond the ability of the parish’s novitiates. Such duties give a canon a great deal of authority over a parish’s finances, which is why there are harsh penalties for canons who abuse that authority for their own benefit. The corrupt canon is, therefore, a stock character almost as well known as the dirty deacon. Like a deacon, a canon is addressed as Brother or Sister.

NOVITIATE

A novitiate is an apprentice cleric. Most enter the Church out of a genuine desire to serve the Pancreator and the faithful, but some do so for less elevated reasons, including hunger for the power that the Church possesses or, conversely, the simple desire to escape the grinding poverty of serfdom. A novitiate, who is addressed as Brother or Sister, receives instruction in the Omega Gospels and the Nomocanon, as well as in literacy in both Urthish and Latin. During their initial parish assignment, a novitiate performs long hours of menial labor at the direction of the rector, during which time they are evaluated for their faith, obedience, and industry, among other qualities. The length of a novitiate’s apprenticeship varies, with talented — or politically well placed — candidates being advanced faster than those with more meager skills.

Additional Positions

In addition to the formal ranks within the hierarchy mentioned above, there are many more positions in the service of the Church that deserve discussion, if only briefly.

SYNECULLA

The syneculla acts as the Patriarch's deputy and senior agent. The position is a purely political and administrative one without any liturgical or spiritual function. In order to avoid empire building, the Nomocanon forbids the election of anyone to the Patriarchy who has previously held the position of syneculla. The current syneculla is Archbishop El-laise Lanquetot, who was for many years an agent of the previous Patriarch in the court of Emperor Alexius.

CHARTOPHYLAX

A chartophylax is an ecclesiastical record keeper, responsible for maintaining the archives of anything from a single parish to an entire planetary see. In some places, this position carries with it not only great prestige but also great power, as Church archives hold a great deal of information within them.

THE GREAT CHARTOPHYLAX

The Great Chartophylax is the chief archivist on Holy Terra and, as such, responsible for overseeing the Church's massive repositories of ancient lore, including knowledge of the occult. This position is a highly coveted one, for obvious reasons, and has in the past been held by individuals interested solely in personal aggrandizement rather than the good of the Church. Fortunately, the current Great Chartophylax is the obun Bishop Nyana voDret, who views her position as a sacred duty.

LEGATE

A legate is an ecclesiastical ambassador, usually commissioned by the Patriarch or an archbishop to engage in diplomacy on behalf of the Church. A legate may thus negotiate with a noble house, a guild, an alien species, or a barbarian culture. The position grants its holder immunity from local laws (within reason), but not everyone — particularly barbarians — recognizes the Church's privileges in these matters.

ECCLESIASTICAL SPIES

The Synecullum regularly places its agents within the entourage of legates, because their diplomatic status enables them to move freely and without undue suspicion. The Imperial Eye believes that there is at least one such agent working in the company of Legate Ghyslaine Wernher, who is frequently sent to Decados worlds on behalf of the Patriarch. We believe that Wernher may be unaware of this agent, but it's also possible that he's simply very skilled at hiding his true intentions. He is, after all, a diplomat.

— Imperial Eye Agent Whipwinder

Lesser Positions

Beyond those mentioned above, the Church employs people in a number of other positions, many of them open to dedicated lay faithful. Good examples of such positions include candle bearers (acolytes), cantors (precentors), readers (lectors), gravediggers (fossors), door keepers (porters), and bell ringers (campanarii), among others. Most of these positions are governed by the strictures of the Nomocanon and, for that reason, serve as "testing grounds" to determine if a person might be suitable for admission as a novitiate. However, many of the faithful have no greater ambitions and seek only to serve the Church in whatever way they can.

Governing Bodies

Given its mission to look after the souls of untold billions of souls across the Known Worlds, the Church has developed a vast ecclesiastical bureaucracy to aid it in this divine task. What follows are brief descriptions of a few of the most significant bodies within the bureaucracy.

The Holy Synod

The Holy Synod is a deliberative council made up of all metropolitans, archbishops, and senior clergy (or their designated representatives) from all the sects, schools, and worlds where the Universal Church holds sway. The Synod was first convened in 2851 at the behest of Saint Palamedes, as he sought consensus in the chaotic days immediately following the Prophet's death. Subsequently, the Synod was convened whenever the Patriarch needed to consult on major issues of the day, whether social or theological.

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It is, therefore, not a permanent body and is often dismissed by the Patriarch after the conclusion of the purpose for which it was called. Nevertheless, the Synod sometimes remains convened for years, if there are pressing enough concerns to warrant doing so. Conversely, during periods of relative calm, no Holy Synod may be called together. Even so, there is an unwritten expectation that the Patriarch should summon the Holy Synod at least once a decade, if only to ensure the prelates of the Church get the chance to make their views known to him.

Over the centuries, the relative power and importance of the Holy Synod has waxed and waned. During the reigns of the Jacobean Patriarchs, for example, the Synod was weak, while, in the Second Republic era, it was increasingly independent of Patriarchal oversight. In all eras, though, one of its most august duties is the election of a new Patriarch when the old one dies or resigns. This duty stems from the very first Holy Synod, which chose Saint Palamedes as the first Patriarch and successor to the Prophet.

A STRONGER SYNOD?

Leaving aside its electoral duties, the Holy Synod has not been influential within the Church for over a century. It remains, at best, a consultative body rather than a policy making one. Some Patriarchs have bypassed the Synod in the name of expediency and others have used it as a rubber stamp for already foregone policy shifts. However, its almost impromptu structure and varied membership makes it an incubator of both truly original theological discussion — or a hotbed of heresy, according to the Orthodoxy — and intrigue.

Patriarch Palamon made a point of asking the Holy Synod that elected him to remain on Holy Terra for several weeks afterward, during which time our agents in Rio Brasília noted that he spent time with every delegate, getting to know them personally. While it's possible that this was merely an example of ecclesiastical glad handing, it's just as likely evidence that Palamon wishes to make better use of the Holy Synod than did Hezekiah the Elder. He hasn't convoked them since, but it's still early in his Patriarchy.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

College of Ethicals

The College of Ethicals is the second deliberative council within the Church, created in 3986 by Patriarch Adrian II. Adrian wished to create a regulatory body to stem “the excesses of the Synod,” by which he meant its heterodox and pro-Republican theological speculations. To gain widespread support for the College’s creation, Patriarch Adrian promised to appoint members of all recognized sects of the Church to it, a tradition that has continued down through the centuries.

The College of Ethicals meets on a regular basis on Holy Terra, where it advises the Patriarch on both the day-to-day administration of the Church and matters of immediate theological import that cannot wait for the Holy Synod to be called. Members of the College serve at the pleasure of the Patriarch and may be called or dismissed at any time and for whatever reason. Patriarch Palamon has so far retained the same membership in the College as Patriarch Hezekiah, in an effort to demonstrate the continuity of his reign with that of his predecessor of happy memory.

COLLEGE OF ETHICALS ASSESSMENT

The membership of the College of Ethicals has long consisted primarily of Patriarchal lickspittles, which has contributed to its unsavory reputation, even within Orthodox circles. There have been many attempts to reform the body or at least diminish its influence, but none have met with any lasting success. The fact that other sects maintain only a token presence in the College has only made the matter worse. What Palamon does with the council will be a good indicator of his intentions as Patriarch.

— Imperial Eye Agent Siri Traverre

Bishopric Councils

Bishopric councils might be called local versions of the Holy Synod. Smaller and, therefore, less powerful, they steer ecclesiastical policy within their jurisdictions. Currently, there are two levels of bishopric councils, each intended to maintain the good order of the Church.

Metropolitan Councils

There are five metropolitan councils within the Church, one for each of the five Metropilae. These councils usually consist of the planetary archbishops within the Metropilae, along with certain bishops deemed to have special expertise or influence. These councils vary in their power and effectiveness. The Delphian Council, for example, is often cited as a very powerful and effective one, while the Cadavus Council exercises far less authority within its domain.

Like the Holy Synod, metropolitan councils meet only on a sporadic basis to discuss matters of major theological or political import. However, members of the council usually remain in regular communication with one another through legates and other emissaries.

Planetary Councils

Planetary councils consist of the regional bishops of a single world, who interpret matters of Church doctrine and law on the planetary level. Planetary councils also serve to check the power of the planet's archbishop by meeting on a more consistent basis than do either the metropolitan councils or the Holy Synod. In this way, planetary archbishops must contend with regularly having to consult with their bishops and priests about their actions.

Holy See

It is no accident that the first act of the Second Holy Synod in 2854 was to move the seat of the Orthodoxy from Midian, the homeworld of St. Palamedes, to Holy Terra. The cradle of civilization, billions of humans still consider Holy Terra — or Urth, to use its ancient name — the purest and most sacred of planets. Indeed, there is compelling evidence to support this belief. For example, it is said that theurgy works more effectively here and its star system was one of the last to be touched by the fading suns phenomenon.

Holy Terra has a large population by the standards of the Known Worlds: over four billion souls call the planet home. The Orthodoxy considers native Urthers more holy than those from other planets and jealously guards it from change, which is why it has such strict immigration laws. Urthers who travel to other worlds often find that they are treated with a mixture of curiosity and awe.

During the First Republic and the early Diaspora period, Urth was an industrial nightmare,

overpopulated and polluted. The Second Republic made an effort to reverse these trends and conditions on the cradle of humanity improved somewhat. The Orthodoxy stepped into the power vacuum left by the fall of the Second Republic and, under its guidance, Urth is once again an idyllic world: vast forests carpet the continents and animal life once on the verge of extinction, such as the blue whale, white rhinoceros, and American bison, among many others, are once again plentiful. New construction is forbidden; no new industry or buildings of any kind are permitted. The streets of Paris, New York, Cairo, and other major cities are like museums of the past and the Orthodoxy works hard to keep them that way.

THE CRADLE OF HUMANITY

The Orthodoxy likes to present Urth as calm and orderly and it is — on the surface. Beneath it lies a culture rife with simmering unrest and political intrigue, despite the best efforts of the Orthodoxy to maintain control. This is the inevitable consequence of the Church's restoration of Urth's biosphere after centuries of neglect and outright abuse. A wondrous achievement certainly, but at what price? Residency is tightly controlled; one needs papers to prove one's identity and special visas to access any city beyond one's own. The Orthodoxy say that their administration is to better protect the welfare of the populace, but is that all that's at work here? Consider: migration between cities is rare, and difficult for locals, and not without difficulties even for visitors. Is this not an ideal way to ensure that challenges to their rule are nigh impossible to organize, let alone coordinate on a global scale? Is not this entire arrangement an attempt to keep a lid on the tumult that exists in the shadows?

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

Because of its high population, living conditions on Holy Terra can be cramped by the standards of other worlds. Because of the restrictions on new construction, no inhabitant of the planet is able to settle pristine regions, which have been given back to Nature in

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reparation for the sins of the past. Thus, the only way to expand is to go up — into space. Luna, Mars, and the asteroid belt (Ceres, Pallas, Vesta, Hygeia, Davida, Interamnia, and Europa, known as the Seven Sisters) all have large colonies, some of them quite ancient. Most of their populations consist of poor families or those whose ancestries are not exalted enough to grant them plots on Holy Terra itself.

As one might expect, Holy Terra is a major pilgrimage site and receives many visitors who hope to visit its shrines and sacred places. The Orthodoxy has created a lottery system by which pilgrims are granted visas. The visas are provided to the bishops of the Known Worlds — their annual number based at least partially on the sizes of their sees — who then distribute them to the worthy faithful. Patriarch Palamon has recently expressed the desire to reform the lottery to make it more equitable, but the matter remains under debate in the College of Ethicals and other deliberative bodies.

VISA LOTTERY

The current lottery is rife with corruption. Not only do bishops bribe clerics within the Dicastery for Regulations of the Affairs of the Holy Places to get more than their annual allotment of visas for distribution, but these same bishops then sell the visas to the highest bidders rather than distributing them equitably to potential pilgrims. Palamon's heart is clearly in the right place, but his head would seem to be another matter. There's simply too much money being made to imagine he'll be able to fix things.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

The Orthodoxy's laws against undue change keep most of Holy Terra bucolic, with some areas being allowing more technological sophistication. This policy is mandated, at least in part, by the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, promulgated by Patriarch Anchises the Ethical in 4067. The Doctrine endorsed the return of small rural communities and a simpler, less materialistic way of life. In most respects, Holy Terra exemplifies this teaching of the Church put into action, creating a near-paradise for the devout.

TECHNOLOGICAL HYPOCRISY

As noted earlier, the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance also gave the Church access to otherwise proscribed technology to be used "for the good of the faith," which is very convenient. Many clergy and ecclesiastical facilities have access to Republican-era tech, which they use discreetly in order to avoid the drudgery of the bucolic existence extolled by Patriarch Anchises nearly a millennium ago.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

As the birthplace of humanity, Holy Terra is dotted with ruins, though most of them were long ago looted. However, there do remain a number of untouched sites, protected by the Church for their religious significance or reputed connection to the Anunnaki. Examples of this include the Sphinx in Africa, the Nazca plains in South America, and Stonehenge in Europe.

Other Patriarchal Worlds

Besides Holy Terra itself, the Patriarchy lays claim to four other worlds. Each of these worlds lies outside of the established Metropilae and has, for historical reasons, fallen within the jurisdiction of the Orthodoxy (as opposed to those worlds whose claims are contested by two Metropilae, about which I spoke earlier). These Patriarchal worlds are:

- **Bannockburn:** As a staging ground for the battle against the symbiots on nearby Stigmata, this world is vital to the defense of the Empire. That, combined with the sizable presence of the Merchant League, made it only reasonable that the Patriarch would have jurisdiction over Bannockburn.
- **Nowhere:** Home to the famous Gargoyle, Nowhere is another world that has played a role in the defense of the Known Worlds against the symbiots. For similar reasons, jurisdiction over it was declared by the Patriarchy.
- **Stigmata:** Some of the Empire's best troops are stationed here and the Orthodoxy is there to support them. The Patriarch considers the recent turning of the tide against the symbiots nothing short of a miracle and proof that, with sufficient faith, nothing is impossible.
- **Velisimil:** As the birthplace of Ven Lohji, not to mention an alien sect of the Church, the Patriarch's claim makes a great deal of sense. Furthermore, the Orthodox presence ensures that the rights of the ur-obun are respected even by the Hawkwoods.

The Patriarchal Fleet

Today's Patriarchal Fleet began during the Patriarchy of Nadrim in the mid-46th century, though it has grown immensely in size and sophistication over the last 450 years. While not as large or technologically advanced as the Imperial or League fleets, the Patriarchal Fleet can nevertheless hold its own in battle. That said, it must be admitted that many of the Fleet's ships are antiquated or otherwise in poor repair, which is hardly surprising, given that many of the vessels were found abandoned before being incorporated into the armada. The Fleet consists mainly of small frigates or fast scouts. There are also a few capital ships in service, but these are unusual and rarely seen outside the Holy Terra star system.

As with the fleets of the nobility, the Patriarchal Fleet depends greatly on Charioteers and Engineers to operate its vessels. Following the lead of his predecessor, Patriarch Marcus Aurelius Palamon has made an attempt to change this. Consequently, the contemporary Patriarchal Fleet employs far more clergy on its ships than it has in the past. Efforts are under way to attract skilled clerics from all sects of the Universal Church to join its crews.

As an aside, it is worth noting that the crews of Patriarchal vessels, unlike those of other factions, use Holy Terra rather than Byzantium Secundus as their navigational center point. Therefore, instead of referring to dayside or nightside when jumping, they prefer the terms "moving toward grace" or "moving away from grace" respectively.

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Security Agencies

Although the Universal Church is, first and foremost, a religion intended to lead the faithful to salvation, it has, over the centuries, acquired many of the aspects of a secular government, including agencies dedicated to its security and that of its faithful.

The Synecullum

The existence of the Synecullum is widely known, though its true purpose and authority are not. The security apparatus of the Patriarch's deputy (from which it gains its name), the Synecullum operates as an ecclesiastical secret police force, ardently defending the Church's temporal interests against all enemies, real or imagined. Thus, Synecullar agents are free to travel anywhere or do anything that is consistent with their mandate.

Precisely what constitutes this mandate has always been a slippery question and continues to be so. Officially, the Inquisitorial Synod has total jurisdiction over the investigation and prosecution of heretics and sinners. Likewise, the Kalinthe have authority over the investigation of supernatural threats, such as demons and Antinomists. Consequently, this leaves a very narrow area of authority to the Synecullum — at least officially.

From its actions to date, it is clear that the agency concerns itself primarily with *political* threats to the Church, such as the guilds and nobility. It also concerns itself with heretics and aliens to the extent that these groups infringe upon the perceived rights and privileges of the Church. Thus, any attempts to institute religious toleration laws on a world might well draw Synecullum attention, as do organizations like the Frontier for Alien Rights (FAR).

At present, the Synecullum spends most of its limited resources investigating both the guilds and the Emperor. In the case of the guilds, this is because there is suspicion among the Hinayana that the Merchant League plans to fan the flames of republicanism within the Empire. In this respect, House al-Malik falls under similar suspicions, although the Synecullum simply lacks the resources to investigate them adequately. Now that the Emperor has married and produced an heir, the Church worries what

effect this will have on the delicate balance of power in the Known Worlds.

The Synecullum is primarily an information gathering agency, which relies heavily on networks of informants. In this way, its information is only as good as the informants it employs. Because many cooperate with the agency under fear of excommunication or because of promises of ecclesiastical boons, the integrity of the Synecullum is probably less than many outsiders would believe.

Because of this, there are rumors that, under the previous Syneculla, Hinayana-aligned priests were recruited who were willing to break the seal of the confessional in order to pass along sensitive or incriminating information to the Synecullum. Supposedly, the agency worked hard to place these confessors in the retinues of powerful nobles, guild members, and even other clerics. If true, the revelation of this scheme has the potential to wreak great damage on the Synecullum, as the violation of the seal is a grave crime under the strictures of the Nomocanon. It is unlikely that Patriarch Palamon will countenance the continuation of this policy.

NOTABLE SYNECULLAR AGENTS

The ringleader of these compromised confessors remains at large and may be operating of his own initiative now that Sigmund Drual is no longer Syneculla. He is known only by his code name of Revelings 12, a reference to a passage in the Omega Gospels about "seeking what lies hidden within the hearts of men for the glory of the Pancreator."

Another notable Synecullar agent is Maghor Mylchreest, head of the security detail protecting the College of Ethicals. Our agents suggest that his true purpose is to keep an eye on the members of the College, especially those belonging to sects other than the Orthodoxy.

— Imperial Eye Agent Uma Masek

The Inquisitorial Synod

In its original form, the Inquisitorial Synod (or Synod of the Holy and Universal Inquisition, as it is officially known) was a governing body on par with the Holy Synod itself. However, since early in the 47th century, it has been reduced to the status of a security branch, though, for reasons of tradition, its name has not been changed. In all other respects, the Inquisitorial Synod retains its founding mission of seeking out and punishing heretics, pagans, demon worshipers, and users of proscribed technology in order to protect the faithful from their foul influence.

A TIGHT LEASH

The real reason the Inquisitorial Synod was reduced in its authority was because the majority of its membership were Avestites by at least 4600, if not earlier. The Avestites were useful as zealous minions of the Orthodoxy, but, once they assumed control, the Inquisition might prove a danger to the finely balanced order of the Known Worlds. The Orthodoxy had to rein the Synod in, lest they set the universe ablaze.

The Inquisition's purview is large. In addition to the usual heretics and Antinomists, inquisitors regularly turn their gaze on non-Penitent psychics, aliens who are not members of the Church, political dissidents, and social malcontents — basically, anyone the Synod or its masters believe is or could become a troublemaker.

— Imperial Eye Agent Haroon Barwegen

Kalinthi

A word about the Kalinthi is probably in order. The Orthodoxy has documented occurrences of demonic possession for millennia. The Omega Gospels described numerous examples of the Prophet contending with demons of the Dark who had taken hold of a person's physical body in order to spread chaos and fear. Perhaps the most notable example of this occurs in the book of Amalthea, which details his time on the planet now known as Grail. The Church thus has a wealth of evidence about the existence of demons, in addition to the support of the Prophet's own words.

To that end, the Orthodoxy established the Kalinthi as an investigative agency dedicated to researching — and, when possible, combating — Antinomists and their ilk. Given the secretive nature of their mission, the Kalinthi answer directly to the Patriarch and any deputies he has designated (though not necessarily the Syneculla).

INSIDE THE KALINTHI

The Kalinthi generally work in pairs, with at least one of them being skilled in theurgy. They also employ a secret code known as the Kalos Logos by which to communicate with one another and that has largely defied attempts to crack it, despite numerous attempts over the years. Since the end of the Emperor Wars, the Kalinthi have suffered increasing losses, with several agents dying in very grisly ways. Whether this is due to genuine demonic activity or simply running afoul of inter-service rivalry with other branches of the Church's security apparatus is unknown.

— Imperial Eye Agent Whipwinder

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Penitents

By direction of the Patriarch, the Orthodoxy is solely responsible for overseeing the reformation of psychics who choose to become Penitents. Once that reformation is completed, Penitents acquire all the legal protections normally associated with the clergy, such as recourse to ecclesiastical courts. While most choose to serve the Orthodoxy, they may instead decide to serve one of the other sects, though this is uncommon. Some even rise high within the Church, the example of Bishop Egidio Garrod of Ravenna perhaps being the most famous (and unusual) example. In general, though, Penitents are viewed with suspicion and understandably so.

Penitents of any sect must obey the orders of an Orthodox priest of higher rank without question. The Orthodoxy views non-Church catechized psychics not only as sinful but as a threat to the security of the Known Worlds. Of late, the Church has been trying to root out psychic covens like the Favyana and Invisible Path, tasks for which the Penitents have proven highly adept.

CREATING PENITENTS

To enforce their control over the Penitents, we have good reason to believe the Orthodoxy has developed a number of techniques, combining theurgy with good old-fashioned brainwashing. Whatever one thinks of their methods, they work well, and Penitents have repeatedly shown themselves more than up to the task of seeking out unrepentant psychics, with the goal of either returning them to the Orthodoxy for indoctrination or killing them outright.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

Personages

Given its pre-eminent place within the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, the clergy of the Orthodoxy are among the most powerful and influential people in the Known Worlds. What follows are descriptions of a few of the most noteworthy ones.

PATRIARCH PALAMON



Marcus Aurelius Palamon is the son of poor farmers on Sutek. After his parents' deaths, he joined the monastery of St. Esmerelda. He proved adept at political maneuvering and soon traveled to Holy Terra for advanced studies. While there, Archbishop Tomás Barley, an influential cleric within the Orthodoxy, took him on as his amanuensis. This started Palamon's climb through the hierarchy, resulting in his elevation to the see of Byzantium Secundus, a position he held for more than three decades prior to his election to the Patriarchy.

Theologically conservative by temperament, Palamon has nevertheless made some surprising overtures to clergy of the Mahayana school of the Orthodoxy. He is thus something of an enigma to both schools, who see in him equal parts ally and enemy. His primary concern seems to be the preservation of justice, as exemplified by St. Maya, to whom he has a special devotion. In his public statements, Palamon claims that the most important role of Emperor Alexius is restoring justice to the Known Worlds after so many decades of chaos.

Some observers suspect that, beneath his stern and impassive exterior, he has an idealistic streak. On the other hand, he regularly inveighs against the encroaching darkness and urges everyone, peasant and noble alike, to turn to the Pancreator as the end of all things draws near. Such talk might simply be that of an old man keenly aware of his own mortality — Patriarch Palamon is in his early eighties and eschews longevity drugs — but it is just as likely that he genuinely believes that humanity stands on the precipice of grave spiritual danger, the likes of which it has never seen.

ASSESSMENT OF MARCUS AURELIUS PALAMON

The new Patriarch is a known quantity, having been a regular visitor to the emperor's court long before his recent election. Moreso than when he was Archbishop of Byzantium Secundus, he seems genuinely supportive of His Majesty's efforts, in particular the Imperial marriage and alliance with the Vuldrok, which he no doubt sees as an opportunity to win more souls for the Church. This is unexpected but welcome and it is hoped that he will be able to win over his critics. His election was a narrow one, after several split decisions in the Holy Synod; there are some powerful clerics, even within the Orthodoxy itself, who did not look kindly on the result and are likely planning to ensure that his reign is not a long one.

— Imperial Eye Agent Themba Mertens

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NAYANA VO DRET



Bishop Nyana vo Dret is an ur-obun who left her homeworld to follow in the tradition of the Prophet's disciple, Ven Lohji. Blessed with a razor keen intellect and a penchant for firm but gentle political maneuvering, this alien scholar quickly gained a following in the Orthodoxy's Mahayana school. She served for a number of years as the chartophylax for the ecclesiastical libraries on Istakhr, Ravenna, and Velisimil before being selected by Patriarch Hezekiah to come to Holy Terra to serve as his Great Chartophylax, a position she continues to hold.

Bishop Nyana has begun a massive cataloging of the contents of the Church's archives, something that has not been done in centuries. This has resulted in

the rediscovery of several texts and artifacts previously believed to have been lost, much to the delight of scholars everywhere. In addition, she has brought to light portions of the archive's holdings that had long had more limited circulation. While this has won her accolades in some quarters, it has also proven unpopular in others. Bishop Nyana thus has as many admirers as she has detractors, but this fact has not dimmed her enthusiasm for overhauling the Church's archival holdings.

ASSESSMENT OF NYANA VO DRET

Nyana's appointment to the position was a purely political one and she knows it. Old Hezekiah needed the support of the Mahayana during the final years of the Emperor Wars and he had relatively few cards to play at the time. Appointing an alien to oversee the Church's archives on Urth itself was his attempt to curry favor with them. The move worked, but he didn't bargain for how independent Nyana proved to be once she was installed in her position.

To be fair, neither did Your Majesty's advisors. Imperial agents have approached her several times, hoping to win sufficient influence with her to gain better access to the Orthodoxy's archives but, so far, to little avail. Nyana is a principled woman; that may well be why Palamon allowed her to retain her position when he was elected to the Patriarchy.

— Imperial Eye Agent Ashtati

ARCHBISHOP ELLAISE LANQUETOT



Ellaise Lanquetot began her ecclesiastical career as a member of the Synecullum, where she was assigned to the Imperial court. So successful was she in this assignment that she quickly caught the eye of Archbishop Sigmund Dual, who promoted her within his service until she was one of his most trusted agents. Initially, she resisted ordination, preferring to remain a laywoman, but Archbishop Dual convinced her that this limited her advancement within the Church and, with some reluctance, she became an Orthodox priest.

Patriarch Palamon chose her to succeed Archbishop Dual as his syneculla, a position she accepted with enthusiasm. Since assuming the office, Archbishop Lanquetot has maintained a low profile compared to her predecessor, preferring to devote her attentions solely to the tasks given her by the Patriarch. She is thus something of an unknown in the social circles of Byzantium Secundus, which has led to all sorts of baseless speculation about her and her activities.

ASSESSMENT OF ELLAISE LANQUETOT

Old Dual was outfoxed by Lanquetot. He groomed her to be his creature and, as soon as the opportunity arose, she stabbed him in the back and took his job. Dual's enemies, both inside and outside the Church — and he had many — had been trying to undermine him for years and, in the end, he fell to a self-inflicted wound.

Lanquetot is talented, smart, and insightful. During her years in the Imperial court, she kept tabs on all the women in the Emperor's life. It's said that she even knew about Freya Eldridsdottir before members of the court did, though that might simply be an idle boast. Regardless, no one should underestimate her, lest they be caught as off-guard as Sigmund Dual.

— Imperial Eye Agent Otmar Aldershof

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Allies and Enemies

Given its power and influence, it is hardly surprising that the Orthodoxy has amassed a large number of both friends and foes across the Known Worlds.

Noble Houses

HOUSE AL-MALIK

The al-Malik regularly feud with the Orthodoxy, trading quotations from the Omega Gospels to support their respective causes. Their rumored republican sympathies and heterodox interpretations of the Church's doctrines have led to numerous clashes over the years. That the Orthodoxy sometimes lends support to rebels against this noble house's rule has only added fuel to a long simmering fire.

HOUSE DECADOS

Though not strictly an enemy, the Decados have rarely been devoted to the Church. They pay lip service to the Orthodoxy and often appoint priests of the sect as spiritual advisors. In truth, though, these advisors have little or no real influence over the Decados lords to which they are assigned. If this house had its way, the Church would be driven from its worlds, lest it interfere with their many schemes.

HOUSE HAWKWOOD

The Hawkwoods have long been allies of the Orthodoxy, as both recognize the importance of tradition in maintaining order throughout the Known Worlds. The Hawkwoods have provided a great deal of financial support to the Orthodoxy over the centuries and that counts for a great deal. Since the end of the Emperor Wars, however, there has been some strain in the relationship, first on the side of the Orthodox, who feared Your Majesty would upend the delicate political balance of the Known Worlds, then on the part of the Hawkwoods, who worry that the Orthodoxy might be abandoning them in favor of the Imperial Throne.

THE HAZAT

The Hazat see the Orthodoxy as useful, so long as it remembers its place. These nobles courted the Church to provide religious cover for their territorial ambitions on Hira and into the Kurgan Caliphate,

but were unwilling to take ecclesiastical direction. The Hazat sought sanction for a crusade and, when that was not forthcoming, they decided to go their own way.

HOUSE JUANDAASTAS

This minor house keeps the Orthodoxy at arm's length, in large part because of its reputation for dabbling in proscribed technologies, like genetic research. Its clergy tend to be Amaltheans, Eskatonics, and Preceptors, which has done little to endear it to the Orthodoxy.

HOUSE LI HALAN

The Li Halan have excellent relations with the Orthodoxy, being their strongest allies among the noble houses. They can be relied upon to support the actions of the Patriarch and have often been richly rewarded for doing so. Of late, they have been less than enthused with the Patriarch's shift in his attitude toward Your Majesty and worry that it might portend a major shift in the balance of power.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

This is a fair assessment, though it overplays the rift between House Li Halan and the Orthodoxy. Though the Li Halan certainly do feel miffed by the recent rapprochement between Your Majesty and Patriarch Palamon, they are strong supporters of the Empire and have benefited greatly from the peace. Furthermore, the Patriarch has family ties to Midian — his sister lived there and his nephew still does — and it is possible the Li Halan see these ties as a means by which they could curry favor with him.

— Imperial Eye Agent Themba Mertens

HOUSE THANA

The Orthodoxy is suspicious of this minor house, in large part because of the large number of psychics within its ranks. On the other hand, Thana has contributed many Penitents for use by the Inquisition, which is a point in their favor.

The Church

AMALTHEANS

Just as Saint Amalthea herself frequently challenged the Prophet, so too do the Amaltheans challenge the Orthodoxy. Though not enemies as such, the Amaltheans frequently attempt to block the Orthodox in their efforts to introduce a narrow interpretation of the Prophet's teachings to the Known Worlds.

BROTHER BATTLE

Since the end of the Emperor Wars, the Orthodoxy has grown increasingly suspicious of this sect. The Order has amassed a great deal of power — and wealth — and this is a cause for concern. For their part, the Order tries to dismiss such concerns as unfounded.

ESKATONIC ORDER

The Orthodoxy is even more suspicious of the Eskatonics, who only joined the fold of the Church last century. Were it not for the obvious utility of their esoteric lore and theurgy against the symbiots, they would likely be thoroughly investigated for heresy. The Eskatonics think the Orthodox are too hidebound and close minded for the realities of the present. If they do not change, they will be unprepared for the imminent eschaton.

TEMPLE AVESTI

The Avestites are the Orthodoxy's closest allies within the Church, cooperating with them on numerous matters of mutual interest. However, the Orthodox rightly worry about the Avestites' propensity for zealotry and, as such, do what they can to rein them in. This strategy worked for decades, but the revelation that Hezekiah had been using longevity drugs was the final straw, unleashing an anti-tech fervor that even the Orthodoxy can no longer control.

ROGUE ELEMENTS

The Avestites may prove to be a much bigger threat to the continued stability of the Church than any of the other sects. However much the Amaltheans and Eskatonics squabble with the Orthodoxy over scriptural interpretation and matters of doctrinal emphasis, they have rarely demonstrated any tendency toward independent action. The Avestites, though, have a long history of it. There have been rumors that the Avestite leadership is incensed about what they see as Hezekiah's "betrayal" in the matter of technology. They're adopting a wait-and-see attitude toward Palamon, but, if he shows even the slightest hint that he is "weak" on these matters, the new Patriarch may find himself dealing with a schism.

— Imperial Eye Agent [redacted]

The Merchant League

CHARIOTEERS

The Orthodoxy has a good relationship with this guild, whose members crew many of the vessels of the Patriarchal Fleet. The only real point of contention between them concerns the profits from ferrying passengers along pilgrimage routes.

ENGINEERS

Relations are tense with the Engineers because of their tendency to push the boundaries of the technologies allowed under the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs.

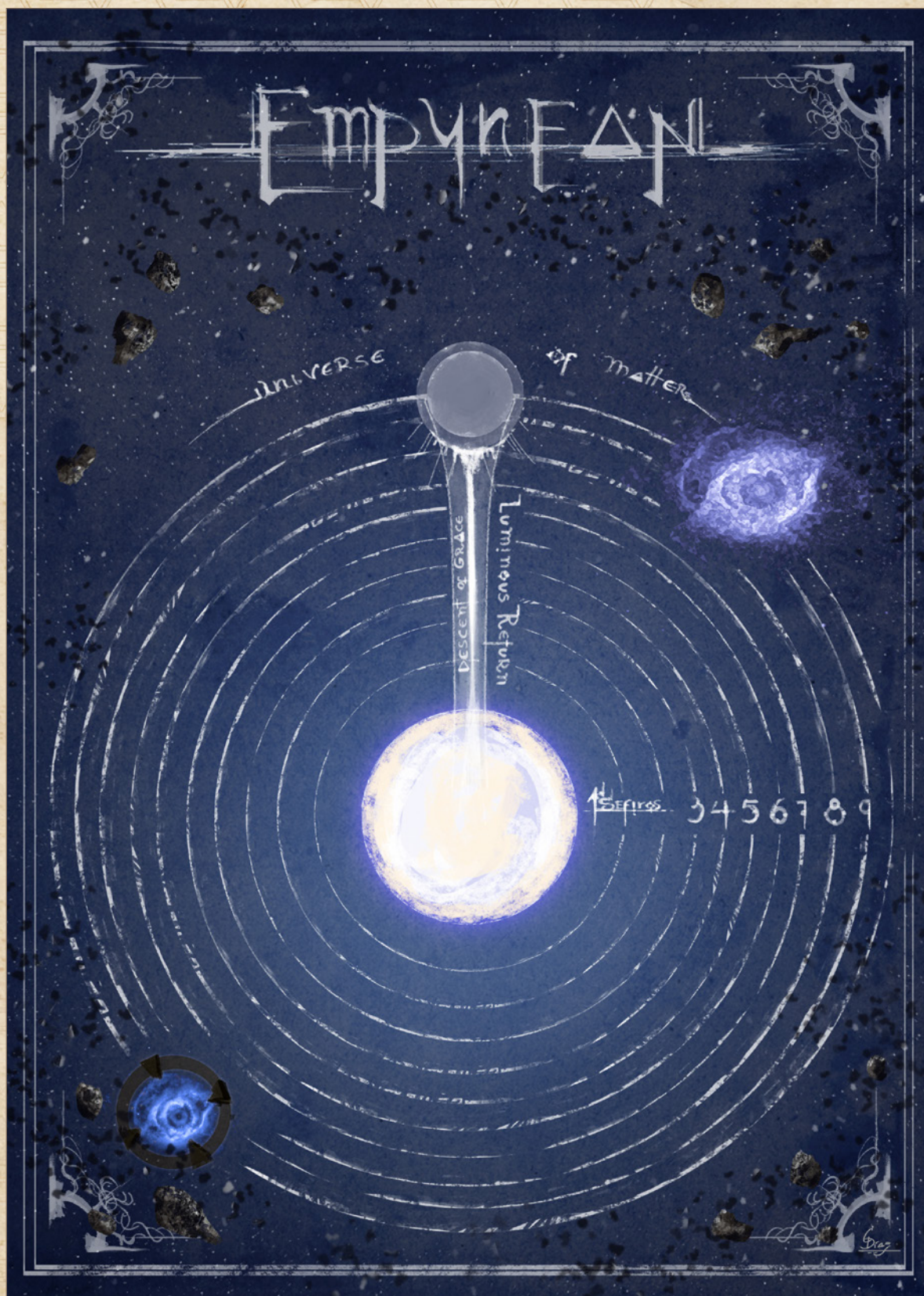
REEVES

The Orthodoxy consider the Reeves useful, but worry about the sin of usury, pro-republican sympathies, and, most worryingly of all, rumors of the cult of Mammon.

URTH
ORTHODOX:
EMPTYREAN LAW

FACTBOOK:
THEOLOGY

GAME RULES



FACTBOOK: THEOLOGY

**FROM FUNDAMENTALS OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY BY
MOTHER AITHNE SIMMON**

In order to grapple with the higher mysteries of theological cosmology, one must first have a firm grounding in its basic teachings. These teachings are derived from the Prophet's own words, as recorded in the Omega Gospels, and in centuries of speculation on those sometimes enigmatic words.

Cosmology

The Prophet preached about a Holy Flame, a Celestial Sun that mystically burns at the center of the universe, providing light and life for all souls. Since this light is holy, it cannot be perceived by gross, material senses. The light of this ever-burning sun flows outward and shines through various emanations or spheres of existence. Called Sefiros, there are 10 of these emanations, of which the material universe is the 10th (and last). Contrary to some heterodox interpretations of the Prophet's words, it is clear that creatures can only reflect the Pancreator's own light, not project their own.

The material universe is itself a reflection of the Holy Light. Sin and other evils emanate from a dark source that blocks the Holy Light. This is why other points of light and reflections within the material world are so important, for they reflect the Light from other directions, not just directly. The virtues polish the soul to reflect the light, making it like a beacon or lantern in the night of shadows.

Theologians who delve into such matters believe that the dark emanations (called Qlippoth) give rise to supernatural creatures commonly known as demons. In general, it is best to refrain from describing the particulars of these theories to the simple faithful, lest they become frightened — or enthralled — by what they learn.

The Pancreator, however, resides in the Empyrean, the seat of the Holy Flame. The Empyrean is a place of pure spirit and light, nigh unimaginable to our sin- and shadow-stained minds. It is from the Empyrean that the light of the Holy Flame shines into all dimensions of existence. Some theologians theorize that the Empyrean is not “above” the universe but rather central to all worlds. Others say that it must be “above,” as all light is sent “downwards” by the Pancreator into the world of matter. In the end, all of these manners of speaking are inadequate to describe the Descent of Grace, as both the Pancreator and the Empyrean are beyond human comprehension.

When the Pancreator's grace is accepted, the soul becomes a mirror, reflecting back the light of the Holy Flame. This is the Luminous Return. Each soul was created to be a mirror for the light, so that it can be reflected in all directions. Sin blackens the soul; enough sin can eventually shut out the light, leaving it a blackened shadow. Sin is thus like verdigris on the mirror of the soul. To remove the sin, one's soul must be polished and the Church provides many methods for doing so, most notably the sacred mystery of repentance. The practice of the Eight Virtues is also vital to the polishing of one's soul mirror, which is why their cultivation is stressed to the faithful at every opportunity.

THEOLOGICAL DISSENT

While Mother Simmon is quick to dismiss “heterodox opinions” about the Holy Light, not everyone in the Church is willing to do so, even within the Orthodoxy. The various Eskatonic theories about the Internal Flame are probably what she had in mind when she wrote this passage. However, some Mahayana Orthodox, such as Bishop Fortunatus Klima and Canon Priska Kucera, also teach that the individual soul can, under certain circumstances, project the Holy Light on its own. This is a matter that will likely continue to be a source of disagreement within the Church, a situation that could become exacerbated by contact with more Lost Worlds with their own unique religious traditions.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

Qlippoth

The Prophet called the abode of demons Jehenna (Latinized as Iehannum in the Omega Gospels), while simple folk use colloquial variations or contractions of this term, such as Jehan or Gehenne. Otherwise, he spoke very little about the specifics of the supernatural realms inhabited by entities of the Dark.

The same cannot be said of Antinomists, who have written extensively on the topic. Over the millennia, the Inquisition has learned much from these servants of the Dark. According to their lore, there are 10 Qlippoths, mirroring the 10 Sefiros.

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The demon lords of each Qlippoth have their own areas of interest and power. Thus, the rulers of the 10th Qlippoth may impart to mortals knowledge of skills previously unknown to them, while those of the fifth may impart the capacity to change one's shape or size.

The first Qlippoth is the home of Aachiyel the Black Sun, also called Infernos Prime. This cold empty shell was left behind by the separation of the false Celestial Sun from the core of existence. Aachiyel seeks only to swallow all the energy of creation, thereby defeating the Pancreator and ending the universe.

It is vital to bear in mind that the Qlippothic realms, even Infernos Prime, are not a true "anti-Empyrean." Rather, they are a warping of the Pancreator's own light. These dark realms, through their very existence, acknowledge the supremacy of the light. Demons derive their power not from a source independent of the Pancreator — as if that were possible! — but from a twisting of the Pancreator's refulgent grace.

Astrology

During the Diaspora, the Church taught that the stars were material manifestations of the Holy Flame. The yearning felt in human beings for the stars was therefore natural and the Diaspora itself was sometimes viewed as an extension of humanity's search for the Pancreator. Within the Church, a new field of astrology became popular, categorizing the stars according to the extent to which they revealed the Holy Flame. People born under certain stars or constellations were held to behave in certain ways, as ordained by the quality of the Holy Flame being projected by those stars on the night of their birth. Pilgrimages soon became popular to certain star systems known for a particular quality, such as healing or insight.

After the Fall, the Orthodoxy came to understand that the passages of the Omega Gospel that seemed to support astrology had been misunderstood. What had previously been known as the Doctrine of the Embodied Flame was replaced with a more spiritual interpretation. Now, theologians teach that each person should be content with the star under which they were born, for it is by the will of the Pancreator that they have come into existence in the time and place that they have.

PERIL AND PROMISE

Theologians associated with the Imperial Court have shown a renewed interest in astrology. Some have even requested that Patriarch Palamon consider reviving the Doctrine of the Embodied Flame, believing it could spur an interest in the exploration of new worlds. Thus far, the Patriarch has not acted on this request and it's easy to understand why. Setting aside thorny theological issues, doing so might undermine other Church teachings about the right ordering of society. Furthermore, the study of astrology has long been identified with the Eskatonic Order, which makes it suspect in the eyes of the Orthodoxy. On the other hand, the Vuldrok place great stock in astrology, using it to foretell the tides of victory and defeat. The aforementioned court theologians argue, not unreasonably, that Church-sanctioned astrology might offer an avenue by which these barbarians could be converted to the Prophet's faith.

— Imperial Eye Agent Radha Bartosz

Church Teachings

The Universal Creed

**FROM THE 4998 EDITION OF THE
ENCHIRIDION OF CREEDS AND
DEFINITIONS, PUBLISHED ON HOLY
TERRA UNDER THE AUTHORITY
OF THE DICASTERY OF RELIGIOUS
TEXTS**

Patriarch Jacob I set forth the Universal Creed in 4360, shortly after the pronouncement of the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs. The Creed is a summation of the Church's teaching, parts of which are recited during the Celestial Liturgy as a reminder to all the faithful of what the Prophet preached during his time among us.

We, the holy successors of the Prophet, servants of the servants of the Pancreator, shepherds and guardians of the divine law, the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, which shall not die and lives forever

beyond the reflected stars, do declare in communion with the College of Ethicals, the following five truths:

1. That the Pancreator's emanations were created because of the love of the Pancreator for unreflected and reflected creation, and that the Pancreator demonstrated benevolence in allowing sentients to partake in this grand design.
2. That the emanations were reflected perfectly in the divine person of Zebulon the Prophet, and that the system of hierarchies emanating from the Prophet to all sentients is built within the framework of the Universal Church.
3. That this natural hierarchy allows for the sanctified mysticism and grace of the sentients farthest from the light to be guided toward the light by the *gratia infudia*, which is to say, the brethren infused with reflective grace.
4. Self-denial, contemplation, and asceticism are the graces which lead the fallen away from the darkness and toward the light. Under instruction from the Church to abandon the love of materialism, the wrongful and damning philosophies of the Second Republic, the repentant sentient must show aversion to technical weaponry and conveniences. For the vertical line which leads upwards to the divine also leads downwards to the demonic and the dark powers use the love of technology to cause sentients to stray and thereby free their devouring hunger.

INNER AND OUTER

Historically, the use of "up" and "down" metaphors when referring to the Empyrean and the Dark is a later accretion to the Prophet's faith. In the Omega Gospels, Zebulon is shown drawing on the image of the Celestial Sun, which, like the suns of every solar system, is "innermost" and exerts a stabilizing gravity that keeps everything in its proper path. The Dark, according to the Prophet, is "outermost," far from the gentle, loving attraction of the Pancreator's light. Over the centuries, as the faithful became more planetbound, "up" and "down" replaced "innermost" and "outermost" in common usage, though this may be changing, as the Pax Alexius makes travel between the Known Worlds more common than it has been in generations.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

5. That they who are denied the light hunger for it, and it is the duty of all sentients to look to the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun for authority in resisting the Dark, and so remain in the gradation of divine light until they are spiritually prepared to advance. For the Pancreator has set forth a natural hierarchy reflected throughout all creation, which is the Order Universal. Within this reflected order the individual can find succor, aid, and spiritual guidance, mirrored from the Holy Flame in the Empyrean to the Universal Church.

We declare the above to be the truth reflected in the light of the Omega Gospels, sanctified by the teachings of the Prophet Zebulon as revealed by the grace of the Pancreator who resides, universe without end.

Virtues and Vices

EXCERPTED FROM BISHOP AHMAD HOLTMAN'S COMMENTARY ON THE MORALIA OF ST. PALAMEDES

Just as the Prophet gathered to himself eight disciples, so ought we to gather to ourselves the Eight Virtues. These virtues are: Questing, Loyalty, Compassion, Protection, Justice, Wisdom, Humility, and Discipline. The practice of the virtues enables us, each in its own way, to reflect the light of the Holy Flame, just as the Prophet's companions did. It is for this reason that St. Palamedes names them the Eight Virtuous Disciples, a title by which the Church still refers to them, for it is right and just.

- *St. Paulus the Traveler* exemplifies the virtue of Questing. The Prophet taught that Questing is to be understood as the constant search for truth, which is to say, the light of the Pancreator, which, though sometimes hidden by the encroachment of the Dark, is nevertheless to be found everywhere throughout the universe. This virtue emboldens the faithful to cast aside complacency and self-satisfaction and to seek the Pancreator, both without and within.
- *St. Lextius the Knight* exemplifies the virtue of Loyalty. St. Palamedes forcefully argues that Loyalty is devotion to a person, realm, or ideal truly worthy of our devotion. Those initiated into the Church are thus expected to be loyal to it, but we are also called to be loyal to our families, friends, and liege lords. The right ordering of society depends on our exercising this virtue. Without it, there is only chaos.
- *St. Amalthea the Healer* exemplifies the virtue of Compassion. St. Palamedes reminds us that this

virtue means “suffering with” another. We are called to bear the pains, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, of our brothers and sisters in the faith, just as St. Amalthea did. This is hard for most of us, as we are by nature selfish and self-absorbed. The Prophet commands that we look beyond ourselves, for the Pancreator is to be found in our fellow creatures, and we reflect more of the Holy Flame when we care about them as much — or more — than we care for ourselves.

- *St. Mantius the Soldier* exemplifies the virtue of Protection. The Prophet urged the faithful to “be wary and look out for one another, for the Dark casts long shadows from which we must all be shielded.” For this reason, the Church adjures us to be willing to offer up our lives in the battle against evil, just as St. Mantius did on so many occasions. We cannot hope to survive this journey through the dark alone; we must depend on one another to ensure that we persevere until the end.
- *St. Maya the Scorned Woman* exemplifies the virtue of Justice. St. Palamedes teaches that justice is giving each their due, regardless of how we feel about them. He reminds us that, in order to achieve the right ordering of society, we must all act with justice toward those both above and below the stations we have been allotted by the grace of the Pancreator. He also cautions that justice is often confused with revenge, a sin against which the Prophet often spoke.
- *St. Horace the Learned Man* exemplifies the virtue of Wisdom. Wisdom, St. Palamedes wrote, “consists in the proper application of knowledge, experience, and insight.” None of these alone is sufficient to be called wise and many have fallen into sin by prioritizing one over the others. Prior to the Miracle of the Club, St. Horace was deemed by his corrupt age to possess knowledge in abundance, but he lacked both experience and, more importantly, insight. It was only by following the Prophet that he acquired them and thereby became one of his disciples.
- *St. Hombor the Beggar* exemplifies the virtue of Humility. According to St. Palamedes, Humility is one of the most difficult of all virtues to cultivate, as he himself knew well. A scion of House Alecto, from which the first emperor of the Known Worlds would one day come, Hombor was born into wealth and privilege. It would have been very easy for him to have ignored the Prophet’s call and led a prideful life without the Pancreator’s grace. Instead, he cast aside all the pomp of his class to serve the Prophet and his disciples, an act that eventually led to his exaltation as the First Patriarch.

- *Ven* (the word means “blessed” in Lojmaa and is the equivalent of “saint” in Urthish) *Lohji the Ur-Obun* exemplifies the virtue of Discipline. As an alien, she was, according to the Doctrine of the Unethical Alien, inherently limited in her ability to reflect the light of the Holy Flame. Yet, by embracing the teachings of the Prophet, she was nevertheless able to become one of the greatest saints. Like Ven Lohji, those of us who fervently embrace the discipline of the Church’s rites and sacred mysteries might one day reflect the Pancreator’s light as did she.

In addition to the Eight Virtues, there are also Seven Vices. While the Prophet himself enumerated only the virtues, St. Palamedes spoke of the vices in his preaching following the Prophet’s death. According to the First Patriarch, the vices are: Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Sloth, Wrath, and Oathbreaking. Over the centuries, theologians have attempted to associate the vices with their virtuous counterpart, but, because there are only seven vices, there has never been a definitive answer to this question. St. Natalka, in her *Encomium Virtutum*, for example, considered Wrath to be the corruption of Justice, while Archbishop Lim Song of Kish taught that Wrath was the vicious analog of Protection.

The Last Things

FROM THE CODEX COTIDIANA
UNIVERSALIS, THIRD TYPICAL
EDITION, PATRIARCHAL
PUBLISHING HOUSE

Upon death, a soul is said to “shed its lantern,” in the words of the Prophet, which is to say, it releases its core light. If the soul’s mirror has been polished through right ordering to become reflective of the Holy Flame, it participates in the Luminous Return to the Empyrean, where the Pancreator watches over all. If it was not properly ordered, the soul becomes one of the Lost.

The Lost are wretched beings, alone and quivering in the cold, black void of the Dark. Though sinful, they still yearn for the Pancreator’s light, even though they cannot reflect it. Left shrieking in the dark, the Lost’s lonely screams might attract demons. Minions of the Dark, demons can devour lost souls, destroying them entirely. Worse yet, they may enslave unreflective souls and send them back to the land of the living to tempt others into stepping off the path laid out by the Prophet and his Church.



There are only two means of hope for the Lost: rescue by a saint or the cleansing light of the Final Radiance. In the Omega Gospels, the Book of Amalthea tells of how the Prophet was afflicted from the Demon Touch, which both cast his spirit into the Dark between the stars and caused him to lose his physical sight. When St. Amalthea healed him, her soul reflected the Holy Flame into the Abyss. Zebulon's spirit returned to the world, along with his sight.

Later elaborations of this story, one of which is included in the *Moralia* of St. Palamedes, claim that three souls defied their demon masters to protect the Prophet's soul from being devoured. In return, the Pancreator granted them the ability to see the light of St. Amalthea's soul, enabling them to participate in the Luminous Return to the Empyrean. The First

Patriarch goes on to say that Amalthea is not alone in having this grace and that others especially beloved by the Pancreator, such as the saints, can also journey into the Dark to rescue the Lost.

The Final Radiance at the end of time is another possible means of redemption for lost souls. At some future date known only to the Pancreator, every sun in the universe will go nova; the light of the Holy Flame will burst forth from them and light the Dark between the stars. Then the Lost, or some of them at least, might be found and they will join the Luminous Return. Certain heretics suggest that the fading suns phenomenon threatens the ultimate outcome of the Final Radiance, but this is absurd. Nothing can thwart the will of the Pancreator. The end of all things will unfold precisely as the Pancreator intends.

Personal Prayers

(FROM THE HANDBOOK OF
PRAYERS AND IMPRECATIONS
BY FATHER QUIRIN INGOLF
O'CONNOR, PUBLISHED 4869,
DOMALDO CATHEDRAL PRESS)

There are several important times of prayer throughout the day, each one associated with a different type of prayer. Within the Orthodoxy there are four primary times, a brief discussion of which follows.

PRECES MATUTINAE

Morning prayer, also called the Daybreak Prayer, gives thanks to the Pancreator for the dawn of light.

Example: "O Pancreator, Lord of All Stars and Worlds, may it please Thee this day to order and to hallow, to rule and to govern our hearts and our bodies, our thoughts, our words, and our works, according to the laws of Thy holy Church, so that we, being helped by Thee, may here and hereafter worthily reflect Your light and be delivered unto You after death."

PRECES VESPERTINAE

Evening prayer offers thanks for the good works done during that day, as well as for the fulfillment provided by labor.

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Example: *“Great Pancreator, Lord of All Stars and Worlds! I prostrate myself before Thee. With all the Celestial Intelligences and saints, I adore Thee. I acknowledge Thee to be Creator of All, my first beginning and last end. I render to Thee the homage of my being and my life. I submit myself to Thy illuminating will, and I devote myself to Thy divine service, now and forever.”*

PRECES NOCTES

Night prayer, also called the Before Bed Prayer, gives thanks for one’s existence and for the existence of one’s loved ones, in addition to pleading to keep the soul safe in the absence of the Pancreator’s light.

Example: *“O Pancreator, who hast fated all creatures to die, but hast concealed from all the hour of their death, grant that I may pass my days in the practice of holiness and questing, and that I may deserve to quit this world in the peace of a good conscience, far from the Dark and in the light of Thy Holy Flame.”*

HORA LUPINUM

The Prophet taught that the pre-dawn hours, whether between the local equivalent of 3:00 am and 4:00 am or between 4:00 am and 5:00 am — interpretations of his meaning vary from world to world — are the worst for the safety of the soul. He called this time “the hour of the wolf” and warned that thoughts of morbidity and despair can most easily gain sway over the soul during it. While most people are asleep during this time and, therefore, less susceptible to its ill effects, monks are usually awake and use this hour to pray for greater resolve in the face of darkness.

Example: *“Visit, we beseech Thee, O Pancreator, this habitation and drive from it all the shadows of the Dark. Let Thy Celestial Intelligences dwell herein to preserve us in peace; and may Thy blessing be upon us forever.”*

PRECES PER DIEM PERSOLVENDAE

Despite its relative uniformity, there are many spiritual traditions with the Orthodoxy, each of which has

its own additional prayers beyond those listed above. Known collectively as the During the Day Prayers, their use and forms vary according to local custom, which the Orthodoxy supports so long as they do not run counter to the doctrines of the Church in any way.

Example: *“Exalted Prophet! Celestial pattern of that perfection to which we should all aspire, I will endeavor this day to follow thine example: to be humble, charitable, chaste, kind, diligent, patient, and honorable. Incline my soul to reflect the Holy Flame as thou dost. I am resolved to watch over myself with the greatest care, and to quest forever in this life so that I may be an example unto others, as you are to me. Enlighten my mind, polish my soul, and guide my steps, that I may pass all my mortal days in your divine service.”*

Celebratory Days Universal Festivals

FROM THE *ENCYCLOPEDIA
CELESTIANA*, 8TH EDITION (5011),
BEARING THE IMPRIMATUR OF
ARCHBISHOP PENG DE-HUAI

Within the Orthodoxy, there are eight universally recognized festivals, each of which is described below. These festivals are generally observed by the other sects of the Church as well, though they may celebrate them in slightly different ways.

COSMOS CARNIVAL (LATE FEBRUARY—EARLY MARCH)

Cosmos Carnival is a week-long celebration descended from prereflective rites, such as Mardi Gras. Serfs, freemen, and even nobles throw caution to the wind and engage in a raucous Feast of Fools by adopting masques and costumes to hide their identities and protect themselves from shame (or notoriety). This festival is especially beloved on worlds of the Merchant League, where sales of liquor, magic lantern shows, and toys surpass those of any other time of the year (including Lux Splendor).

Owing to its prereflective origins, the Orthodoxy initially attempted to stamp out Cosmos Carnival, but failed in its attempt. Rather than admit defeat, it adopted and adapted the festival, during



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which time sin and even heresy are viewed with some indulgence. Indeed, on some worlds, the Inquisition is forbidden from operating during Cosmos Carnival, except in pursuit of heinous sins, such as Antinomy.

URTH DAY (MAY 1)

Urth Day is another prereflective celebration, commemorating humanity's homeworld. The festival was popular among Diasporan colonists far from their ancestors' birthplace, though some scholars believe its origins can be found in a pre-interstellar terraforming reform holiday. Whatever the truth, the Orthodoxy sanctified the day as a time to remember Holy Terra and humanity's long history on it. On some worlds, this festival also commemorates Mars (the birthplace of the Prophet) and even the jumpgate.

FIRST JUMP (JULY 4)

First Jump memorializes the first manned trip through Urth's jumpgate in 2306, following its discovery the previous year. Originally a secular holiday, Saint Palamedes turned it into a Church feast day, in part to squelch its Sathraist connotations. The festival is especially popular with Charioteers and others who make their living by traveling among the stars.

SAINT RAMOS' DAY (AUGUST 10)

Sometimes called Colony Day by those with Republican sympathies, this festival commemorates the trials and triumphs of Waldemar Ramos, an activist of

the Diasporan era, who was killed by zaibatsu security forces for his championing of colonists' rights. The Church subsequently recognized Ramos as a sainted martyr.

FORGOTTEN ORIGINS

Historical records held on Leagueheim suggests that Saint Ramos Day actually has its origins in an ancient zaibatsu loyalty ceremony, during which Ramos started the ill-fated revolt that led to his demise.

— Professor Guiomar Fausti, Veridian University (Byzantium Secundus)

SANTA FLAMMA DIES (SEPTEMBER 17)

This festival commemorates the day the Prophet saw the Holy Flame and forever changed the course of human history. Santa Flamma Dies is the second most holy day in the Church calendar (after Lux Splendor, see below). It is a time of prayer and thanksgiving to the Pancreator for His grace, as well as to the Prophet and all the saints who have borne the Pancreator's message down through the ages. Plays depicting this event, as well as the subsequent gathering of Zebulon's disciples, are staged across the Known Worlds during this festival, while magic lantern theaters show popular holovid movies about the Prophet.

MORTOS DIABLOS (OCTOBER 31)

The old Urthish celebrations of Día de Muertos and Halloween were carried by Diasporan colonists to the stars, where they were celebrated in late autumn, as the cold of winter creeps in. During the Second Republic, Patriarch Orrin, worried about the pagan associations of the holiday, attempted to re-sanctify it as a time when priests performed rites to hold back the Dark and protect the souls of the faithful against demons. Despite Orrin's efforts, Mortos Diablos retains certain pagan associations and even the most devout seek help from the Children of Zuran, whose adherents are said to be skilled in the fashioning of charms and amulets against evil spirits.

DIES LAMENTUM (DECEMBER 23)

Also known as the Prophet's Wake, this solemn festival commemorates the death of the Prophet during a jumpgate accident in 2849. Some believers perform physical mortifications (usually involving fire) upon themselves in an attempt to demonstrate their devotion to the Prophet. For less fanatical believers, it is a day to reflect on the Prophet's life and works, as well as to read from the Omega Gospels. Ritual malediction of Vithram the Black, the pilot of the Prophet's doomed vessel, is also common.

LUX SPLENDOR (DECEMBER 25)

Also known as the Radiance of Light, Lux Splendor is the most important festival in the Universal Church. Following his death, the Prophet's spirit cleansed the jumpgates and consecrated them against the Dark, making the stars safe for humanity to travel. This festival represents the bounty of grace available to all beings, not just the saints. On this day, the faithful exchange presents (preferably handmade) with friends and loved ones, an act that represents the reflection of light from each soul to every other soul, which serves as a reminder of the Prophet's parting gift.

Some secular historians claim that the date of the Prophet's death and therefore Lux Splendor is incorrect. Instead, December 25 is the date of an older holiday from the Prophet's own prereflective religion. Like most such claims, there is little to no evidence to support them. Consequently, the Orthodoxy continues to discourage such speculations.

Seasonal Festivals

In addition to universal festivals with set calendar dates, there are also four seasonal festivals recognized by the Church whose dates vary from world to world.

Some of these festivals have prereflective and even pagan roots, but, as the Prophet so often did, the Orthodoxy has adopted and adapted them to bring them in line with our own doctrines.

ORATION FOR THE NEW DAWN

Also known as New Year's Day, the Return of the Light, the Lessening of the Dark, and the Waning of Winter, this festival marks the start of a new year. Usually occurring not long after the winter solstice, the Oration is especially popular on worlds whose climates are cold, such as Malignatius. On such worlds, the physical changes associated with the eventual arrival of spring are barely noticeable, making the festival's symbolic meaning of entry into a new dawn even more significant.

ODE TO FECUNDITY

This festival welcomes spring and emphasizes the Pancreator's gift of life and growth. On many worlds, such as Leminkainen, the Ode retains many of its pagan associations with bodily, rather than spiritual, rebirth and resurrection. Needless to say, the Orthodoxy takes a dim view of such associations.

CANTICLE FOR SUMMER

This festival occurs at the time of maximum light and emphasizes joy and happiness rather than the riotous revels of spring. The Canticle honors the warm and contented happiness that comes through good works and hard labor. In some places, cathedrals and even smaller houses of worship bring in large blocks of ice to provide relief from the oppressive heat — making them very popular places to visit!

AUTUMN HYMN

This festival marks the harvest, the time of the communal sharing of both labor and yield. As the light grows dimmer, it is also a time to contemplate the spiritual light of the Holy Flame that still shines, unseen by mortal eyes but illuminating the reflective souls of the Pancreator's children.

Local Festivals

With so many worlds, each with its own history and culture (or cultures), it is perhaps inevitable that there should develop numerous local festivals not recognized on other worlds. Naturally, we cannot list them all, but a few of the more well-known or unique ones are described below.

REFLECTION NIGHTS

Celebrated primarily on Li Halan worlds, the Reflection Nights (or Nights of Reflection) occur in the evenings of the three days prior to Santa Flamma Dies. During those nights, the faithful undertake acts of self-abnegation, such as abstinence, fasting, or even more extreme forms of penance, in the hope that they, like the Prophet before them, might be gifted with a vision by the Pancreator.

SAINT PALAMEDES DAY

Celebrated on Hawkwood and Li Halan worlds, Saint Palamedes Day marks the day when the First Patriarch succeeded the Prophet as the leader of the Church. Because of a difference of opinion on when this event occurred, the day is either December 26 on Li Halan worlds (based on the notion that Palamedes became the Voice of the Prophet immediately after Zebulon's death) or March 2 on Hawkwood worlds (commemorating the date on which he was made First Patriarch by the Holy Synod).

VOICE OF FIRE FESTIVAL

Celebrated on al-Malik worlds and Hazat worlds, the Voice of Fire Festival commemorates the First Sermon, when the Prophet preached to Saint Paulus the Traveler after he beheld the Holy Flame on Yathrib. The Festival's date is variable, usually occurring immediately after the Canticle for Summer, but some worlds, such as Vera Cruz, celebrate it on the day before the Oration for the New Dawn.

Sainthood

FROM A LECTURE BY
DEACON CELIO NIKULA

The Universal Church teaches that, in some sense, all the faithful who have died in communion with the Pancreator can be called saints. However, the Church recognizes certain individuals as having achieved, during their mortal existence, an exceptional degree of reflectivity in polishing their soul mirrors. These individuals are what is usually meant by saints, and are publicly honored and held up as being worthy of both veneration and emulation.

There are more saints listed in the Patriarchal Synaxarion than it is feasible to discuss today, never mind those found in local lists and martyrologies. Instead, it is simplest to focus on the most widely known and revered

saints, the Eight Virtuous Disciples, whom the Prophet called to follow him as he preached the Pancreator's message throughout human space. While all of these saints died long ago, before even the rise of the Second Republic, they live on in parables and legends. Indeed, they sometimes live on in reality, for many is the peasant who swears to have seen one of the disciples come to the aid of the Pancreator's children in their toil.

To the average believer, the saints and their miracles are real, not just in faraway yesterdays but today, here and now. While priests rightly speak of sin, darkness, and the dimming stars, simple folk sometimes mistakenly believe in their hearts that such a doom cannot truly befall us. Will not the saints protect and save us? During the worst excesses of the Emperor Wars, for instance, some peasants believed that their sinful overlords would suffer retribution once St. Lextius returned to claim the throne and usher in just rule across the stars once more. Would that that were true!

Nevertheless, the saints do inspire others with their deeds. A truly efficacious idea might be piously attributed to a saint. For example, a soldier who wins a battle through a tactic that occurred to him in a dream might say that St. Mantius inspired him, while a scholar who suddenly comes up with a solution to a long-standing problem might credit it to the influence of St. Horace. Such beliefs are commonplace and not simply among the unsophisticated. Moreover, they are worthy of approbation, as they demonstrate the importance of the saints in our daily lives.

Let us turn now to the Eight Virtuous Disciples. Their names are presented in what follows in the Latin versions adopted by St. Palamedes in the early days of the Church. If the original name of a saint is still known, we give it as well.

Amalthea the Healer

Amalthea was born on Tethys, where she studied medicine and other healing arts, as well as ethics and physics. While still a child, she became lost and wounded. In that state, she heard a beautiful, unearthly voice saying, "Amalthea, I will guide you." This event, known to later generations as the Miracle on the Hill, marks the beginning of her life as a renowned healer of both body and soul.

Eventually, she traveled to the world now known as Grail and practiced her healing arts there. One day, the Prophet, who was also on the planet and suffering from a supernatural blindness as the result of combating a demon, asked her to heal him. She cried tears of blood and light into a large cup, offering it to him. The Prophet drank of it and was cured. This miracle gave the world its present name and marked the beginning of her time in his entourage.

Amalthea was the most contentious of the Eight Virtuous Disciples. She regularly debated the finer points of ethics with the Prophet, a practice that her followers take as evidence of the necessity to challenge even the most principled of authorities.

Hombor the Beggar

Hombor was a member of a guild of beggars on Criticorum. Each day, he begged on a street corner, looking pitiful and wretched. One day, the Prophet passed by and, seeing him, turned to Amalthea and said, "This one needs medicine to heal his open sores." Hombor balked, "If you heal my sores, how shall I make a living?" The Prophet replied, "It is not because of pity for you that people give; it is pity for themselves. Your sores are not of the flesh but of the spirit. Only when you give freely to another are you alive."

Hombor frowned, "I have nothing to give. And who would give to one such as I for my sake alone? I once took the life of another man, so now I take my living from other men. Only a fool gives without receiving." "Is the Pancreator a fool?" The Prophet asked, "He gives freely of his coin every moment of our lives." "You're just like all priests," Hombor countered, "How can you prove such things?" "Look upon me. What is the most valuable thing I can give? Ask and it shall be yours." "Ho! But you will gain by doing so. Unless ... Give me your voice, that which you use to take from others."

The Prophet then drew a knife and cut his own throat. Amalthea cried out that she could not heal such a wound. Hombor stood in awe of the Prophet, his rags now stained with his blood and lamented, "No! I did not mean for you to do it! Oh, I have been the death of this man! I am the death of faith, for he was not yet done speaking!" He clutched the Prophet's legs and begged the Pancreator to restore his voice. The Prophet placed his hand on Hombor's head and spoke, "For once you have freely given. I accept your alms."

The Miracle of the Giving cemented Hombor's service. He rallied the poor and oppressed to the faith and became one of the most beloved of the Eight Virtuous Disciples.

Horace the Learned Man (Horace Abdalim)

Horace was a Diasporan philosopher who preached that all one could truly know was doubt, that all else was an illusion, an attempt to find succor in musings of eternities and absolutes. He saw the Prophet's

teachings as irrational and set about following his entourage, in the hope of refuting them before the crowds.

Eventually, the Prophet challenged Horace to a debate, which is said to have lasted hours. The Prophet told him, "Words can seduce minds, but they cannot win hearts. You speak of doubt and fear and a Great Unknowing. Your sharp mind, a gift from the Pancreator, has become a sword that you use on yourself. Cease thy thrusts and slashes and let the wounds of your heart heal." Horace replied, "You say such things because you cannot prove them."

The Prophet sighed and said, "You shade your eyes from the light of truth and call it a virtue. How can you understand until you truly glimpse the light, unhindered by your resisting eyes? I tire of debate and would show you." He then struck Horace on the head with his staff. The scholar fell to the ground and, after getting back up, said, "I understand. You have much to teach me." This is the Miracle of the Club, which is interpreted to mean that logic must ultimately serve the real.

Horace traveled with the Prophet for many years, becoming, along with Amalthea, one of his most diligent students. He died peacefully in his bed years after the Prophet's own death.

Lextius the Knight (Lucas Kambei)

The lord whose Lord was the Prophet, Lextius is the Holy Writ personified, wherein the nobility swear fealty to the Church. Set to inherit vast lands and wealth, Lextius gave them up to follow the Prophet. This made him a pariah and a laughingstock among members of his own class, some of whom actively sought to stop him from his holy mission. Others, however, heard the Prophet's call because of his example.

After the Prophet's death, he returned to his fiefs on the now-lost world of Dogen and governed wisely, becoming the perfect ruler and model for all who aspired to such a lofty vocation. Legends claim that he eventually despaired because of the sins of his fellow human beings. To keep Dogen pure, he shut down its jumpgate and vowed, "Only when the universe is again ruled by Faith will my kingdom return to provide an example for others." The return of Lextius continues to be awaited on many worlds.

The noble line of Lextius, House Kambei, no longer exists, though House Li Halan has often attempted to claim kinship with it. Despite the closeness of the Li Halan with the Church, the Orthodoxy has never supported its claim.

Mantius the Soldier (Avram Manchewitz)

Mantius was a brutal mercenary who learned that all warriors must have a cause to fight for; his became the Pancreator. Love for the Creator of All taught him the discipline necessary to rein in his destructive tendencies and to overcome his excesses. In this way, he is also an exemplar for all who wish to overcome the baser parts of themselves and work toward the understanding of lofty things.

Mantius was the Prophet's personal bodyguard, protecting him from those who would do him harm. The Miracle of the Bullets is the name given to one notable occasion when he jumped in front of the Prophet after Hazat troops opened fire on him, under orders from a hot-headed noble. Not only did Mantius not die but his action resulted in all of the bullets fired returning to their sources and causing the guns to explode. The Hazat lord was humbled, begged the Prophet's forgiveness, and converted on the spot. Mantius is credited with many other superhuman feats during his travels.

After the Prophet's death, he refused to lead the human armada during the Ukar War, opting for a life of seclusion instead. Mantius would occasionally resurface to defend the faithful in unexpected places. No record of his death exists. This has led to many legends, suggesting that he did not die and will one day return to defend humanity against the Dark between the stars.

Maya the Scorned Woman

According to legend, Maya was a housewife in a poor household on Shaprut. Her husband beat her and cheated on her with other women. Her anger grew too great and she sought out dark powers to avenge herself against him. In doing so, Maya was overcome by a fearful vision, realizing that she had empowered sin rather than justice by her actions. She then prayed for deliverance from the physical world of cruelty and the supernatural world of evil. Her prayers were answered in seeing a star fall from the heavens nearby.

The star turned out to be the starship of Paulus, conveying the Prophet to Shaprut. Maya confronted him, asking, "Are you another man come from places of power to punish those weaker than you?" He smiled and replied, "I am come to deliver the light, so that it might shine upon all. Power blinds the vision, but the free can see well enough. Are powerful or are you free?" His words revealed that power has its own chains and she gave up seeking revenge to follow him.

After the Prophet's death, Maya toured the Known Worlds, praising the just and condemning the unjust. While on this tour, Baron Ferros Decados captured and personally oversaw her torture. Every torture device miraculously failed to harm her until, at last, she was electrocuted — and every fusion cell and generator in his fief broke down in the act. Before she died, Maya told him, "I am weary of this world and can no longer resist such hatred. I go to my reward. But know that your deeds shall return to you tenfold and that you shall provide example for a universe enthralled to power, yet bereft of justice."

Paulus the Traveler (Paul Deveroux)

Paulus is the star pilot who flew the Prophet from Yathrib, the world where he first beheld the Holy Flame. Consequently, he was the first to hear of his experiences — an event known as the First Sermon — and be converted by it. He is said to have been a gregarious, adventurous fellow, full of laughter and wild courage. His zeal to spread the Prophet's faith was such that he never turned down the opportunity to visit new worlds aboard his starship, the *Emissary*, even worlds where the reception would be less than warm.

Paulus was more than the Prophet's first disciple; he was also his friend. For that reason, pacts are often sworn in his name and oaths of companionship seek his blessing. He is also regarded as the patron saint of children, acting as a "big brother" and defender of the weak. He instills courage in those who pray to him (and maybe knowledge of a few clever tactics to turn the tables as well!).

Because he was ill at the time, Paulus did not pilot the Prophet on his final journey and forever regretted it. An apocryphal tale claims that, upon learning of Zebulon's death, he cried out, "My companion travels the Dark Road without me. I am lost." He later set out to explore the Known Worlds, before dying of old age "in the Garden of Nowhere," prompting speculation that the planet's present barrenness is the result of the mourning of Paulus.

Ven Lohji

Ven Lohji was one of the first ur-obun diplomats to travel to human space and meet with this newly encountered race. She was initially impressed, until she discovered the squalor in which peasants lived. She intended to return to her homeworld and counsel her people to avoid further contact with humanity. Then,

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she met the Prophet, who was meditating alone in the woods on Leminkainen.

From a distance, she watched in curiosity as a bird landed upon his shoulder and then began to pluck out hairs from his beard from which to build a nest. She eventually approached him, frightening the bird, which caused the Prophet to rouse from his reveries. He asked her, "Are you a bird who desires to make a nest of my teachings?" She replied, "I had thought there was no wisdom to be had among humans. But the birds and trees believe otherwise. Perhaps our relationship is a seed which needs watering."

Ven Lohji joined the Prophet's entourage. She taught him about obun beliefs, and he taught her about the vision the Holy Flame revealed to him. After his death, she returned to Velisimil and founded a religion based on the Prophet's teachings, which is considered a sect of the Universal Church. Some theologians have raised questions about the orthodoxy of Ven Lohji's sect. Such opinions are not supported by the Prophet's own praise of the saint, as recorded in the Omega Gospels and, as such, ought not to be given much credence.

VOAVENLOHJUN

The status of Voavenlohjun, as Ven Lohji's sect came to be called, within the Universal Church has sometimes been a source of argument. To its credit, the Orthodoxy has only rarely been party to this, since, as far back as the time of Palamedes Alecto, the Patriarchy has lent its support to the obunish branch of the Church. Still, it's easy to see why conservative clerics might wonder about the ultimate allegiance of the Voavenlohjun priests, with their own hierarchy, traditions, and green vestments, among other differences.

— Imperial Eye Agent Siri Traverre

The Path of Sainthood

FROM A HOMILY BY
ST. IVO OF CADAVUS,
DELIVERED TO THE PEOPLE OF
THE CITY OF LUXOR, 4778

Reflect the Holy Flame! That is what makes a saint — and we are all expected to be saints. Remember the words of the Prophet, preserved in the Book of

Lextius, when he told the young noble, "One light in the darkness is better than none, but two lights are better and three or more better still. My soul reflects the Holy Flame, so that the Pancreator's light might banish the Dark. How much more we could banish if your soul joined mine in this task."

We are made to reflect the light of the Holy Flame. This is our purpose, the fulfillment of which is possible simply by accepting the Pancreator's grace, as offered to us through the eight sacred mysteries and other pious devotions. The path to sainthood is no more than that and it is available to us all.

You may think it beyond you, because the saints were men and women wholly unlike you and I. You are mistaken! They were *exactly* like you and I. Consult the histories and read the martyrologies. Recall the stories of the saints you were told as children. The saints lived lives as varied as yours or mine. Think of Humble Henderson the wood-carver or Rawiri the technician or Jakande the merchant. Would we, if we had met them on the street, been able to read on their faces that they would one day be revered as saints?

I do not think so. The saints of the past had no special destiny. They were not singled out by the circumstances of their births. They enjoyed nothing that is not available to us, in this day. Yet, their souls reflected the Holy Flame; they banished the Dark. They heeded the call of the Pancreator and rose to the occasion. This is possible for us all!

Do not believe me? Then you doubt the words of the Prophet, who said in the Book of Mantius, "Do not be tempted to think that those who toil the land or labor in the heat are less able to reflect the Holy Flame than those who have the luxury of praying unceasingly. All that is required is a polished soul mirror." Did the Prophet err in saying this? Is reflectivity possible only for a few? No!

Become saints! Reflect the Holy Flame!

Pilgrimage

AN EXCERPT FROM THE
INTRODUCTION TO 12TH REVISED
EDITION OF THE MANUAL
PEREGRINUS

The Prophet extolled the virtue of questing — the lifelong search for signs of the Pancreator's light and grace throughout the universe. While it is clear from his words in the Omega Gospels and in the commentaries of the Church's greatest saints and theologians that Zebulon enjoined each of us to undertake this

holy mission as individuals, he also demonstrated, by both his words and by his actions during his ministry, that corporate questing, which is to say, questing as a group is honorable, praiseworthy, and, above all, in keeping with the example that he himself offered during the years prior to his death.

Indeed, are not the Prophet's travels to the worlds of human space in the company of the Eight Virtuous Disciples a powerful prototype of how best to fulfill our obligation to quest? Such was the opinion of St. Poornima of Sonal, when she preached, "The Prophet gathered his eight disciples one-by-one during his early questing. They are thus the first fruits of that questing and, as such, powerful reminders to those who follow in his hallowed footsteps that often the Holy Flame shines most brightly not in prayer or meditation or thought — genuine gifts of the Pancreator though they are! — but in other souls. We are called to quest *together*, just as the Prophet himself did. Can there be any surer guide than he in whose name we are gathered today?"

It is for this reason that the Church, from its first days, has strongly encouraged the faithful to band together and seek out the Pancreator wherever they may go. By questing together, we are not only better prepared to deal with whatever comes our way, including the foul depredations of the Dark, but, just as more than one mirror more strongly reflects the light of the stars, all the more so will our combined souls reflect the light of the Celestial Sun, of which all other lights are but a pale imitation.

The custom of pilgrimage, which is attested to even in prereflective faiths, provides us with a potent means by which the faithful might quest together. This is why the Patriarch, in union with the archbishops and bishops of the Church, has long worked with the Chariteers Guild to make travel to and from pilgrimage sites as simple and inexpensive as possible. Pilgrims who can afford the cost of fares and accommodations are expected to pay for them out of their own funds, while subsidies, provided by both the Church and the noble houses, are available to less fortunate pilgrims. Of course, many wealthy pilgrims demonstrate their charity toward the faithful by paying the expense of those who cannot.

Because the Church considers pilgrimage a pious and praiseworthy practice, the Patriarch is especially solicitous of the safety of pilgrims. He has, therefore, tasked the Master of the Order of the Brothers Battle to provide adepts dedicated to the protection not only of holy sites, but of pilgrims themselves. The Order has risen to the challenge, just as the Patriarch knew they would. Brother Battle adepts now act as security on many pilgrim vessels and at many shrines as well, particularly those located on or near centers of unrest or war.

BROTHER BATTLE

This directive by the Patriarchy has inadvertently given Brother Battle a lot of power and wealth. With the Order's adepts now in security positions across the Known Worlds, they inevitably become privy to a lot of sensitive information. As yet, there is no concrete evidence that the Order has attempted to make use of such information in any way, but there are plenty of rumors alleging so. Given the uncertainty of the future, who's to say that Master Claudius or one of his lieutenants won't one day see it as a way to advance the interests of the Order?

More troubling are stories of the Order's involvement in usury and other financial malfeasance. As part of its pilgrimage duties, the Order sometimes acts as a bank for pilgrims, granting letters of credit redeemable at pilgrimage sites across the Known Worlds. The Orthodoxy would call such activity sinful, if not heretical, while the Reeves guild would certainly see it as encroaching on their territory.

— Imperial Eye Agent Pebble

Popular Pilgrimage Sites

FROM IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SAINTS: A GUIDE FOR PILGRIMS, A BROCHURE PUBLISHED BY THE DICASTERY OF THE HOLY PLACES

The Pancreator has blessed the Known Worlds with numerous sites made holy by the saints who were born, taught, worked miracles, and sometimes died there. Over the centuries, these sites have been recognized and promoted by the Church as worthy of visitation. Indeed, no less an authority than St. Palamedes himself extolled the spiritual value of pilgrimage, saying, "To travel to a holy place is to pray with your entire body, with your entire being. There are few things more commendable in the eyes of the Pancreator."

As you consider taking up the sacred vocation of the pilgrim, you might be wondering, "Where can I go? Which holy places should I visit? Can I afford to leave my work, my family, and my home for so long?" Fortunately, there are literally thousands of pilgrimage sites across the Known Worlds recognized by the Orthodoxy's Dicastery of the Holy Places, some of which might be located on your own planet. You

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might not even have to board a starship to follow in the footsteps of the saints.

Here are just a few of the options you might consider:

AYLON

This is a very popular destination for pilgrims, because of the presence of Prophet's Hill. The Hill is the site of the Prophet's first public sermon. Because pilgrims have in the past foolishly taken portions of the hill home with them as souvenirs, a contingent of Brother Battle soldiers now guards it against further desecration.

CADAVUS

The House of the Holy Flame is a monastery located on the shores of the radiation-tainted Medicadavan Sea. The monks lead simple lives and mortify their flesh by ingesting the poisoned food and water available in the area. If you feel the need to test the limits of your faith, a visit to the House of the Holy Flame is worth contemplating.

CRITICORUM

Overlooking the capital city of Acheon is Mount Shada, upon which stands the Statue of Amalthea, honoring the Prophet's disciple. Pilgrims come here from across the Known Worlds not only to behold the statue's beauty but also to ask St. Amalthea's aid in healing them of ills of both body and spirit.

HOLY TERRA

Birthplace of humanity and seat of the Patriarch, the entirety of Holy Terra is a holy site, though numerous locations on its surface are singled out as especially sacred,

such as the Cathedral of St. Palamedes in Rio Brasilia. In addition, the planet Mars, located in the same star system, is the birthplace of the Prophet, though some other worlds claim this honor for themselves, despite a Patriarchal pronouncement to the contrary.

ICON

The Cave of Zebulon's Miracle is a site in the Twerrid Mountains where Prince Cardano Li Halan, shortly after his conversion on the battlefield, saw a vision of the Prophet. The cave is difficult to reach, which is why there are fewer throngs of pilgrims than other sites.

MALIGNATIUS

The city of Neo-Kiew is the site of the martyrdom of St. Maya the Scorned Woman at the hands of a Decados noble. It is thus one of the holiest sites in all the Known Worlds and a very popular destination for pilgrims.

RAVENNA

The entire continent of Castillo was gifted to the Church by House Hawkwood shortly after the Fall. By Patriarchal decree, it is now considered *Terra Firma*, a part of Holy Terra itself. For that reason, pilgrims who visit it are eligible to receive the pilgrim badge of St. Palamedes, just as if they had visited Holy Terra! This is a good option for pilgrims from Gwynneth, Leminkainen, or Ravenna.

SHAPRUT

In the Rokham Mountains west of the capital of Tabriz is a cave called Soora. On the wall of that cave is the nearly 10-meter high Zebulon's Shadow,



said to be the remains of the Prophet's human frailties after the Pancreator cast them out of him. An order of hesychasts maintains Soora and tends to the needs of pilgrims who visit here, in search of healing and prophecy.

REVIVAL OF THE QUESTING SPIRIT

The peace of the last quarter century has made pilgrimages easier and less dangerous than at any time since before the start of the Symbiot War. The Orthodoxy probably sees this as a mixed blessing. It's true that this has led to an increase in popular piety, as pilgrims usually return from the holy places with greater zeal for the faith than when they left. But it's also true that it's a lot harder to keep peasants down on the farm once they've seen what life is like on other worlds.

It would not be surprising if there were some within the Orthodoxy who are already advocating for greater restrictions at some pilgrim sites, or perhaps even subtly trying to discourage serfs from seriously considering going on pilgrimage. In this they are unlikely to succeed. Whether the Orthodoxy likes it or not, things are changing in the Known Worlds and the increase in pilgrimages reflect that. We are seeing a revival of the questing spirit so lauded by the Prophet and it may bring untold benefits.

— Imperial Eye Agent Lourens Vargas

Final Words

These are only a few of the holy places you might visit. For a full listing, as well as information on the costs associated with traveling to them, speak to the rector of your parish or contact the Peregrine-Major of your local Bishopric Council. They would be very happy to help you plan your pilgrimage and gain the blessings that flow from it.

Pilgrim Badges

FROM THE PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE OF SIR JANKIN BARANY, UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO HOLY TERRA IN 4876

Dearest Alonso,

I cannot begin to express the joy I felt when I first stepped into the narthex of the Cathedral of St. Palamedes and looked inside. The exquisite beauty of its architecture! The whirl of colors! It is one of the wonders of the Known Worlds. I know Patriarch Jacob I was a profligate sinner, a disgrace to the Patriarchy, but he is also proof that the Pancreator can work miracles even by means of imperfect instruments. I was moved simply by seeing the outside of the cathedral — but entering it and taking part in a Celestial Liturgy within? I am without the words to describe the experience. Truly, this pilgrimage to Holy Terra has been remarkable.

My only regret is that neither you nor father could make the journey with me. Aside from my visit to the cathedral, I have not yet spent much time at any of Urth's other holy places, but I hope to change that soon. I may even have the opportunity to visit Mars, where the Prophet spent his earliest days. Can you imagine it? Treading the very ground where once the Prophet walked before he first beheld the Holy Flame?

You will be pleased to know, though, that I have purchased my pilgrim badge. I look forward to showing it to you when I return to Delphi. It's a charming hand-made depiction of Holy Terra, surrounded by Celestial Intelligences. I think it's constructed of tin or an alloy of it, so it's not all that valuable in itself, but it means the world to me — no pun intended! I will happily pin this little bauble to my cloak when I attend the next ball in Anschok City. How many of the other young nobles will be able to boast of having been to Holy Terra?

I remember father telling me that, in his youth, he got to know a lot of pilgrims. He was interested in hearing their tales of other worlds and the holy places they visited. He was also keen to see the badges they brought back with them from these sites. There were so many of them! Each one a hand-crafted memento of having been to some place where the Prophet or some great saint had trod. I remember he spoke about the red "M" badge worn by those who'd visited St. Maya's shrine on Malignatius and the crude, silvery depiction of the Prophet from Shaprut. None of them was worth much, either for its materials or its

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artistry, but what they represented! Faith and good fortune and the blessings of the Pancreator and all the saints.

I wish I could bring back badges for you and father to wear. Unfortunately, that's a privilege of a pilgrim who's actually been here on *Terra Firma*. You know that, of course, which is why there would be no point in bringing them for you, even if I could. One day you'll make the pilgrimage, too, and then you can wear yours as proudly as I wear mine. The faithful have been doing this for I don't know how long. It's a lovely tradition and now I'm a part of it.

Please give my regards to father and the rest of the family. I hope to be back in time for the start of Cosmos Carnival.

Your brother,
Jankin

Relics

FROM A LECTURE DELIVERED
AT CASTILLO THEOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY ON AYLON BY
REVEREND PROFESSOR FARON CHEN

Relics are the tangible memorials of a holy person. They thus serve a very important role in the life of the Church, for they remind us that, though they are now gone from this realm, the Prophet and the saints were once as we are today. Like us, they walked under the skies, wore clothing, used tools, and otherwise behaved as men and women have behaved for time immemorial. Though they are now recognized for their supreme reflectivity of the Holy Flame, they are not of a different kind than are we. We are all called to become saints and relics serve, in part, to keep this reality ever before our eyes, lest the saints of long ago become little more than abstractions or myths.

Following an ancient scheme, the Church recognizes three types (or classes) of relics: Reliquia Prima, Reliquia Secunda, and Reliquia Tertia. The distinction between types is a function of their relationship to the saint with which they are connected.

- **Reliquia Prima:** Relics of this type are the physical remains of a saint, such as hair or bone. Relics of martyred saints are sometimes valued more than those of a saint who died a normal death, but, theologically speaking, there is no difference

between them. In a similar fashion, those remains that played a significant part in the saint's life are viewed with more favor than other parts. Thus, the arm bones of a soldier saint or the toes of a traveling saint might receive particular veneration. Despite claims to the contrary, there are no Reliquiae Primae of the Prophet, as his body was never recovered after the jumpgate accident that claimed his life. This has not stopped charlatans over the centuries from asserting otherwise. There are numerous fraudulent Prophetic Reliquiae Primae throughout the Known Worlds, which the Church has denounced.

- **Reliquia Secunda:** Relics of this type are items owned or used by the saint during their mortal existence, such as an article of clothing, a jumpgate cross, or a rosary. As with Reliquiae Primae, it is not uncommon for certain relics of this type to be deemed more valuable than others, because of the role it played in the saint's life. For example, the crosier that Saint Palamedes held during his oration following the Prophet's death in 2849 is more revered than other crosiers he used during his long reign as the Church's first Patriarch. Reliquiae Secundae of the Prophet do exist, such as a kasaya, or robe, he wore while visiting Shaprut, for example, but they are rare and mostly held by the Church or the noble houses. Of courses, innumerable fakes exist as well.

- **Reliquia Tertia:** Relics of this type are commonplace and easy to obtain, as they consist of objects touched to a Reliquia Prima or Reliquia Secunda. Pilgrims regularly bring with them items with which to touch the relics at the shrines they visit, thereby creating a Reliquia Tertia to take back home with them. They function both as objects of simple devotion as well as souvenirs of a pilgrimage. As such, they do not have the same aura of awe and power that other relics do.

The Nomocanon explicitly forbids the sale of relics, deeming it not only fraud but also sacrilege. The penalty for such a crime is years of indentured servitude to the Church. The manufacture of false relics carries a similar punishment. On some worlds, these are civil as well as ecclesiastical crimes and carry with them additional sentences. There is a permanent office of the Holy Synod whose purpose it is to oversee the authentication of relics, including investigation of crimes associated with them. On worlds with thriving pilgrimage sites, agents of this office are kept very busy.

Game Rules

Calling

Missionary

Precondition: Incarnate *or* Sanctuary Aeon *or* Urth Orthodox

A missionary is a priest who travels to far-off places to ensure that the light of the Pancreator is reflected to all. While many missionaries are employed on alien worlds, such as Kordeth or Ungavorox, or newly-rediscovered worlds, like Hargard or Iver, many more are sent to small villages and hamlets within the Empire to ensure the prayers of the unlearned are virtuous and free from heresy. This is a humble calling, far from the advantages — and intrigues — of sees and dioceses. Nevertheless, missionaries are vital to the future of the Prophet's faith, which is why successful missionaries can, despite their distance from



centers of ecclesiastical power, become quite well regarded and influential. That influence sometimes paves the way toward a celebrated career in the hierarchy — or, one day, sainthood.

(Note: Other sects can have missionaries who spread their doctrines to other worlds, but they don't have access to the perks of this calling.)

PATRON SAINTS

Saint Olayinka — Olayinka Gloucester was born on Severus in 2779 to a minor branch of the planet's then-ruling house. A clever, bookish girl who was fascinated with the new faith of the Prophet, she fled an arranged marriage to join Zebulon's entourage. When she finally met him in person, he smiled at her and told her, "Seek not the Pancreator's Light here, among my disciples, but in the hidden places of your own world." Olayinka returned home to Severus, where she spent the next 40 years living among and preaching to the ascorbites. Legends say the Pancreator gifted her with the ability to speak to the aliens, enabling her to understand their ways better than any human before or since. While she never converted one to the faith of the Church, St. Olayinka is nevertheless considered a patron of missionaries for her persistence and dedication to the Prophet's command.

Saint Xochitl — Xochitl Antonsen grew up on Vera Cruz and was strong in the faith from boyhood. He was ordained a priest in 4326, the year before the jumpgate to Hira opened for the first time in centuries. He joined the expedition of Don Gonzago Justus, with the goal of converting the Kurgans to the true faith. After the jumpgate closed again, Xochitl was trapped on Hira like the Hazat with whom he came, but he did not let that dim his faith or his zeal. He rose to become Bishop of Fort Omala and is renowned for the Kurgans he converted, including the chieftain Orhan, whose defection to the Orthodoxy demoralized the enemy.

EARLY CAREER

Skills: Academia 1; Charm 2; Empathy 1; Impress 2; Performance (Orate) 2; Remedy 1; Survival 1

Characteristics: Faith +2; Intuition +1; Presence +2

Capabilities: Planet Lore (choose) *or* Speak (choose); Jumpweb Lore *or* Transport Lore (choose)

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GAME RULES

Perks: Choose 1 from the Missionary perks, below, or the open perks list.

Equipment: *Illuminated instructional* (TL6 device; projects holographic images of events from the Omega Gospels, to school the unlettered; tech compulsion: inerrant)

MISSIONARY PERKS

Anthropologist
Fortitude in Faith
Hospitality (see below)
Linguist
Righteous Sermon

Perks

CHURCH ORDINATION: METROPOLITAN

Above the rank of archbishop is metropolitan, of which there are only five in all the Known Worlds. The likelihood that such an exalted rank would become available to a player character is small. Moreover, the rank brings with it a crushing load of administrative responsibility that would leave little time for such a character to become involved in a drama.

ECCLESIASTICAL ADVISOR

Class • Privilege • Precondition: Urth Orthodox
You are employed by a priest, noble, or merchant, advising them on matters of religious policy.

Benefice: Your specialized knowledge, experience, and counsel are much needed by a ranking member of the local power structure. You must determine the primary topic your advice covers, such as matters of doctrine, penitential discipline, or relations with alien species. Your rolls are favorable when attempting influence maneuvers relating to your area of expertise. Your target can be your employer or anyone who falls under their jurisdiction (including citizens of their town, fief, or see).

HOSPITALITY

Calling • Ability • Precondition: Missionary

Your status as a missionary means there will always be folk willing to offer you food, drink, and lodging.

Benefice: Missionaries travel the Known Worlds, spreading the faith with little care for material comforts. Consequently, they must often rely upon others for sustenance and shelter. Provided

a community has a good opinion of you, based on your past actions, you can be assured of a place to stay and a meal. The quality might not always be the best, but it will serve your purposes. In times of trouble, you can also expect to be hidden or protected from harm.

This perk can also enable your troupe to gain access to the same food, lodging, and protection as yourself. However, you are responsible for them and any bad behavior on their part may result in the loss of this perk's benefits until you can make amends. With a victorious *entreat* maneuver, your hosts will even hide you and your troupe from enemies (including the law). In addition, they can point you to individuals and communities that will help you in other destinations with which they are familiar. This operates very similar to the benefice of the Refuge perk, but its effects are temporary and dependent on your not overstaying your welcome.

LICENTIA PRAEDICANDI

Class • Privilege • Precondition: Urth Orthodox
You have been officially authorized by the Orthodoxy as a preacher of the Universal Faith.

Benefice: When making influence actions against those listening to you preach, you subtract your Church Ordination's level (i.e., 3 for deacon, 4 for priest, etc.) from their Mind Resistance.

If you support your argument by first preaching on a doctrinal or scriptural matter for at least 1 minute, you can perform a Perform (Oratory) *awe*, *mesmerize*, or *rouse* maneuver. In addition to the effects of the states those maneuvers impose, your subsequent influence attempts against those affected are favorable for the remainder of the scene. The target must share your faith, however.

Your authorization also grants you access to any cathedral controlled by the Orthodoxy, enabling you to preach either on Restday at a Celestial Liturgy or on another day of your choosing. Preaching doctrines that are provably heretical can mean being stripped of your authorization and possibly even imprisonment or execution.

Background: While all clergy, by virtue of their Church Ordination, may preach, the Orthodoxy recognizes certain clergy whose preaching is especially worthy of attention by the faithful. These clergy receive a *licentia praedicandi* or license to preach, which is a written document attesting both to their skill as preachers and that the content of their homilies is free from any heresy.

WHITE AND RED PRIESTHOODS

As noted earlier in this book, Urth Orthodox clergy are divided into two priesthoods, known colloquially as the White and the Red, based on the colors of their vestments. Certain broad generalizations can be made about members of each priesthood, some of which have consequences for character creation. However, it should be stated clearly that these are only generalizations and no Orthodox cleric, least of all a player character, is limited to the options noted hereafter.

CALLINGS

White priests, because of their greater social mobility, often adopt the Clergy or Friar callings, at least initially. Meanwhile, Red priests usually adopt the Mendicant or Monk callings, which better reflect the rigor of their spiritual outlook.

PERKS

Asceticism is a hallmark of the Red priesthood. Consequently, austerity perks, like Armor of Purity or Vow of Poverty are quite common among them.

Afflictions

TURNCOAT PSYCHIC

Precondition: Psychic

You suffer a compulsion to reveal anything you learn about non-Penitent psychics to the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities.

Affliction: The Orthodoxy views the use of psychic powers as spiritually dangerous, which is why it long ago established a regimen for the reformation of psychics. During this process, some of these Penitent psychics come to believe so firmly in what the Orthodoxy teaches that they become its zealous agents against other psychics.

Whenever you encounter a non-Penitent psychic, you must first make an ardent attempt to convince them of the error of their ways and to bring them

under the control of the Church. Should the psychic refuse, you feel the need to report everything you have learned about this psychic (name, location, extent of powers, etc.) to an appropriate ecclesiastical authority. Failure to do so after an appropriate (and safe) chance arises results in you suffering the Guilty state until you either report this information or you have been absolved of doing so by an Orthodox priest.

Skill Maneuvers

Empathy

DISCERN HUMORS

Action

Your knowledge of the Church's insights into the psyche allow you to assess a person's most pressing desires and fears, aiding you in future interactions with them.

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Rolls: Empathy + Intuition

Resistance: Target's Mind Resistance.

Capability: Religion Lore

Impact: You can recognize any mental or social states currently affecting the character. Doing so makes any of your rolls to remove them during the next scene favorable.

Knavery

QUIBBLE

Influence (Persuasion)

You can use your knowledge of Church moral teachings to convince someone that black is really white — from a certain point of view. Before you roll, you can choose one of three different tactics: bombast (high-sounding language), equivocation (use of ambiguous language), and mental reservation (unspoken qualifications).

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Roll: Knavery + Wits

Capability: Religion Lore

Resistance: Target's Mind Resistance.

Impact: Your tactic determines your results:

Bombast: Target is Commanded.

Equivocation: Target is Confused.

Mental Reservation: Target is Deceived.

Theurgy Rites

The Orthodoxy stresses a “vertical” relationship with the Pancreator, eschewing the esoteric philosophies of sects like the Amaltheans and Eskatonics. However, this does not mean that its priests do not delve into the mysteries of theurgy, developing new rites. Nor does this mean that their rites are easy to learn. Rather, Orthodox rites generally avoid exotic mysticism in favor of effects that preserve order and harmony in a universe rapidly spinning out of control.

Theurgy	Rite
1	Chasten
3	Calm the Flock
4	Tightening the Leash
5	Protect the Flock
6	Redeem the Flock

CALM THE FLOCK

Calling • Power • Precondition: Theurgy 3 *and* Urth Orthodox

You can calm a mob with words of reason and scripture, protecting them and others from their own irrationality.

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Cost: 1 VP

Roll: Perform (Oratory) + Presence

Components: LG

Resistance: Hard

Impact: By confronting a fearful or vengeful mob and attracting their attention so that they can hear your words, you can calm 10 people for each VP spent upon casting. Those calmed are Convinced. If the mob is controlled by a supernatural agent (e.g. psychic or demonic influence), the Resistance is based on the level of the power being used.

CHASTEN

Calling • Power (charism) • Precondition: Theurgy 1 *and* Urth Orthodox

You strip away the self-deceptive rationalizations of sinners, laying one of the target’s transgressions bare.

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Cost: 1 VP

Roll: Impress + Presence

Components: L

Resistance: The target’s Spirit Resistance.

Impact: You must know about a particular sin the target has committed and verbally confront them with it. What the target chooses to do with this

knowledge is up to them. The target may decide to repent and change their ways, or they may continue in their actions, but, even if they do not, they know that what they are doing is wrong and feel Guilty as a temporary state. (You may spend 2 VP upon casting to make it an enduring state, or 4 VP to make it chronic.)

Upon the following scene, the target will still remember this moment of revelation, but may begin to rebuild their rationalizations. Furthermore, this ritual is a two-way street: if you are guilty of a similar sin, it affects you as well.

CHARISM:

With Theurgy 1, your charism (by spending 1 VP) gives your target (but not yourself) +1 Mind Resistance against a single attempt to influence them to commit a sinful act that occurs within the remainder of the scene.

At Theurgy 5, you can give your target +2 Mind Resistance against an attempt to influence them.

At Theurgy 9, you can give your target +2 Mind Resistance against two separate attempts to influence them, so long as both attempts occur within the same scene that you use this charism.

PROTECT THE FLOCK

Calling • Power • Precondition: Theurgy 5 *and* Urth Orthodox

You can convince someone that a supernatural event has a mundane explanation.

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Cost: 1 VP

Roll: Charm + Faith

Components: LG

Resistance: The target’s Mind Resistance.

Impact: Because a supernatural menace can scar a community forever, the Orthodoxy must sometimes protect the faithful from the full reality of such an incursion. To that end, this ritual enables you to convince a number of people equal to your Presence (+1 per 2 VP) that a recent supernatural event had a purely rational explanation. The targets fully believe your story, though subsequent evidence to the contrary might erode that belief. If you are successful in convincing the target, word will spread in the community and many more people will come to believe your alternative explanation. Likewise, the target’s status in the community may affect the result: the village idiot may not readily convince his fellow townspeople, but the mayor may hold more considerable sway.



REDEEM THE FLOCK

Calling • Power • Precondition: Theurgy 6 and Urth Orthodox

By throwing yourself into the work of a community, you are able to heal its physical and spiritual wounds.

Time: Narrated

Cost: 1 VP

Roll: Empathy + Faith

Components: LGP

Resistance: Hard

Impact: Sometimes the damage caused by the minions of darkness is too great to cover up and the population suffers greatly. Neighbors become more suspicious of each other and may even go so far as to turn away from the light of the Pancreator. By means of this rite, you can bring the community back together. To succeed, you must first work alongside serfs, nobles, and guilders alike. The Resistance might rise depending on the size of the community and the seriousness of the disaster. A successful casting galvanizes 20% of the parish's population, plus an additional 10% per 1 VP spent. These people will join you in rebuilding, addressing physical damage and even patching over old grievances to work together toward a common end.

Such deeds will obviously bring attention to you, marking you for promotion within the Orthodoxy and respect from the faithful. Such service to the Pancreator is one of the marks of the saints. If your work returns even a few souls to the bosom of the Church, you may make an *atone* maneuver (roll Focus + Faith) to attempt to lose one rank of Hubris.

TIGHTENING THE LEASH

Calling • Power • Precondition: Theurgy 4 and Urth Orthodox

You can neutralize the psychic abilities of a lapsed Penitent.

Time: Instantaneous (primary action)

Cost: 1 VP

Roll: Focus + Faith

Components: LG

Resistance: The target's Spirit Resistance.

Impact: Sometimes, a Penitent psychic overcomes the Orthodoxy's rigorous training, turning themselves against the faithful. If you are successful in casting this ritual upon a Penitent psychic, you nullify any active psychic abilities they've used or are currently using. If you spend 2 VP, you can nullify their ability to activate any of their psychic powers for 10 turns.

Note that this ritual only works on psychics who have previously undergone a Penitent's conversion under the direction of an Urth Orthodox priest.

When your Theurgy is 7 or higher, you may cast this rite against any psychic, not just Penitents. The impact is the same.

Tech

Equipment specifically associated with the Orthodoxy is unusual, but it does exist. Here are a few examples.

DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES



Item	TL	fb
Jumpgate cross (wooden)	1	1
Jumpgate cross (silver)	1	5
Omega Gospels (mass produced, printed)	2	10
Omega Gospels (illuminated)	1	20 + 5 per Art rank of creator
Omega Gospels (electronic)	4+	25
Prayer wheel (personal)	1	5
Prayer wheel (large)	1	20
Prayer Wheel (electric)	3	40
Rosary	1	2-3

FORTUITOUS OMEGA GOSPELS (TL 5+)



Cost: 50 + 10 per tech level

Tech compulsion: Industrious

It is said that the answer to all one's problems lie within the Omega Gospels. For these specialty editions, this is surely true. These hollow books can carry all sorts of items, from concealed knives and palm lasers to think machines and spy cameras. An ornate lock prevents the book from being opened without a key (+300 fb and TL 7 for a genetically locked version). In addition, the specialty shielding on the hand-sculpted metal covers prevents security devices of the same tech level or less from viewing the contents.

Gamemastering

Given the widespread presence of the Orthodoxy throughout the Known Worlds, many dramas could involve it in one way or another. A few possibilities are:

- The characters become embroiled in the jurisdictional battles between Metropilae over a contested world, such as Leagueheim, Madoc, or Manitou. Such battles affect the political structures of these worlds and, therefore, could easily draw the attention of local League and noble interests.
- A charismatic but unsanctioned preacher has begun encouraging unrest in the countryside by his heretical interpretation of the Omega Gospels. The local noble lord is worried and requests the Orthodoxy to provide him with ecclesiastical agents capable of countering the preacher, whether by challenging him to theological debate or by eliminating him through other means.
- The Orthodoxy is trying to win new souls for the Pancreator and is sending missionaries to frontier

worlds like Hargard, Hira, Iver, or Twilight. The natives are not necessarily friendly, and the missionary may need the protection of stout-hearted companions.

- The Orthodoxy is rushing to claim rumored Ur-ruins but other interests desire the technology for themselves. Can the Church claim the proscribed technology or will it fall into less devout hands? If the characters are a mixed troupe, how will they decide who gets the ruins — or will they try to keep them for themselves?
- A pilgrim returns from a shrine, claiming to have been miraculously cured by the intercession of a saint. The local Urth Orthodox bishop dispatches a team of investigators to determine the truth of this claim. Was it truly miraculous or is it a fraud perpetrated to fleece gullible pilgrims who visit the shrine? Or could the supposed miracle have darker origins?

Rogues' Gallery

CANON AMANCIO GUPTA



Secret embezzler

Headliner • Priest 3 • Urth Orthodox • Clergy

"You'd like to talk about the cathedral's finances, eh? Come, let me offer you a drink before we settle into the details of such a complex subject. If I recall correctly, you're fond of Akupara merlot, correct?"

Description: Canon Amancio Gupta has been selected by an aged and forgetful bishop to assist the running of his diocese in a regional capital city. He came highly recommended for his work ethic and head for numbers, two things the bishop desperately needed in order to get his cathedral in order after many years of poor management. Fortunately, Canon Gupta proved to be every bit as good as his reputation. Within a few months of his arrival, he had seemingly put everything aright and had saved his superior a great deal of embarrassment.

Of course, Canon Gupta's talent with figures came at a cost. He has been secretly skimming money from weekly collections and using his position to extort money from local peasants, guilders,

and even petty nobles. He has genuinely helped improve the financial situation of the diocese, but he has enriched himself greatly in the process. This is exactly the kind of corrupt behavior that gives the Orthodoxy a bad name in some quarters.

Canon Gupta (or someone like him) might be encountered serving the rector of any large parish or cathedral across the Known Worlds.

Characteristics

Str	3	Wits	9	Pre	7
Dex	4	Per	6	Int	5
End	3	Will	8	Faith	4

Skills

Academia	6
Arts	4
Charm	9
Empathy	5
Fight	5
Focus	8
Impress	5
Interface	1
Knavery	7
Observe	8
Perform	5
Remedy	4
Sleight of Hand	4
Vigor	5

Actions:

<i>Confuse</i>	16
<i>Deceive</i>	14

Impact

The target is Confused.
The target is Deceived.

Shake it off 11 | 16 | 12 Removes a state.

Capabilities: Arts (Writing), Customs (Cathedral, Commons, Court, Streetwise), Knowledge (Homeworld, Religion, Urth Orthodox), Performing Arts (Oratory), Read/Speak (Latin, Urthish), Think Machines

Perks: Church Ordination (Canon), Counterfeit, Credit-worthy, Holier than Thou, Indulgence, Inspiring, Riches

Affliction: Dark Secret

Resistance: Body 0 | Mind 4 | Spirit 0

Vitality: 23

Revivals: rating: 8 | number: 1

Bank: 10

Surges: rating: 12 | number: 1

Equipment: Expensive clerical attire.

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FACTBOOK:
THEOLOGY

GAME RULES

TIGER

Agent (creature) • Level: 3 • Size: 6

The tiger is the largest feline on Holy Terra and one of the planet's most recognizable fauna, with its reddish-orange fur and black vertical stripes. There are several different species of tiger, but, in the main, these animals measure between 2 and 4 meters in length and weighing between 90 and 300 kilograms. The tiger is an apex predator, feeding primarily on the cervine and bovine animals of its native Asia. It also has been known to attack humans, even when unprovoked.

Like many species on Holy Terra, the tiger was once hunted to the brink of extinction. Prior to space-flight, the tiger was in fact one of the most prized trophy animals on the planet, with its pelts being highly valued. Thanks to environmental reclamation projects initiated by the Universal Church, the number of tigers on Urth has grown steadily and it is no longer threatened. Indeed, their numbers have increased to such an extent that entering their Asian habitats can be dangerous for the unprepared.

Despite their healthy population, tiger hunting is discouraged, primarily for safety reasons. Nevertheless, hunters who seek a true challenge, such as Count Temujin Tai Li Halan, often take to the jungles to slay one of these magnificent creatures.

Characteristics:

Str	7	Wits	1	Pre	5
Dex	8	Per	7	Int	2
End	5	Will	7	Faith	4

Skills:

Fight	7
Observe	8
Sneak	9
Vigor	7

Actions:

	Goal	Impact
Bite	14	4 dmg
Claw	14	5 dmg + Slam

Resistance: Body 4 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0

Vitality: 14

Surges: rating: 10 | number: 1

GREAT SKERRA

Agent (creature) • Level: 4 • Size: 7

The great skerra is an example of a Changed Ter-ran animal, in this case a tiger. Genetically modified by the al-Malik as pets and hunting beasts, they were first brought to the world of Aylon. Over the centuries since their initial creation, they have been imported to other worlds, mostly within al-Malik space, though populations of them have been reported on Decados planets as well.

Patriarch Nadim used the Great Skerra in parables as a metaphor for nobles who adhere to Orthodoxy even when they stray from its practices. As such, they are considered icons for a degree of theological license allowed to nobles that others could not get away with.

Like its root stock, the great skerra is a large feline animal, measuring 3 to 4 meters in length and weighing 200 to 400 kilograms. Its fur, however, is green and its vertical stripes a dark blue color. This coloration has given the skerra degree of camouflage among the forests of Aylon's continent of Verthandi.

Characteristics:

Str	8	Wits	2	Pre	6
Dex	8	Per	7	Int	2
End	7	Will	7	Faith	5

Skills:

Fight	8
Observe	8
Sneak	8
Vigor	8

Actions:

	Goal	Impact
Bite	16	5 dmg + Hard
Claw	16	5 dmg + Slam

Resistance: Body 5 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0

Vitality: 16

Surges: rating: 12 | number: 2

