

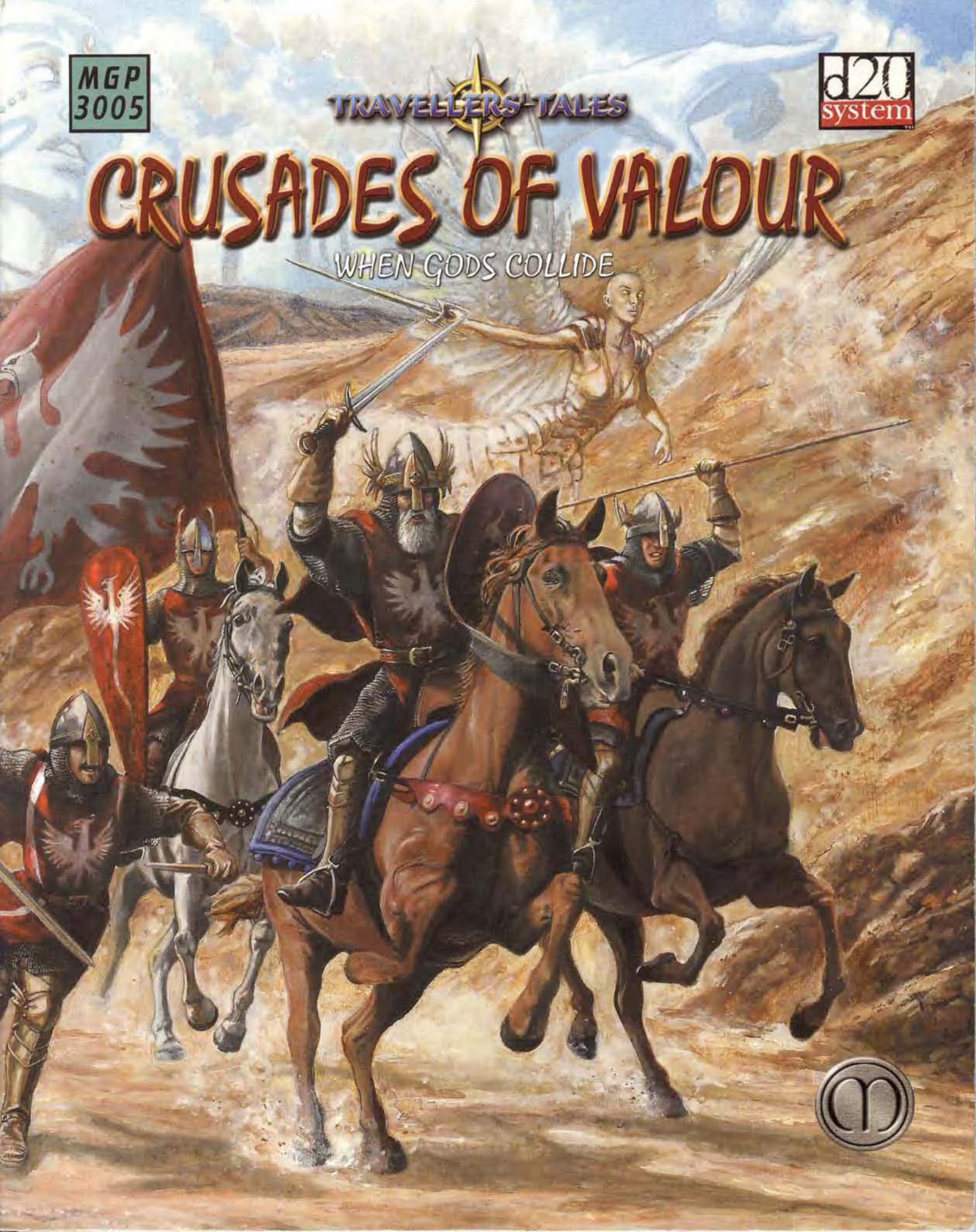
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CRUSADES OF VALOUR

WHEN GODS COLLIDE





CRUSADES OF VALOUR

When Gods Collide

Paul Cockburn

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a vast army on the march, a huge column of soldiers, mounts and machines of war, under gaudy pennants and banners. Warriors from different cities, different lands; clerics, lords, smiths, sutlers, camp-followers of every kind. All different, and yet united by one thing – a device or emblem each wears on his surcoat, perhaps, or a symbol painted on their shields. All of them grim-faced and determined, because they are not just any army, seeking battle, spoils or territory for their commander – no, this is a crusade, and they fight in the name of their god.

Then imagine this same army, set out on the plains of a foreign land, facing an enemy force on its home soil. Huge phalanxes of spearmen crash against each other; arrows dart across the sky like birds of prey; mounted troops skirmish and draw blood on the flanks. Behind each regiment, a priest calls upon his god for a blessing on his troops before their commander hurls them into battle. No quarter is asked and none given, the soil stained with the blood of holy and unholy alike. Finally, with battle joined, the skies darken and avatars swarm down upon the defenders, rending man and beast alike, destroying their will to fight on.

Weeks later, the crusaders break through the walls of a nearby city. Trapped within are thousands of followers of their adversary. Victorious troops the world over have always seen the fruits of the sack as their right, but imagine this army now, its numbers thinned by bloody battle, and exhorted by clerics to repay the unbelievers for their sins.

There is something blood-chilling about a religious war and in a high fantasy setting, with different races worshipping many different gods, the possibilities become even greater. This sourcebook, *Crusades of Valour – When Gods Collide*, covers many of those possibilities. Within these pages, you will find information on running a crusade campaign, with your player characters acting as part of a crusading army, or undertaking covert missions to defeat and destroy the ‘unbelievers’.

It should not need to be said, but we perhaps ought to mention it anyway. Remember: this is fantasy. In the real world, no-one should get bent out of shape over the beliefs held by another person. But in the world of high fantasy – well, I say those damned night-worshippers have it coming.

REACHING FOR FANTASY

Using the information in this book, you can introduce religious conflict into your campaign world as both a background and foreground element for all levels of play. Low level player characters can take part in crusades, joining a crusader force, or signing up to one of the more permanent military orders. At mid-level, they might undertake special missions to capture, slay or destroy a relic, temple or high-ranking priest of another cult, as well as leading detachments of the crusading army. Finally, ranked player characters might themselves call for a crusade and seek to raise followers to build up a crusading force of their own, charged with the destruction of a heretic enemy.

As crusaders – permanent or temporary – player characters can embark on specialist careers, such as that of the Knight. They will learn how to raise a host from fellow believers, maintain their fervour and morale, and lead them into battle. They will become acquainted with the most advanced magicks, as they take on the arcane and divinely-inspired defences of an enemy temple. Many will be drawn into politics, diplomacy and the murky world of covert compromise.

This book also attempts to place heroic individual or party combat in the context of a greater battle, so the efforts of the player characters can have a bearing on the course of a religious war.

Perhaps more than anything, player characters drawn into a crusade will find themselves face-to-face with the followers, servants, acolytes, priests and avatars of the many gods that exist in a truly poly-cultural world. They may receive blessings from their chosen deity as a result of undertaking the crusade; but then they may also find greater expectations placed upon them. Who knows, they may even come face-to-face with the gods themselves. Although it is not intended that this book be any kind of definitive guide to adventures on other planes, some information has been provided for those foolhardy enough to take on a deity on its home turf.

IN THE NAME OF GOD

What particularly marks out a crusade from the common-garden variety of warfare is that its outward purpose is to triumph in a god’s name.

Sometimes a mundane clash between princes might see one side or both claim to be acting in the name of their chosen deity or with their god's support, but it is only those wars sanctioned by major religions that concern us here.

Because of that, we have taken the deities and religions outlined in the core rulebooks of the d20 games system and developed those areas that are of concern to Games Masters and players looking to play in a crusader campaign. Clearly, many campaigns have very different mythologies attached to them, and each Games Master will have to make changes to the specifics, but there are ideas designed to make it easy to see. For example, how a holy war fought in the name of a sun god might progress.

The authors have also taken a few liberties with the spell lists of clerics and like characters, surmising what a god might do to make his followers more powerful when they are in direct combat with heretics and unbelievers. So long as a cleric character is operating within the confines of a divinely-inspired crusade, he might rightly expect some assistance from his chosen god. In the right

circumstances, even a mage or a thief might just draw some benefit from wearing his deity's emblem at a critical moment.

Very often, a crusade to root out an infidel belief must be taken to the heartlands of that religion itself, and at the centre of any faith are its temples, shrines and sites of special divine significance. Some examples of the kinds of centres various races and religions might create are included in this sourcebook – many more will suggest themselves to readers as their own campaigns progress.

TRAVELLERS' TALES

This sourcebook is the second in the new series from Mongoose Publishing, entitled Travellers' Tales. Designed to be slotted seamlessly into any fantasy-based d20 games system, the Travellers' Tales series introduces players and Games Masters alike to a wealth of new options on which to base their campaigns. Rather than detailing specific campaign settings, each book of the Travellers' Tales series will take an exhaustive look at the way entire campaigns may be run and explored.





INTRODUCTION

The castle was ancient, perched on a desolate crag at the highest point of a remote pass. Within its stark, bleak walls, in contrast, the Hall of Shields was of modern construction; gleaming white stone reaching up into the clouds, perfectly dressed in the dwarven style, a tribute to architecture, power and money.

The messenger's heart beat a little faster just for being there. He pushed his mount through the open Tribute Gate, past the grumbling guards in their bearskins, up to the high portal at the front of the Hall. Above the vast doors, a disc of hammered gold was set into the flawless white stone. The messenger touched his hand to his heart, closed and then opened his fist, to give the sign of a Worshipper of the Sun. It seemed then, that the disc glowed a little brighter, as if a brief shaft of light from the sun itself illuminated his arrival through the featureless grey of winter. Then the doors swung open, and the messenger, passing the care of his mount to a liveried steward, rushed inside.

No-one gave him pause; no-one asked him his business. His arrival had been expected for days, anticipated by every man there, high or low. Perhaps his coming had been due even longer than that. A hush fell upon the darkened hall as he rushed to the steps of the central dais, falling to his knees at the feet of the Grand Master. He gave no report. His presence alone confirmed all that the assembled host had come to hear. The entire assemblage exhaled as one. The time had come.

The Grand Master held out his left arm. At once, all around the hall, shields from a bygone age were lowered from their places of honour high on the walls. They were kite-shaped and sharp-edged, heavy and brutish. Though otherwise differentiated by the heraldic devices carefully etched into their wooden frames, each had an identical golden boss at its heart. They were taken down from their display chains and carried to the knights who packed the Hall, according to precedence laid down centuries before. The Grand Master's page placed the Shield of the Masters upon his lord's arm. A bugle called.

At once, a hundred clerics, perhaps more, stepped from their places at the chapels and shrines that lined two walls of the Hall, and uttered spells of Blessing and Light. Every shield borne by every hero in that assemblage of heroes glowed like a new day's sun, blood red, and then gold. The Hall of Shields was suddenly brilliant with divine light.

'My lords!' called out the Grand Master. 'The time has come. The Priest of Light has listened to the reports of the outrages committed upon our brethren of the sun in the southern lands. He has listened to the stories of the defilement of our temples, the murder of our priests and acolytes, the persecution of all who have let the light of the sun into their hearts. He has listened, and he has understood.'

The armoured knights, more than three hundred in number, pressed closer in a circle about the dais, eyes lifted behind the visors of their warhelms. Each was fully armed and armoured, and bore his sun-blessed shield high on his left forearm. The Grand Master swept his gaze around the full circle of his Commanders, and his eyes shone with a fanatical light. His mesmerising voice filled the hall.

'Ride tonight to your consistories: near and far; large and small. Call out every sword. You each have three months to meet the fleet, as we agreed; those who are even a day late must take the overland route and bring reinforcements to the host as best you can. We sail on St Asulph's Day, then best to achieve a landfall in the land of the impure on the Holy Day of Solstice.'

'My Lords; this is why we were formed, why we have trained hard and fought harder all these long years. Now, at last, the Priest of Light has proclaimed a holy war against the followers of the Fanged God! And we, the sons of the Order of the Sun, are the vanguard of the host that will be sent!'

His final words were spoken in a high, clarion voice, which echoed off the high ceiling of the shining hall. Every Knight present drew his sword, gave assent, and raised a martial cry of triumph to the sky.

'Ride hard and fast, my Lords! Before the Equinox, we will have brought the divine, blessed light of the world to every foul corner of the lands of the underdark, reduced their cities to ash and left the bones of their followers to bleach on the barren rocks. My Lords! I give you war! I give you *jihad*! I give you Crusade!'

CRUSADES — AN OVERVIEW

What makes a crusade a different form of warfare to any other military conflict between peoples or nations? There is a very real difference between a crusade and a war — the involvement of religion.

In this book, we are going to look at religious warfare in a fantasy setting. In a world of fantasy, where monsters and ghosts are a reality, it is likely that not only are the gods real too, but they are also perhaps more likely to involve themselves in the affairs of ordinary mortals. Whether they are providing assistance to followers and clerics, acting more directly through their avatars and servants, or personally taking part in the struggle, fantasy gods bring a very different flavour to religious wars — they make it personal.

RELIGIOUS WARFARE IN POLYTHEISTIC SOCIETIES

Just as an aside before we tackle how crusades operate in a fantasy environment, it is important for each Games Master to be clear in his or her own mind just how religious belief operates in their campaign. The most common fantasy mythology is that the gods are real spiritual beings who live on some other plane and who demand or accept (for what ever reason) the worship of mortals.

It is usually the case in fantasy campaigns that mortals believe in many gods, and many ordinary citizens of towns and villages will choose to worship (pay homage to) several. Some of these deities might be diametrically opposed — it is easy to imagine someone worshipping at the temple of the god of life, but also making a few offerings to the goddess of death too, so the latter turns her gaze elsewhere.

Clerics, on the other hand, except in the most rare of circumstances, are the followers and agents of one god and one alone. They are trained and based at a temple dedicated to the worship of one deity, and part of a religious hierarchy that follows the rules associated with that same deity. When they pray for clerical spells, they are drawing on the spiritual

power of one god; when they act, they act in the name of that god and his religion. It is not inconceivable to think of a setting in which clerics are the servants not of one deity but a pantheon, and it is possible for that religion to make holy war on opponents, or heretics within its own creed, but the addition of alignment and other factors make such a setting extremely complicated.

So, for the sake of simplicity, in this book a crusade is a war between two or more peoples, in which at least one side is sanctioned in its struggle by one or more religions. Their enemy probably 'believes' in the same god in whose name the war is fought, but for whatever reason has fallen foul of the god's servants, the clerics of his religion.

GETTING STARTED

There are two ways in which a Games Master can introduce a crusade into his campaign. The most obvious is to design a campaign from the ground up in which a religious war is at the centre of things. In such an example, the player characters could wander into a war zone, a region where religious tensions are already high, or a problem could flare up in the province in which they are already situated. In either case, the characters become embroiled in events that are not of their making.





Above all else... make it brutal, unreasoning and savage. No matter what particular adventures the player characters embark upon, the shadow of the holy war should fall over everything.

SCENE- SETTING

It will depend on the nature of his campaign just how much the Games Master will reveal of the causes and politics of the crusade.

Sometimes it makes sense to

The second method is to have religious conflict ignite in proximity to the player characters and the actions they undertake. They might even be the cause of the holy war breaking out—acting as the spark that ignites the fire. This method allows the Games Master to make his or her players feel as if they are in charge of their own destiny, because they will see a cause and effect in what they have been part of and how that connects to the scenarios they subsequently encounter.

In either case, the Games Master's task is to set the scene of rising religious and perhaps racial tension. Obviously, if the gods and their clerics do not play a major part in your normal campaign, this is less easy, but one simple truth about religious warfare is that it is often both spontaneous and can develop a life of its own. So, even if you have not made a big deal out of the role of the gods in your campaign so far, that does not mean the ordinary people of the lands you have created, as well as their religious leaders and rulers, do not hold deep-seated religious beliefs that are suddenly the cause of some great crisis.

There are some ideas in the next chapter for how to develop the idea of a religious war breaking out when it is not something the Games Master designed as a major campaign theme. The same concepts can be followed when designing a deliberate crusade setting. What matters most is that the Games Master describes clearly and in chilling terms the sudden outbreak of religious zeal and hatred, fanned and nurtured by clerical hotheads, perhaps exploited by secular rulers.

have the player characters aware of what is going on; more often it is more fun to keep them in the dark.

On the other hand, the player characters should be very aware of the everyday events around them. One of the most common features of a religious war is how quickly it seems to take over everything. In towns the player characters visit, they should see soldiers parading, ready to march or preparing to defend the town; all clearly bearing the emblem of their religious patron. Describe clerics haranguing large crowds from the steps of a temple, exhorting them to greater piety, urging them to donate more wealth to the church, or to join the colours and march off to a foreign land. Even on street corners, there will be agitators trying to whip up religious fever.

Even the simplest acts become small tests of religious orthodoxy. When the player characters visit an inn or go to buy supplies, have the trader greet them with some innocuous but religiously-flavoured welcome. 'Greetings, travellers, the sun has blessed us this day.' There should be some pat response, and the player characters will get the hang of that soon enough, but this is just the smallest way in which they are tested day by day, by almost anyone they meet. On many occasions, a simple conversation in an inn or with a person in the street will turn to the current state of the crisis. 'So, friend, what is your opinion of what happened in Timberhill?' The player characters will find that judging the mood of the local population is all-important at a time like this.

What they will be experiencing, of course, is that heightened fear of strangers that goes hand-in-hand with times of religious crisis. Ordinary people and people in authority alike will want to know that the player characters 'belong' and are not a threat to the religion they follow. Even if there is a racial element to the war – which should make it simple for anyone to decide if a person follows one deity or another – paranoia means there will be doubt and suspicion on all sides.

The Games Master, therefore, should start making life uncomfortable for the player characters, unless they can easily show that they are part of the same orthodoxy as the inhabitants of wherever they are located. Those street-corner zealots, exhorting the faithful to be vigilant, will point out the player characters in the street and demand they prove their allegiance. The innkeeper will insist his rooms are all taken, and that his fine wines are only for those who are taking up the crusade. Local bullies, hiding behind a holy symbol, will believe they can act with impunity against strangers.

Acts of random violence, some directed at the player characters, others just scenes they witness or participate in spontaneously, should occur frequently. The players should feel at all times as if they are being compelled to choose sides; it does not matter if they think themselves neutral in the conflict, people everywhere will try to demand some kind of response from them.

This becomes even more evident for those player characters who are unusual, by either race, class or behaviour. At a time when the human followers of the Earth Goddess are even more zealous than usual in their hatred toward the followers of the God of Death, where does the dwarven wizard stand? Irrational people will ask the most insane questions, challenging obviously good holy men simply because they are not good holy men of the same deity.

It does not even become that much easier for those player characters who are part of the

culture. 'Yes, innkeeper, praise be to the sun that warms this day for us - tell me, can you point out the home of one Feredar the Wizard?'

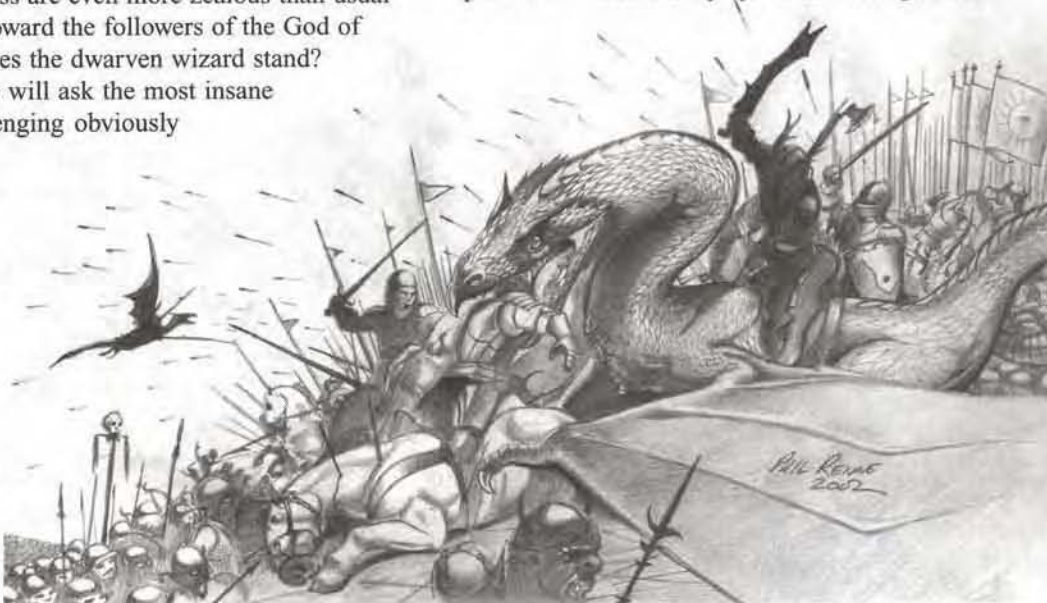
'Perhaps I could... though I wonder what business a stranger could have with that faithless old sage, and why it is that though you bear the sun disc on your shields, you have not yet marched east with the army...'

FIRE IN THE SKY

The other factors that will most influence the player characters are the big events of war – battles, sieges, pogroms and riots, the natural disasters attributed to the gods (rightly or wrongly) or the direct evidence of the wrath of one deity against the followers of another.

No Games Master actually has to change the type of scenario he or she runs to accommodate a crusade as the campaign background. Even if your players never want to do anything more than raid dungeons for monsters' gold, you can still introduce the flavour of a crusade as background to these events for the players may well be making the most of the chaos of the crusade to pursue their own agenda. The war is there, in the background and they may get caught up in it incidentally, but perhaps the players do not care about its outcome, only that they can hunt around its margins for rich pickings.

All the Games Master has to do is set up adventures that have this sense of anarchy in the background, with armies on the march, religious leaders whipping up hysteria and cities and towns being plundered. When the player characters go to a



CRUSADES - AN OVERVIEW

dungeon complex to raid it for treasure, they may well find its defences strengthened as the goblins prepare for the imminent arrival of an elven holy army – can the players find a way into the dungeon past these defences, ahead of the elves? If they succeed in looting treasure, what will happen when they get back out and find the elves besieging the area? Or perhaps they wait, and let the elves do the hard work of wiping out the defenders, and when the crusading army has left, they go in to scavenge through the remains, finding secret areas the elves missed. Maybe they find the goblins have abandoned the complex and that instead of a dungeon, their target is now a goblin warband on the march.

There are endless opportunities for player characters in such a setting. High priests, warlords and kings will hire – or press-gang – any who look like they might prove useful. The player characters can be invited to wipe out an enemy lair or burn down the temple of a heretic god. They will be permitted to steal and loot as they wish, so long as they fulfil the goals of their patron. Players get the chance to involve their characters in bigger, grander events, operating on a much wider scale than normal. They can be part of an army which lays waste to an entire city or province; they can take advantage of the awesome forces at the disposal of a powerful cleric, who cracks open the walls of an enemy fortress to allow the player characters entrance; they can even see the gods at work directly, acting through their celestials, demons and other avatars, or perhaps even striding the mortal realm themselves.

As a Games Master, you do not have to worry about the fact that the party

includes a feeble wizard with 12 hit points who can barely hold his own in a fight against an orc, never mind stand up against some powerful being from a distant elemental plane. The player characters can be a large or small part of the bigger picture, depending on their capabilities and interests. Your job as a Games Master is just to create adventures and situations that fill them with awe – and a little fear too... nothing motivates players as much as a little fear. For example, imagine a scenario in which the army of which the player characters are a part finds itself blocking the escape of a demon carrying away a religious relic. On their own, the characters have no realistic chance of stopping this powerful entity, especially if they are low-level. But if they do stand up against it alongside the army and inflict a few points of damage, surviving more or less intact, imagine the tales they will tell of that session later!

All the Games Master has to do is make sure the threat to the players is real, and make them feel as if they are always in great danger. Do not allow a few dice rolls to make the situation impossible. If the demon's scythe weapon does 13-24 damage, then the feeble wizard has no chance of surviving; that is actually a good reason why the demon would not seek the wizard out from among the multitude of targets in front of it – he just is not a perceivable threat. If the wizard pings off a spell that stings the demon's pride a little, have it attack a man-at-arms or other soldier beside the wizard. 'The scythe slashes the soldier for 22 points of damage, slamming him into you. The poor guy is dead before you both hit the ground, and you take d6 damage from the impact. You want to try and make a strength check to push him off? – OK, we can deal with that next round...'

Do not twist the rules so much that the player characters can defeat the demon. Perhaps they just do enough damage to have the creature drop the relic, or their bravery so impresses the commander of the army they get some reward for the encounter.

Above all else, play it large! This is a war between the gods, or at least their servants on the mortal plane. Make your players feel a part of it!



HEROES OF THE CRUSADES

When the servants of one god go to war with those of another, a wide variety of classes will stitch the holy symbol of their deity to their surcoat and march off to a foreign land. Mighty nobles will abandon their duties of state and government and call out their followers to win glory or martyrdom. Low peasants will flock to the crusade's banners, driven by nothing more than simple piety and devotion.

High and low, all are bound by a simple truth, one represented by the symbol they adopt and wear. This symbol shows they are united in the trials and hardships that follow. They will march together across hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles. They will fight together, facing the same dangers and, if they do not prevail, like as not they will be slaughtered together, so that when future generations find their whitened bones, none shall know who was king and who was knave.

That is not to say that all crusades are the same. Some wars fought in gods' names are cynically driven, and the 'cover story' of some terrible wrong is used to hide the simple truth that the crusade is nothing more than a course of religious bigotry on the part of those hungry for land and power. In others, despite a genuine sense of grievance, both sides pursue the matter half-heartedly, more fearful of loss than potential gain.

But when gods collide, things can get very serious indeed. A crusading army is then a massive entity, almost like an entire nation on the move, sweeping across the landscape to their destination like locusts. Kings and nobles on their steeds or in their gaudy wagons, escorted by finely-armoured guards; squadrons of light cavalry fanning out ahead of the column, foraging, seeking supply, constantly on the look-out for the enemy; endless columns of infantry, kicking up the dust as they drag themselves wearily along on another day's march into a strange land.

A crusade is a campaign in its own right, a base for all kinds of adventures. It is like being in a city on the move, with all kinds of characters and resources

to be explored. Just where do the player characters fit into all this?

EXISTING CHARACTER CLASSES

The existing character classes in *Core Rulebook I* can take part in a crusade-based campaign and there is no need to create new characters or make great changes to the ones your players already have. A new prestige class, the knight, has been added to allow player characters to play a more permanent and central role in the crusade, but in a massive crusader army, there is room for all kinds of classes to be a part of the holy war.

BARBARIANS

Barbarians can become involved in an organised crusade in a number of ways. Larger bodies of barbarians – whole tribes even – can be drawn into a holy war, if their shamans tell them there will be terrible consequences if the enemy is not destroyed.

Similarly, smaller bands which have been part of the standing army of a state for some time, or who make their living as mercenaries, could be employed by a ruler. Without the religious beliefs of the main army, such barbarians are unlikely to receive any blessings or benefits granted to the mass of soldiery by clerics, holy items or gods. However, it is easy



to envisage individuals, small groups or even larger bodies sweeping ahead of the main army as a reconnaissance party seeking out enemy forces, forage, supplies and targets. Barbarians can even be the central cause of a crusade, as large hordes of gathered tribes sweep down through the wilderlands to wreck havoc on civilisation in the name of their primitive deities.

BARDS

Even where there has been some terrible offence caused to a deity they hold dear, it is hard to imagine bards in any great numbers taking part in a crusade, however, as chroniclers and recorders of great events past and present, individual bards might accompany a crusading army to watch and observe earth-shaking events take place first hand. A crusade also allows them to explore, journeying to far off lands and seeing the wonders of distant cities and people – perhaps even to record their destruction.

It is also the case that some more mercenary bards would see the crusade as a great opportunity as the lords and their followers will require many nights of

entertainment during a long march. A large army is like a city on the move, and such pickings would be easy. After being exhorted by a shrill priest for several weeks at a time, soldiers would be more than ready to hear a bawdy tale of high adventure...

CLERICS

Clerics will, of course, accompany a crusade in great numbers. Priests and shamans will also be foremost in the defending army. The war is, after all, being fought for their benefit. Naturally, most clerics only become involved when the religion they represent is directly involved in the war, though there is always room for allied priests offering healing and other services, at least in those armies not dominated by fundamentalist principles. Those who have attained some prowess with arms can serve directly in the front line, both bolstering the morale of the troops around them and bashing heads with a morningstar. But, even less-warlike, adventuresome clerics will be found around the crusade, calling on divine magic and guidance, exhorting the army to greater efforts. Soldiers will depend upon them for information about the cause, nature and conduct of the war, for blessings and healing and they will ask for prayers, or the interpretation of the smallest sign or omen. Soldiers – especially when they are being told they may have to die for a cause they do not fully understand – are a suspicious breed. They will require all the guidance they can find.

DRUIDS

The destructive nature of war is anathema to druids, and it is difficult to see them being part of a crusading army, unless some direct offence or threat has been caused them. Even then, their role is likely to be limited. However, when nature itself is under attack from vile gods of destruction, druids may come from across the land to band together as a mighty and divine force in their own right, filled with the righteous wrath of the aggrieved and aided by the power of the plants and animals of the land.

FIGHTERS AND WARRIORS

War and combat is the essence of the fighter's existence. Those who share the



religious beliefs of one of the combatants in a crusade will flock to the colours readily, but many thousands more will join the army simply because their commanders tell them to, or because they hope for loot from captured cities and dismembered armies. Those soldiers and warriors on either side who do not share the religious beliefs of the army of which they are part will not receive the full benefits of the blessings and support offered by the army's priests, and uncommitted soldiers may be the first to break on the battlefield, especially when faced with blood-thirsty fanatics on the other side who appear heedless of risk or casualties.

But this is war, the life they chose. They are the mainstay of both the crusading army and its target, the first to die for a theology they may never understand.

MONKS

The grinding drudgery of army life, especially on the march or in encampments, is not the kind of fighting a monk would choose, but if the monastery in which they have trained has religious beliefs which cause them to side with one cause or the other, monks will appear in the ranks of crusader armies in greater numbers than would be the case in an army chasing more mundane goals. The monk tolerates the crassness and lack of professionalism of lesser fighters in the hope the war will provide opportunity for more glorious combat.

Monks can also be thought of as 'special forces,' sent behind enemy lines on covert missions to disrupt an invading army's progress, sabotage defences, or conduct assassinations against commanders and high priests. If they do become involved in mass battle, it will be as skirmishers, or light troops deployed to harass larger bodies of enemy troops, drawing out leaders and champions, and to penetrate to second and third lines, seeking out enemy commanders and priests.

PALADINS

On seeing a massed crusading army drawn up in front of its commanders, ready to give their all in a holy cause, the slightly more cynical or world-weary paladin might be heard to observe that it is about time. After all, the war against evil, the defence of law and good – these are the causes the noble paladin has fought for all his life.

Every paladin who hears of the gathering of a crusading army which is disposed to Law and Good



– or one which threatens a realm of that alignment – will do his utmost to reach the colours before decisive battle is joined. Even more so than fighters, this is the essence of what a paladin is about, this is the ultimate chance to take the fight directly to the enemy and wreak terrible slaughter against those who follow evil. Many paladins will take up positions of command in the army. They will be the most trusted soldiers, consulted by secular commanders and deferred to on military matters by the priests. When a Lawful Good crusade takes place, it is less a matter of can Lawful Good player characters take part and more one of how can they not?

RANGERS AND ROGUES

Rangers have a very evident role in any army as scouts and pathfinders, and there is no reason why this would change in a crusading army. In fact, they are possibly needed more than ever in a crusade,

'No man need paint a star or a sun or a moon on his shield to have my permission to kill an orc.'

The often-quoted remark of Prince Adalm in 1377, when pressed to support the call of the Temple of the Sky for revenge against the Portal Order. The less-referenced reply of Priest Caleb, Bishop-Seer of Threntina, was: 'It is only that when they paint such a device on their shield such killing becomes a duty.'

especially one which has to cover some great distance to find its target, since maps and information may be out of date and the location of the enemy's centres of resistance, religion and civilisation will need to be tracked down accurately before the broad mass of the army appears. Once the two armies are within operational range of each other, rangers will be out ahead of the armies of both sides, checking the ground and seeking a place of advantage on which to fight.

Rogues can also be involved in a religious war, as intelligence-gathering operatives working inside the enemy's land before the crusade has even begun, or as covert operatives looking to sabotage the enemy's will through assassination or – more probably – the theft of holy items, standards and other great symbols of strength, belief and power. They are much less likely to be found among the massed armies involved in the war, although there are always foolhardy types who only count the vast numbers of pockets to be picked and pouches to be slit rather than the swords wielded by their 'marks'. Crusading armies do not tolerate thieves in the midst, any more than standard armies.

SORCERERS AND WIZARDS

In a conflict of a divine nature, there is less of a role for the arcane spell-caster, although it would be a brave (and perhaps foolish) field commander who left all his wizards at home. Different campaigns will feature different ideas about how religious and wizardly fraternities get along and the Games Master must come to a judgment about whether or not a wizard can fit comfortably alongside a cleric with a holy cause to fight for.

CHARACTER LEVELS

A crusade campaign is perhaps best suited for characters who have nine or more levels under their belt, since they will have achieved a level of independence and power by then that makes it more likely their support will be sought out as the holy war begins.

Below that the influence player characters can have lessens, to the point where it would almost be crazy to have first-level characters involved, since they are not only extremely vulnerable, but are also complete nobodies in the realm they inhabit. However, it is possible that such player characters just stumble into the campaign, triggering events by an act of simple adventuring and then find themselves sucked deeper and deeper into the morass, manipulated by the high priests of their own religion, reviled and hunted by those of the enemy. Over a long enough campaign, these characters could progress enough in levels to be recognisable and sought-after personalities by the time war reaches its climax.



THE KNIGHT

On many battlefields, in the midst of carnage and mayhem, there can often be found a body of men, utterly steadfast in the face of all adversity. Well-equipped, these hardened warriors sit upon their warhorses, lances raised, swords loosened in the scabbards, until the critical moment of battle when they sweep across the field in a massive armoured wave, smashing all opposition aside. Ordinary soldiers, even hardened veterans, view these warriors with awe. These are the knights of the elite military orders.

Playing a knight is one of the easiest ways a player can become directly involved in a crusade campaign – holy wars are the stock-in-trade of these warriors. While many fighters are deeply pious men and some clerics wield a mace with considerable skill, it is the knight who typifies the ultimate hybrid of professional warrior and religious zealot. Unlike the paladin, the knight expects to serve as part of an organised band of warriors, and his ultimate goal is battle!

Every knight serves an order, a body of men who serve an ideal and who are prepared to fight and die in its pursuit. Typically, the order lives apart from the broad mass of society, praying and training within a consistory, a closed community where a number of knights, their retainers and servants, and a few specialist auxiliaries (including archers, spell-casters and the like) work together. The order will own the land on which they live, and some farmland and resources around the consistory, which provides income. From this, the knight draws his food and equipment for, until he becomes a sufficiently high level, he will never possess personal wealth.

Life in a consistory is hard, filled with days of training, fasting, prayer and more training. Though servants take care of trivial concerns, the knight works day and night to harden body and soul for war. When the call comes, he sets forth without hesitation, to fight, triumph or die in some far off foreign land.

THE LIFE OF A KNIGHT

The knight differs from other character types in the way his or her life is given over to duty. The various orders place enormously different emphases on codes of honour, chivalry, wider duties to the religion they are sponsored by or the people they serve – the character of the order's patron deity has

a great deal to do with what a knight 'believes' in. However, all orders share one common aspect, and that is a knight's primary and sole loyalty is to the order. It is his duty to serve the order faithfully and without question and even chaotic characters and races can be united by this ethos.

Knightly orders are extremely organised and hierarchical. They are governed by their 'rules', a regime of training, dedication, prayer and discipline, which bonds tightly all members of the order. These vary enormously, of course. Good orders stress piety, hospitality and service to the community outside the consistory, while those of evil alignment require the gathering of slaves and sacrificial victims, pillage and the creation of an aura of fear about them through acts of brutality.

The daily life of a knight is built around training, both in combat and in the beliefs and history of the



order. Physical training is extremely harsh and some orders outwardly boast they suffer more casualties in training than on the battlefield. Several hours of every day are spent in this kind of training, interspersed with periods of rest, meals and prayers or other acts of devotion to the patron deity; the monotony is occasionally broken by patrols or periods of duty at outlying guard posts or watch stations. Evenings are taken up by mental exercises, in the form of lectures in the history of the order, tactical training and religious instruction.

This constant diet of preparation is only broken by those times when the knight leaves the consistory, either on crusade, to patrol border regions, or to perform some diplomatic or ceremonial function. As a member of an elite, most knights expect to be treated hospitably by their co-religionists wherever they travel, and they are lavishly equipped and accoutred on such forays.

PLAYER CHARACTER KNIGHTS

The long periods of isolation within the consistory, along with this devotion to duty and service, might make it appear to be a difficult or impossible class to integrate into a mixed role-playing party, one more used to a self-determined life of adventure. However, the existence of 'auxiliaries' alongside the knights within each order (which can be quite an informal arrangement) allows for them to be part of mixed class party groups. Individual knights, furthermore, will regularly be despatched on missions for the order and their host religion or state and so long as the adventure could be justified to senior members of the order, it is not at all impossible for knights to join in the fun other character classes enjoy.

The big difference is that, between adventures, the knight should return to the fraternity of his order, to continue and complete training, to re-centre himself within the ethos of the order and to take fresh instruction. This can be handled through the use of between-adventure down-time when wizards are studying, fighters spending gold and rogues setting up criminal empires.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify as a knight, a character must fulfil all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5 or higher.

Feats: Armour Proficiency (heavy), Martial Weapon Proficiency (in weapon favoured by the order).

Skills: Ride 6 Ranks *, Knowledge (religion) 2 Ranks.

Alignment: As permitted by the order.

Race: As permitted by the order.

Special: Many orders have strict entry rituals or requirements, as covered in the Crusader Orders chapter. A character must also fulfil any of these requirements to become a knight of that order.

Class Skills

The knight's class skills (and key ability for each) are: Concentrate (Con), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Ride (Dex)*.

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier.

* Ride is only a Class Requirement and Class Skill in those orders where the knights are or can be

The Knight

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Retainers, Possessions
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus Feat
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Knightly Virtue
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus Feat
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Knightly Training, Responsibility of Command
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Bonus Feat
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Knightly Training, Responsibility of Command
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Knightly Virtue
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Bonus Feat, Responsibility of Command
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Knightly Training

mounted. The Ride skill is specific to the order's normal mount, be that horse, giant lizard or killer whale!

Class Features

All of the following are features of the knight prestige class.

Weapons and Armour Proficiency:

Knights are proficient in all simple and martial weapons, and all armour and shields.

Retainers:

All knights have 1-5 retainers in their service, paid for and provided by the order. All retainers begin as a 1st level fighter in the most basic stages of training to be a knight. As the knight gains new character levels himself, he may choose to add an additional retainer, or to increase the level of an existing retainer by one. Retainers slain in the course of the knight's adventures will be replaced when he returns to the consistory, though new retainers will begin as 1st level fighters regardless of how experienced their predecessors were.

Squires: Knights may have one or more squires, who are fighter class characters. They may never gain more than five levels and the knight can never ask them to face a combat he does not undertake himself. The primary role of a squire is the immediate care of his knight and they are trained to use all their strength, courage and endeavour to retrieve their knight should he be brought down in combat.

Groom: The knight's groom is charged with the care of his warhorse (or other combat mount) and all his pack animals. A groom is a fighter classed character with the skill Profession (groom), which covers all aspects of equine care. They can be of any level, though never more than half the level of their knight (in other words, a sixth-level knight may have a 3rd level fighter as a groom). Even those knights who do not serve in an order that fights mounted may have a groom to look after their pack animals. A knight may only have one groom.

Man-at-arms: A man-at-arms is the knight's immediate personal bodyguard at all times when the



knight himself must lay down his arms, such as when he is asleep, eating or praying. They can be of any fighter level, though they may never exceed the combined level of all the knight's squires. A knight may only have one man-at-arms.

Possessions: A knight's weapons, armour, warhorse (or other combat mount), retainers, shelter, training and subsistence are all provided by the order and so can never be considered as personal possessions – should the knight leave the order, these things are also left behind. In theory, all knights are equipped equally, but in practice, it is natural that the best mounts and finest armour held by the order are given to the most senior commanders and veterans. A knight may not augment these provisions with personal wealth, with a few exceptions. Any treasure found or looted becomes the possession of the order. In addition, a knight must relinquish all personal possessions gained prior to his entry to the order.

The exceptions to this are; one combat mount and any number of smaller riding and pack beasts; a personal weapon, even a magical one, so long as it is consistent with the chosen weaponry of the order; small personal magical items, such as rings and amulets, so long as the value of these is not greater than the knight's level times 1,000 gold pieces; all personal and familial effects of little or no gold piece value.

At 1st level, a knight is accoutred according to the standards of his order. For most orders, this





amounts to the following starting gear; Breastplate, large metal shield, the order's weapon of choice (usually a longsword unless otherwise specified), a riding mount (where appropriate), backpack and liveried uniform for normal day wear. Retainers are equipped with leather armour, the order's weapon of choice, a backpack, flint and steel, a lantern, rope and other minor miscellaneous items to the value of 2d10 gold pieces. Rations are provided for knights and their retainers whilst away from the order.

At each level thereafter, a knight is granted better equipment by the order, from its own stockpiles and armoury. With each level gained, the knight can select one of the following;

Armour Improvement: The knight may select armour that provides greater protection. Every time this improvement is selected, the knight gains a new suit of armour with an Armour Class bonus of +1 greater than his previous suit.

Weapon: The knight may select a secondary weapon of his own choice.

Magical Items: The knight may select a single magical item (including potions, which will be replenished when he returns to the consistory) of a value no greater than his class level times 1,000gp.

Bonus Feat: Whenever a knight receives a bonus feat, he may select one of those from the fighter's list of bonus feats as described in *Core Rulebook I*.

Knighthly Virtue: Knights are the divine hand of justice for their patron deities in the material world, second only to the greatest clerics and high priests. When Knighthly Virtue is gained for the first time at 3rd level, the knight may cast a 1st level spell from a domain associated with his order once per day. At 8th level, the knight may cast a 2nd level spell from a domain associated with his order once per day, and a 1st level domain spell twice per day. These spells are cast at a caster level equal to the knight's class level.

Knighthly Training: Working hard within the consistory, the knight receives special training in what it is to be a knight in the heart of battle. At 5th, 7th and 10th level, the knight receives a bonus feat from the following list; Battle Leader, Battle Tactics, Command, Instil Faith, Proselytise. These are new feats detailed on p21.

Responsibility of Command: At various levels of his career, a knight becomes eligible for command responsibilities within the order. At 5th level, a knight gains the title of Lord, and can take command of a small consistory (see p26 for more information about consistories) where the Knight-Lord will command a up to a dozen lesser knights.

At 7th level, a knight becomes known as a Lord-Prior and can take command of a medium-sized consistory. In battle, the Prior commands approximately 50 knights. Priors also fulfil other functions on behalf of their order, such as acting as representatives at the courts of kings.

At 9th level, a knight becomes a Lord-Commander and is eligible for command of a large consistory, leading 200-300 knights.

A 9th level or greater knight can become the Grand Master of his entire Order, with hundreds or even thousands of knights under his command. Naturally, there can only be one such leader and this is always the most senior knight present within the order on the death or retirement of the incumbent Grand Master.

THE JANISSARY

The janissary is a captured slave who is then beaten, educated and otherwise trained into a new life serving a crusader order. The knight is a free

warrior, abiding by the strict rules of his order – the janissary is a possession.

The janissary is little better than a slave. Captured as a child or young adult, usually during a raid or as part of the booty won during the capture of a city, he is selected from amongst his fellow captives by a knight or a great king or noble, though professional assessor-trainers are sometimes employed to identify potential candidates. They look for a youth of good stamina and health, and one who does not show signs of having become too devoted to any previous way of life or religion. Those they select are then taken away from the other captives to a consistory, where their new and painful life begins.

Almost every culture has its janissaries, as do many of the crusader orders detailed in this book. Even goodly-aligned races and cultures have janissaries, though they may try to hide the fact by calling them ordinary knights but then secreting them away at a small consistory for their training. Good cultures may also be more inclined to view the treatment of a janissary as being a path to salvation from the life they had before and their treatment is likely to be cruel rather than brutal. Because they are taken as captives, janissaries are sometimes of a different race to that of the order they join. Some human cultures will go as far as to train janissaries captured from amongst humanoid races such as orcs. The less fussy humanoids take captives like this all the time, beating their intelligence and will out of them and leaving them with so little sense of their own self and background that their different shape and appearance is forgotten. They become soldiers of the order.

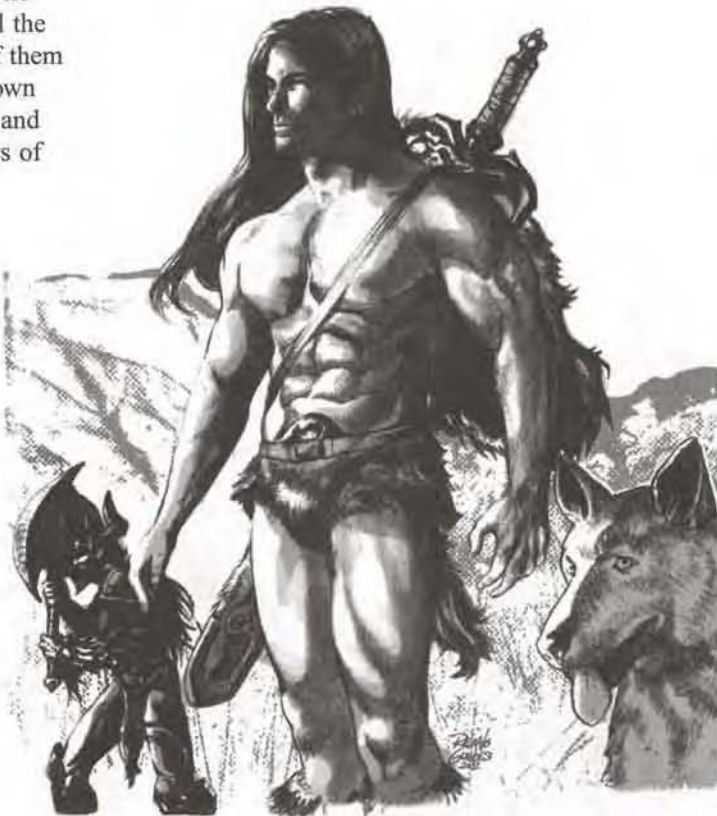
Janissaries, then, are slaves. Their loyalties are to their consistories and to their master knights, and they are subjugated and trained until this is all they believe in. Personal goals are subdued and hidden whilst those determined to cling on to their old ways are unlikely to survive their new upbringing. The individual janissary is completely swallowed up in the crusader order to which he belongs. Their mind-training is so complete, these warriors become akin to automatons on the battlefield, fierce and indefatigable warriors who fear little and will attack into the most ferocious defence with no thought of their own individual life. The casualty rates among janissary units are appalling, as they are given the most difficult jobs to

do – they are always first into a breach or last to leave the battlefield.

The greatest of janissaries will fight long and hard for their order and, over time, may just prove themselves to their lords and masters. Such individuals may well be knighted by the order and so join the ranks of regular knights though they will rarely be able to shake the stigma of their upbringing. For others, the only release is either death or escape. The latter is rare but it does happen. That tough, self-contained and yet faintly unstable adventurer in the corner of the tavern may just be a runaway...

THE LIFE OF A JANISSARY

From the moment he is taken as a slave, the janissary expects cruelty, harsh training and a life of constant toil and hardship. No matter at what age they are taken – and some cultures take very young slaves into the ranks – the young janissary will be separated from the rest of society and forced into a life of training for war.



Most janissary consistories are separate from those of 'free' knights, though there are combined consistories where the slaves are trained alongside other knights but without any of their freedoms. Becoming a knight is something the janissary aspires to and is inspired by. The janissary is sometimes tattooed or branded but otherwise nothing separates him from other knights other than that they are never allowed to leave the consistory or enjoy any other form of freedom. They are the property of the order.

Training is identical to that of a knight's, though far more intense. On the military side, the young janissary is toughened up through arduous and repetitive exercises, designed to make him a predictable, controllable and indefatigable warrior. He will be trained in the use of weapons, and expected to master them to the highest standard. Another way in which janissaries are marked out as different to standard knights is that they spend a great deal more time on campaign, away from the walls of the consistory, if not its rigours. Janissaries are expected to serve and so they are used in almost all circumstances, not just crusades. They will be

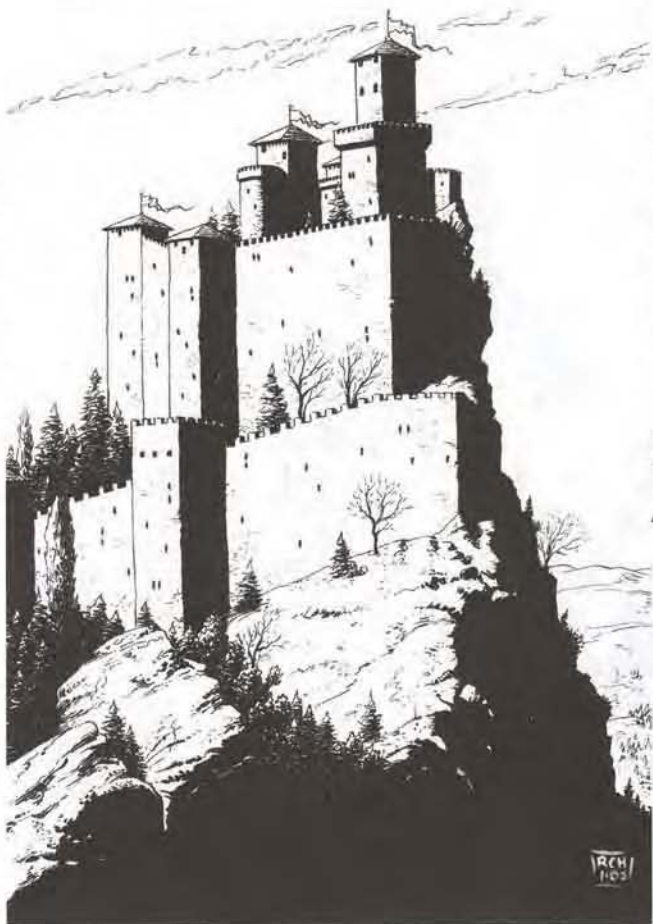
employed against village uprisings, bandits and border raiders, and in small localised brush-wars, not just the bruising clashes between religions and states. This has the effect of brutalising them, getting them used to the battlefield and killing.

Away from the consistory, the training and exercising continues. Even more than with the knight, the janissary is constantly on duty and when not marching, training or fighting they are harangued and tutored by clerics and other teachers. This brain-washing is designed to erase all signs of individuality from them and to render them wholly dedicated to their order and to a way of life that makes for unquestioning obedience to a particular deity. Any lasting signs of the individual person inside the slave are crushed. In time, the individual janissary may forget his place of birth, his race, his family and perhaps even his name. All that will remain is the duty he owes. It takes a great deal of willpower for the individual to survive this regime with any sense of self intact. More often those who survive and somehow escape are forced to invent themselves anew.

Other than when he falls into exhausted sleep on a plain cot, the janissary's life is one of brutal and unceasing toil. Either through physical exercise (orders which contain janissaries are among the most prolific castle-builders), martial training or campaigning, or through the harsh screams of a tutor, the janissary's day is filled with toil. Few survive this standard of treatment for long but those who do become physically strong, very well trained and often have skills in science, mathematics, siegecraft, engineering or some other similar field, taught to them as a form of discipline for the mind. Janissaries are often forged into superb road and fortification builders, as well as soldiers.

PLAYER CHARACTER JANISSARIES

Even more so than with knights, the nature of the janissary's life, especially the subjugation of self and the complete devotion to the will of a master, makes a player-character janissary difficult to play in a standard adventuring party. The janissary class is specifically designed for non-player characters or for players just beginning a new character, which is a further limitation. However, in the context of a crusade campaign, where some other players are knights or are working with a crusader order, the janissary can be used very successfully. Janissaries also make for superb characters in small parties.



The Janissary

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Possessions
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Body-Servant
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Knighted

The crusade campaign this book discusses at length would be a fantastic opportunity for a Games Master to play with a group of janissary player-characters who, at some point, break free of their knights and order.



Another way of using the janissary class is with those campaigns in which characters are 'aged' a little before play begins. A character who had spent his formative years as the slave within a different culture could grow up as a janissary, escape or be freed, and then become an extremely dedicated warrior against his former masters.

Finally, the Games Master could allow a janissary character to become part of a mixed player character party in circumstances through which one of the other characters, say, was charged by the janissary's order with his ongoing training and development, recognising this particular slave has potential which needs to be developed in the wider world. On the

whole though, the authors do not recommend having one player character be the slave of another!

Hit Die: d12

Class Skills

The janissary's class skills (and key ability for each) are: Climb (Str), Concentrate (Con), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are features of the janissary NPC class.

Weapons and Armour Proficiency: Janissaries are proficient in all simple and martial weapons, and all armour and shields.

Possessions: A janissary's weapons, armour, shelter, training and subsistence are all provided by the order and so can never be considered as personal possessions – should the janissary ever escape the order, these things are also left behind. In theory, all janissaries are equipped equally to their knights but this is rarely followed in practice. A janissary may never augment these provisions with personal wealth, for all treasure found or looted becomes the possession of the order.

At 1st level, a janissary is accoutred according to the standards of his order, though this is usually of poorer quality than that of the knights. However, the janissary is still usually better equipped than a common soldier for, on the battlefield, he is considered an elite warrior. For most standard orders, this amounts to the following starting gear;

Scale Mail, a buckler, the order's weapon of choice, a backpack and a liveried uniform for normal day wear. For extended campaigns, a janissary will also be granted flint and steel, a lantern, rope and other minor miscellaneous items to the value of 2d10 gold



THE KNIGHT

pieces. Rations are provided for janissaries and their body-servants whilst on the march but they never perform as mounted cavalry and so do not have a warhorse of any kind, though they may be given the use of pack animals or wagons.

Janissaries never have personal wealth. Any treasure found or looted, or other gains become the possessions of the order, though there is one rare exception. Janissaries are a potentially dangerous and subversive element within any society, even when their will has been broken by training, and there are many instances where they have mutinied or revolted against their rulers. In order to both tame the stronger janissaries, as well as honour their heroic actions, it has become customary with most races to grant a reward to janissaries after a battle or siege in which they have been extensively employed. This reward is of the order of 100-600 gold pieces per level of each surviving janissary and this sum alone can be used by a janissary to purchase better equipment or other personal items.

This payment is *very* rarely made and often only in circumstances in which it would be foolish or unwise to simply massacre any malcontents.

Body-Servant: The janissary, having performed loyally for his knights, gains a body-servant, a younger janissary who must be taught the ways of the order. The body-servant is a 1st level janissary who never increases in level whilst under the tutelage of the janissary. Body-servants slain in the course of the janissary's adventures will be replaced when he returns to the consistory.

Knighthood: On attaining 5th level, the janissary has taken everything the order has managed to throw at him and survived. On the battlefield he has likely become something of a hero and now leads other janissaries into the fray. The janissary is now knighted and becomes a full member of the order. From this point on, the janissary may take levels in the knight prestige class, regardless of whether he meets the prerequisites or not.

They were standing in thirty ranks, sixteen wide, flanked by their Lords and sergeants-at-arms, their heralds and their ensigns. Gaudy banners waved overhead. The sun streamed down into the yard, reflecting off burnished armour, gleaming harnesses and the crests on their steel helms. When they came to attention, their shields gleamed like hot stars, their emblems throwing back the bright sunlight so that the whole yard seemed to be afire with golden radiance.

The master stepped forward onto the steps of the main tower, leaving the cluster of nobles in the doorway. His eyes took in every face in the yard, and as he scratched the snow-white scar that cut through his beard, he grinned a harsh and challenging smile that made each one of the warriors below think he was looking at them.

'Whom do you serve?' he bellowed, and his voice echoed from the high walls of the fortress.

'We serve our lord, the sun, the light of the world!' came back the reply from almost five hundred throats. The Master's grin broadened.

'Whom do you obey?' he called. The answer was a little more hesitant, but a few voices spoke up, and others joined in as quickly as they could.

'We obey the Priests of the Sun, and the commanders of our order, our masters and officers!'

'Not bad...' the Master murmured, then he leaned forward on the balustrade of the staircase, and called down: 'And who do you fear?'

'No-one!' cried a few voices, though they were stilled at once by the Master's baleful glare. There was a long silence, broken only the snapping of the flags in the wind.

'You!' came a voice, finally, and the Master guffawed loudly.

'Good answer,' he replied. 'Don't come back if you let me down out there.'

He turned and mounted the steps, passing into the tower. 'They're as ready as ever they will be, Steere,' he remarked as he passed the general. 'Try not to get them all killed.'

FEATS AND MAGIC

Because of the intensity of their dedication and training, not to mention the direct benefits of blessings from their deity, the participants of a crusade have the opportunity to gain specialised feats and magic. This reflects the additional strength that fanaticism and discipline can bring to a crusader.

CRUSADE FEATS

All of the feats and spells below may only be selected when the individual is inspired by the crusading spirit and cannot be called upon at just any time. Therefore, they may only be selected by those having levels in cleric, knight or paladin classes, or those who are current and active participants of a crusade. Crusade feats, once gained, may be used at any time. However, the spells listed in this chapter may only be used during a crusade, as determined by the Games Master.

Battle Leader (Crusade)

This feat allows you to command men on the battlefield, giving them clear and concise orders they can obey without becoming disorientated. Troops commanded in this way are less likely to move off after the wrong objective, or to rout uncontrollably.

Prerequisite: Charisma 15+, Leadership, Battle Tactics.

Benefit: So long as they can hear your words and understand them, a single body of soldiers can be given orders on a battlefield that they will then automatically obey to the best of their ability. This feat can also be used to automatically rally troops who have routed, provided they have time to be influenced by your words.

Battle Tactics (Crusade)

Battle Tactics allows you to make correct decisions on the battlefield, positioning troops to the best advantage, taking into account terrain, weather and other factors, then manoeuvring and commanding them to best advantage during the battle.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 15+.

Benefit: You can assess the lie of the land and thereby know the best position to deploy your army. If you command troops, you can place them according to your understanding of the field of battle and the likely strengths of the enemy. This will grant a +1 armour bonus against all ranged attacks made beyond the first range increment, provided there is some feature in the terrain which would provide shelter. A similar +1 bonus to all Reflex saving throws against spells is also gained. Finally, a bonus of +1 to the unit's Military Cohesion (see The Cinematic Battle System chapter) is granted. This bonus increases to +2 if you also possess the Leadership feat. Battle Tactics requires you to be able to observe and assess the battlefield.



Command (Crusade)

This feat allows you to command bodies of men to perform a specific task on behalf of a crusading force. Speaking to the crowd, you so sway them with the passion of your words that they are temporarily inspired by the same crusading devotion you demonstrate. These tasks cannot be directly combat-orientated, nor can they last for more than a day. Typical examples might include building defences before the arrival of an enemy force, giving up hidden supplies or moving en masse to another location.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13+, Leadership.

Benefit: You can sway 1st level characters within earshot so long as they are of the same alignment as yourself, and there are no distractions or voices muttering in opposition to your command. Up to 10 1st level characters times your character level may be commanded to perform any non-combat related task for a period of one day, so long as it contributes in some way to the crusade taking place.

Instil Faith (Crusade)

Instil Faith allows you to open the hearts of the faithful to your words. It consists of an oration before casting a spell, during which you remind the listeners of the importance of the cause on which they are embarked, and fill them with the fire of your own zeal. Their minds are thereby opened more completely to the effects of divine spells cast upon them – they believe even more fervently divine

power will provide them with the additional strength needed to do their god's work.

Prerequisite: Charisma 15+, Knowledge (religion) skill.

Benefit: The oration to a crowd must last at least 15 minutes as you describe the importance of their actions in the grand scheme of the crusade. Any divine spell cast upon those listening immediately will have its duration last 50% longer than normal. Only those listeners who share your religion will gain this benefit.

Proselytise (Crusade)

This feat allows you to debate with those who do not share your religion's beliefs. If completed, it will negate any bonuses they have gained from divine spells, holy symbols and the like as their faith wavers.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 13+, Charisma 13+, Knowledge (religion) skill.

Benefit: So long as those you wish to sway can hear your words and understand them, and you have time to make the salient points of your argument (1d6 rounds), the Proselytise feat puts doubt into the mind of the enemy to the extent that their religious fervour fades. Any bonuses they have received from divine spells or religious magical items that affect Armour Class, saving throws, attack and damage rolls are negated. Characters in the audience who have the ability to cast divine magic may make a Will saving throw at DC 15 to resist the Proselytise feat and personally avoid the negation of their

bonuses, though they cannot prevent the loss of morale and faith amongst their colleagues.

CRUSADE SPELLS

The following spells are available to all characters who use domains for their divine magic spellcasting. They may be 'swapped' for a domain spell of the same level at the option of the spellcaster at any time a cleric is meditating for his spells whilst on a crusade. The Games





Master is the final arbitrator of whether a crusade is currently ongoing and thus whether a divine spellcaster may select these crusade spells in place of his normal domain spells.

1. Bless Crusading Symbol
2. Release Soul
3. In Nomine
4. Bless Army
5. Wrath of God
6. Oath of Binding
7. Bless Crusade
8. Implore Intercession
9. Test of Faith

Bless Crusading Symbol

Enchantment (Charm)

Level: Domain 1.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 minute.

Range: Touch.

Target: Symbol of the crusade.

Duration: Duration of the crusade.

Saving Throw: None.

Spell Resistance: No.

This spell blesses a symbol of the crusade, usually a standard, relic, holy symbol or other treasured item. The effect of this blessing is to grant a +1 divine bonus to all saving throws, attack and damage rolls for all troops within 30 ft. of the symbol. This effect only applies when the bearer of the crusading symbol is engaging in acts directly related to the crusade and will not function beyond the duration of a crusade.

Release Soul

Evocation

Level: Domain 2.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 action.

Range: Touch.

Target: Dying character.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Saving Throw: None.

Spell Resistance: Yes.

This spell can be cast only in the moments immediately after a subject has been struck down. A subject who has been reduced to between -1 and -9 hit points can be sent to the afterlife quickly and with the blessing of the caster's

own deity (which may or may not be welcomed by the deceased but they are in no position to argue). The subject's remaining life energy is released, along with their soul or spirit, by the simple act of speaking holy words over their body and then drawing the last of their blood. The subject may only be resurrected in the future through the use of a *wish* or *miracle* spell, or direct divine intervention.

In Nomine

Enchantment (Charm)

Level: Domain 3.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 minute.

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels).

Target: All living creatures in range.

Duration: 1 minute/level.

Saving Throw: Will negates.

Spell Resistance: Yes.

In nomine is cast immediately after another divine spell. The caster amplifies the outcome of the former spell by making all who see it aware of the caster's presence and the nature of his divinely granted power. All enemies within the area of effect who fail their saving throw are immediately affected as if the caster had cast *cause fear*.

Bless Army

Enchantment (Charm)

Level: Domain 4.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 minute.

Target: One military formation.

Duration: One battle.



Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless).

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless).

By calling upon the direct power of his deity, the caster can bless an entire unit of soldiers to fight in the name of his god. *Bless army* will grant a +2 divine bonus to the Military Cohesion (see The Cinematic Battle System chapter) of a single formation of troops. The formation to be blessed must be within sight of the caster whilst the spell is being cast.

Wrath of God

Evocation

Level: Domain 5.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 minute.

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level).

Area: 30 ft. radius spread.

Duration: 1 round/level.

Saving Throw: Reflex halves.

Spell Resistance: Yes.

Wrath of god calls upon the divine power of the caster's deity to smite his enemies and further the cause of the crusade. When cast, the area is filled with the raw power of the caster's deity. This usually takes the form of a divine firestorm, though ice, utter darkness and whirling blades are all possible, depending on the nature and sphere of influence of the deity. All subjects within the area of effect will suffer 1d6 points of damage per caster level (up to a maximum of 15d6). All living creatures not directly allied to the caster and within 30 ft. of the area of effect will also be affected as if the caster had also cast *cause fear* upon them.

Oath of Binding

Divination

Level: Domain 6.

Components: V, DF.

Casting Time: 1 minute.

Range: One individual.

Duration: 1 minute/level.

Saving Throw: Will negates.

Spell Resistance: Yes.

When this spell is cast on a subject, they will be compelled to tell the truth in answer to any questions put to them for as long as the spell is in effect. As part of this spell, the subject will be forced to swear a binding oath in the name of their chosen deity that what they say is indeed the truth, an oath which may bring them into great danger if it is broken (the specific oath is up to the individual deity but will be of the 'may I be struck down if I tell a lie' variety). This, of course, means the caster needs to know the name of one or more deities the subject worships.

Bless Crusade

Enchantment (Charm)

Level: Domain 7.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 hour.

Target: Up to three military formations.

Duration: Duration of the crusade.

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless).

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless).

By calling for the blessing and personal hand of his deity, the caster can bless an entire army of soldiers to fight in the name of his god. *Bless crusade* will grant a +4 divine bonus to the Military Cohesion (see The Cinematic Battle System chapter) of up to three formations of troops. All formations to be

blessed must be within sight of the caster whilst the spell is being cast.

Implore Intercession

Conjuration (Calling)

Level: Domain 8.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 hour.

Effect: Variable.

This spell calls the attention of the caster's deity to a moment of great peril in the crusade and pleads for intercession. The response of the god will be entirely dependent on the situation but the Wisdom of the caster does have an effect on the maximum response that may be expected. The summoned intercession will take whatever action is necessary to save the crusade from the current threat and then depart.

Caster's Wisdom

17 or less

18

19-20

21-24

25+

Maximum Intercession

A single avatar

Two avatars

Earthquake, whirlwind or other 'catastrophic' miracle

Three or more avatars

Direct divine intervention

Test of Faith

Enchantment/Transmutation (Calling)

Level: Domain 9.

Components: V, S, DF.

Casting Time: 1 round.

Target: One living divine spellcaster.

Duration: Variable (see text).

Saving Throw: Will negates caster's divine bonus.

Spell Resistance: No.

This spell initiates a duel between two divine spellcasters, in which each attempts to destroy the mind, spirit and will of the other. Every round, both the caster and intended target roll 1d20 and add their Wisdom modifier. Unless the target has made a saving throw, the caster receives a +3 divine bonus. If the subject attempts any action other than maintaining concentration of this test of wills, he suffers a -3 divine penalty. The loser of this duel will permanently lose 1 point of Wisdom. The duel will continue every round until either the caster dismisses the spell or his Wisdom falls below 19, at which point the spell can no longer be maintained. As a subject's Wisdom falls, all abilities (such as bonus spells and the effect of certain spells) are reduced accordingly. If a subject's Wisdom falls below 3, they become insane, broken in mind and spirit.

'My brother died fighting the corsairs, and they said he was a hero, and would be lightly judged on the other side. My neighbour was killed on crusade against the necromancers, and they say he went straight to heaven, though I know he was a thief, an adulterer and a liar. It seems like any damned fool can get a dagger in the heart on a crusade, and become a saint.'

The Enigma, by Grim



CRUSADER ORDERS

Many races and religions have knightly orders that are concerned with the preservation of their own true faith through military means. This chapter explores some of them. The examples shown are archetypes, based on generic racial characteristics and mythologies, and may easily be adapted for individual campaigns.

In most cases, crusader orders exist as independent arms of a religion. They may be politically controlled by the leader of the faith in whose name they take up arms, but their military activities are internally controlled. They are elite forces, and run their affairs accordingly.

Each order is separate from the military caste of any race or nation, though they draw their recruits from the common population. Members of orders live, train and are based in separate establishments called consistories. These are castles, fortresses or camps, either based in a frontier or hostile region as a forward base of the order, or within a host country, where it acts as a recruiting and supply centre.

The armed strength of each order is based on its volunteer knights, each of whom may have a number of servants who act as auxiliaries in combat. The order can be expanded by the addition of specialist troops or mercenaries and many consistories will also have a large number of clerics. A small number may have wizards based among their order as well. However, it is only the knights and clerics who are spoken of as being 'part of the order'. The others are no different to the entourage of any lord's castle.

Small consistories will typically have 1d6+8 knights (F5/K1-2 or P5/K1-2), living in a fortified manor under the command of a lord (F5/K5). There is also likely to be a priest present (C3). Each knight will have 1-3 retainers (F1) who act as foot-soldiers in combat.

A medium consistory usually has 3d20+10 knights, under the command of a Knight-Prior (F5/K7) and with 1d3 Knight Lords (F5/K5) as lieutenants. The consistory itself will be a modest castle with outlying lands and farm

buildings, and will have a small temple under a senior priest (C5-7) with 1d10+10 subordinates (C1-3). As well as the knights' retainers, the consistory will also likely house specialist troops, such as 2d20+70 archers.

Large consistories can be giant affairs, massive fortress complexes enclosing large areas of land. In times of peace, the population of such a place would only be about the same as for a medium consistory, with perhaps a larger number of specialist/auxiliary troops (1d6x100), but in a hostile frontier region or in times of war, this would be expanded by up to d6x50+100 knights, under the command of a Knight Commander (F5/K9-10), with three Knight Priors and 2d4+4 Knight Lords as officers. In such times, each knight would have 2-4 retainers, and there would be units of light horse, archers, spearmen and other specialists, easily outnumbering the knights in the fortress. One of the central buildings would be a major temple, which itself might house over one hundred clerics under the tutelage of a very senior priest (C9) who would run the consistory in partnership with the Knight Commander.



These huge consistories are very rare, with perhaps just one in any kingdom or nation. They are a visible warning to any who might attempt to interfere with the followers, temples or priests of the religion. As such, they are as extravagantly funded as any city-centre temple, and are consequently centres of huge (and very tempting) wealth. They are also where the order stores any magical items they hold – under close guard.

The following crusader orders are given as examples of just who might inhabit such consistories and cover many intelligent races. Each order is detailed with the following information;

Membership: Those whom the order will accept.

Application: Any restrictions or requirements for entry.

Alignment: The general alignment of the order, which is usually reflected in the alignment of its members, though some accept members from a wider base.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The patron deity of the order, along with those divine domains from which the order draws its spiritual strength.

Remit: A simple statement of the order's ethos, reflecting the reasons why it was set up, and what is expected of its members.

Symbol: The order's holy symbol.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Any bonuses or penalties associated with this particular order.

Auxiliaries: Typical associate members of the order - the non-knightly warriors and specialists employed by the order.

MC: This is Military Cohesion, a measure of the order's typical combat ability in battle. See p69 for more details on Military Cohesion.

Typical Equipment: Any alterations to the standard equipment given in the chapter on the knight prestige class as it applies to this order.

Special: Any special rules, possessions or features of the order.

THE SOLAR ORDER

The Solar Order is devoted to the defence of all Solar Temples and small consistories are attached to all but the smallest temples, even in remote, foreign lands. In the larger human kingdoms, they have many medium and large consistories, and the order is staggeringly wealthy. It is led by the Grand Commander but its broad policy is directed by the High Priest of the solar god. No knight of the order can rise above fourth level unless he or she has also achieved at least third level as a cleric.

It is true to say that Solar Knights are a little misogynistic and that female knights, while relatively common in the lower ranks, are rarely seen to reach the command levels. This reflects the overtly masculine nature of the deity.

Their warriors prize honour and duty over all other virtues. Solar Knights are quiet, reserved, polite when spoken to and chivalrous to all classes. They are remarkably disciplined both as personal fighters and in battle, and bear no specific enmity to any race or other order, though they are painfully aware



of the terrible losses they have suffered at the hands of the Brotherhood of the Broken Lance.

Membership: Principally humans, elves and half-elves though all must be followers of the solar deity. The order shuns rogues and thieves, and expels any who display such abilities. The Order of Daylight, a secretive but affiliated order mostly populated by centaurs and other forest creatures, works very closely with the Solar Knights.

Application: In peacetime there are few vacancies. The Solar Knights accept volunteers for membership, but conduct extensive checks into the character of the recruit which often delays the acceptance of strangers for months or even years. The faster way into the order is to achieve a reputation as a warrior of good character. In such circumstances, the Solar Knights have been known to approach worthy candidates directly. A typical service that might attract their attention would be the destruction of a raiding band which had damaged a Solar temple, or an act against evil dedicated to the solar deity.

Alignment: Lawful-Neutral/Good.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The solar deity (Sun & Good).

Remit: The protection of all who worship the sun and the guardianship of all temples and clerics of the sun god.

Symbol: A solar disk, worn both on the knight's surcoat (above the heart) and on his shield.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Solar Knights will never pursue offensive action at night and on campaign their retainers build a sturdy defensive camp each evening to protect the formation even in the midst of a larger army. If forced into combat at night, Solar Knights lose their Knightly Virtue class feature and suffer a -2 MC penalty.

Auxiliaries: All Solar Knights are mounted heavy cavalry. The order also commands bodies of infantry and archers to garrison its castles though these are never taken on campaign. In almost all cases when it undertakes a crusade, the Solar Order works closely with the knights of the much larger Order of the Hammer and centaurs of that order provide bodies of light cavalry and archers.

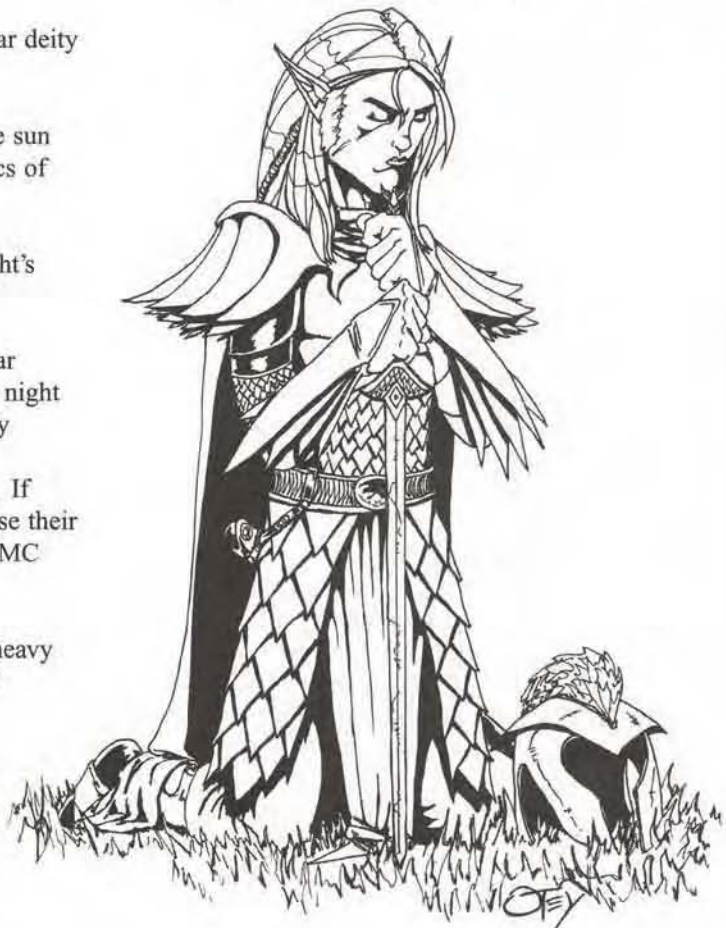
MC: 15.

Typical Equipment: As description of the knight class.

THE ARCANE ORDER

The Arcane Order is a very loose organisation compared to many of the military orders detailed here. Individual consistories operate independently, some would say almost in competition with each other, in the search for magical artefacts and books for their libraries. These consistories tend to take on the character of the majority of the knights there; some are considered repositories of great evil, others sanctuaries of good. In reality, they are all quite selfish and grasping in their pursuit of magical gain, and the differences in character are not so important.

The centre of any Arcane consistory is its library, and the knights are quartered about it. Younger knights are taught how to copy scrolls in the scriptorium; they are also taught basic smithing and potion-brewing. This study is considered a better use of their time than learning military tactics, although they are perfectly competent individual



fighters. The work they do in the Library and its associated buildings often also replaces acts of devotion to their deity – for an Arcane Knight, the best way to show devotion is to succeed in the tasks set by the order in acquiring new items.

The most jealously guarded secrets of the order are those related to the smithing of their armour, which is specially enchanted to allow spell-casters to act with few of the normal restrictions relating to armoured characters and magic. This is only made available to the officers of the order, being extraordinarily expensive to manufacture. Most prized of all are their silvered gloves, so light as to be almost unnoticed on the hands, and yet as protective as fine chain mail.

Membership: Principally humans, though half-elves are admitted.

Application: The Arcane Order accept applications from volunteers but insists they perform a series of tests against existing members of the order before they are admitted. A basic test of martial competence in both mounted and foot combat is followed by a test of spell-casting. This is normally all for show, because the key test is to send the applicant out on a quest that will require strength of both mind and body to complete.

Alignment: Any.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The deity of magic (Magic).

Remit: The advancement of magical knowledge; the gathering of the world's great artefacts.

Symbol: A complicated knot design, pierced by a sword.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: All Arcane Knights are spell-casters, though all lower-level knights are restricted as spell-casters by their armour and so appear to act much as any other knight on the battlefield.

Auxiliaries: All Arcane Knights are mounted heavy cavalry. The order also commands bodies of archers, and employs mercenary foot when required. The Arcane Order is aloof, and never co-operates with other orders, except in moments of severe danger.

MC: 13.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class. The Arcane Knights, for all their accumulated wealth of magic, are loathe to let any of it leave the consistory lest it be lost. Therefore, although they are much more generous than most in terms of providing potions and scrolls for their crusading forces, they are much meaner with more permanent items, such as armour and weapons. However, in defence of the consistory all this hardware is made available to their warriors, making them extremely hazardous to attack.

THE ORDER OF PAIN

The Order of Pain is feared wherever it is encountered, since it is widely accepted that its knights are capable of acts of considerable cruelty, and that they are prepared themselves to endure almost anything in pursuit of their perverse goals. It is also widely known that the order actively seeks to test itself against others, to prove its greater strength even though it is numerically inferior to almost all others. The order is, of course, operating without the guiding hand of any priesthood or accepted religion and is thereby considered 'godless' by many other religions who undertake crusades against it almost any time one of its consistories are uncovered.

The Pain Knights themselves have no problem with their outlaw status, and use their independence to involve themselves in holy wars between other religions. Because of their status, they are almost always forced to take the side of evil religions, although there is no requirement for its members to act evilly.

Unsupported by any religion, the Order of Pain is widely known to be desperate for funds, and it struggles to equip its knights adequately. In the light of this inescapable fact, the order has been recently seen to act more as a mercenary body than as true religious warriors.

Membership: Dwarves and humans. Many half-breed humans and even some creatures like ogres are to be found in the most isolated consistories.

Application: The Order of Pain is secretive, and the hardest part about becoming a member is finding a consistory to approach. The order is effectively a rogue element within the religion of the God of Strength and the heretical nature of its beliefs has caused it to be ostracised within that creed and in the wider society outside. Once the consistory has been found, the applicant must undergo some kind



of trial of pain – typically, this is a fire-walk or an ordeal of running the gauntlet of existing members.

Alignment: Neutral, but overtly attractive to evil characters.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The god of strength (War & Strength).

Remit: The subjugation of lesser orders and religions. The heresy of pain is that struggle, especially if it is hard enough, is a worthy form of worship in its own right and that the god of strength demands the submission of lesser deities and the suffering of its own supporters in pursuit of that goal.

Symbol: A hand closed over the barbed edge of a spearhead.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Pain Knights are capable of extreme acts of endurance. Any Constitution check made against extreme distress, such as drowning, is made with a +6 divine bonus. In addition, the knights are renowned for their death blow – a final strike made by the knight immediately after he has been reduced to negative hit points, with an attack bonus equal to his hit points - that is, a Pain Knight taken down by a blow to -8 hit points would receive an immediate free attack with a +8 bonus to hit.

Auxiliaries: All members of the order are knights. There is no distinction between their cavalry, heavy infantry or even their archers, though the latter are encouraged to close with their enemy almost immediately. Very few clerics exist prepared to accept the heresy of pain, and so the order accepts other spell-casters into its ranks as ‘priests’ which tends to outrage the orthodox priesthood of the god of strength even more.

MC: 14. The Order suffers no MC penalty for being outnumbered.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class. The barbed axe or hammer is the order’s chosen weapon.

THE ORDER OF GLASS

The Order of Glass is a curious association of ex-thieves and other rogues, secretive and obscure, supported by the religion of the god of thieves through a tithe gathered by thieves’

guilds. Those members who are not former or current thieves are mercenaries, attracted to the order by the possibility of one single act of martial larceny that will set them up for life.

The order is rarely involved in crusades as such, although almost all its members are hunted men in one state or another. However, the priests of the order (who are themselves usually high-ranking members of the thieves’ guild) are frustrated and offended by the lack of recognition given to their deity by the followers of others, and fight back by stealing items from other religions as proof of their worth. This, in turn, often causes such bitter offence that ‘war’ is inevitable, and many of the more lawful religions take great delight in hunting down the heretic-thieves, though this is not always as easy as their priests would like it to be.

The Order of Glass does not operate consistories as physical premises, but hides among the criminal underworld of large towns and cities in small cells, where training and indoctrination takes place. This makes targeting them as a body almost impossible, and open warfare as practised by other religions’



holy orders a frustrating and impractical goal. This doesn't stop them trying.

Given their extensive contacts in cities all over the world, the order are often sought out by other religions as allies. The Glass Knights have been known to enjoy this role, and to play off both sides against each other, although this is often more to do with the territorial disputes between different thieves' guilds than any policy of deceit. In fact, the most dangerous holy wars in which the Order has been involved have been those in which different consistories have been involved on either side of a dispute between other religions.

Membership: Thieves.

Application: Most professional thieves' guilds or underworld associations have secretive contacts with cells of the order. Therefore, to approach the order for membership, the applicant needs to convince the local thieves' guild by some daring act of larceny.

Alignment: Chaotic.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The god of thieves (Trickery & Chaos), a deity widely recognised as merely a demi-god by most other religions.

Remit: The 'proof of theft', a creed in which the status of the order's guiding deity is enhanced by thefts from other religions. This activity, though chaotic and frequently destabilising, is essentially harmless and the items are often returned if their loss has caused genuine harm.

Symbol: A key, picked out in an almost-black colour against a black field so that the outline of the device is almost impossible to see.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Because of their extensive contacts with thieves' guilds, Glass Knights have the ability to pass through towns and cities almost unseen, and from third level onwards are given various magical items with concealment powers. Being caught in open battle is almost an admission of defeat; the order operates best as guerrilla fighters, moving rapidly from point to point, ambushing and destroying supply routes and foragers, harassing enemy columns and cutting communications.

Auxiliaries: All Glass Knights are light infantry, though the order has mounts available for rapid

transit. The order does not train its troops to be archers, though many have missile skills and these are deployed in battle.

MC: 15 from ambush or behind prepared defences but only MC 11 in open battle.

Typical Equipment: Glass Knights have standard equipment, as per the knight class description, although many of its fighters prefer lighter armour to that provided and supply themselves accordingly. The order's magical equipment almost exclusively relates to devices of concealment and silent movement, though looted treasures from other religions are available too.

THE NECROS FELLOWSHIP

The worship of the goddess of death is not an illegal or immoral act, even in the most lawful societies. In fact, in some cities, the temple of the death goddess lies across the street from that of the life-affirming earth goddess, or that of a sun deity. Most ordinary citizens make offerings to the goddess, if only so that she might turn her attention elsewhere.

However, it is an inescapable by-product of the existence of the goddess' religion that the Necros Fellowship exists. Long ago, the Death creed had a military order much like any other, if a little inclined to be sombre and brooding. However, it was never very numerous, and the high priests of the creed found themselves disadvantaged in disputes with other religions, for want of mortal souls prepared to put themselves into battle in the name of death.

That order became corrupted and transformed by the adherence of necromancers and vampires, who saw it as a vehicle for their own protection. Over time, they wrested day-to-day control of the order from the priesthood of the goddess, although there is still a level of political control. This is the dichotomy of the religion of death - on the one hand, their priests see themselves as no different to priests of light, animals or truth, providing a direct link between mortals and their divine source. On the other, they are forced to rely for protection on beings who have subverted the death of mortals, and who revere the goddess not as a final judge or keeper of souls but as a gatekeeper, guiding beings from the mortal state to that of being undead.





Alignment: Chaotic evil.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The goddess of death (Death & Evil).

Remit: The protection of necromancers and war against those clerics who despise the undead.

Symbol: A black heart dripping silvered blood.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None, although because of the dangers of

It is an uncomfortable arrangement, and one of some theological dispute, although it has been noted that the goddess has acted in support of the fellowship, and that the High Priestess of the creed insists that supplying tithes to the order is in accordance with her wishes. What it means is that both religion and order need each other, even if their aims appear divergent. It also means that crusades against the cult of death are normally directed not at the institution of the creed, but at the fellowship alone. The order is normally defensive, although some of its commanders are known to wish for more opportunities to act aggressively – since war is one of the greatest providers of slain mortals for their necromantic activities. The order aggressively denies this is the case, stating quite blatantly that it requires a numerous and healthy mortal population as a ‘herd’ for its leadership...

Membership: Any. Almost all the officers are vampires.

Application: Merely turning up to the doors of a Necros consistory is usually enough proof of intent but applicants are also observed around the undead closely in their first weeks within the order to ensure their compatibility. Those who see themselves as destined for high things within the order are required to commit a high-profile murder and bring the victim’s body to the order to be resurrected as an undead creature.

daylight to their undead followers, the Fellowship shuns the sun.

Auxiliaries: Necromantic Knights are heavy infantry, with no cavalry and no beasts of burden, although there are rumours of some powerful consistories mounting their officers on black, fire-breathing undead horses (though these rumours may be fanciful). The undead that serve the order act as tireless draught animals, hauling the order’s equipment including the carriages that speed the Fellowship from place to place. Light infantry and missile troops are provided by raised undead.

MC: 17, but MC 12 in daylight.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class.

THE WARRIORS OF THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

The militant arm of the religion of truth, the Warriors of Light are an aggressive and arrogant body, which believes itself superior and above all other orders. Their consistories are all placed in or close to major centres of population, which the warriors then ‘police’ according to their own standards of right and wrong, sometimes with the permission and support of local secular rule, but just

as likely to be in a completely antagonistic relationship to civil authorities.

The order lives according to a highly disciplined and moral code, and seems to think that all should aspire to the same laws. Their members therefore are detailed to patrol the streets, looking for any who fail to live up to that high standard – from the petty misdemeanours of street-walkers and unlicensed vendors, to thieves and assassins working their less acceptable trades. They impose beatings and on-the-spot ‘tithes’, all of which creates an atmosphere of resentment among ordinary citizens.

Even less acceptably, they go out of their way to offend and put down the followers and supporters of other religions as being ‘false’ or ‘secondary’. Street-corner preachers, guardians of small shrines, even priests out among their flock, all are harassed and brow-beaten by these high moralists, even the followers of other lawful deities from the same or allied pantheons.

Naturally, such behaviour frequently results in Truth Knights being attacked, at which point the order takes great offence to this ‘provocation’ and initiates reprisals. Many secular rulers hate having a consistory of these bullies on their doorstep for precisely these reasons, although they also recognise the power of the order as a protector of government and a powerful foe of the races of chaos. Some cities have even bowed to the inevitable and disbanded their own police and militia, placing their defence in the hands of the order, and paying a fat tithes for the privilege.

Membership: Lawful of all races.

Application: Any may apply to join the order, but there is a sweeping and invasive initiation ceremony in which the applicant is physically and magically probed to ensure his or her purity and acceptability to the god of truth.

Alignment: Lawful.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: Truth (Lawful).

Remit: In common with its patron religion, to bring the light of truth to bear on all the beings of the world. The order takes this to mean also expunging those found unworthy of knowing the truth.

Symbol: A black circle surrounded by three white rings.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None.

Auxiliaries: Truth Knights operate as heavy mounted infantry, though they are capable of acting as heavy cavalry too. They do not have a permanent auxiliary establishment, though they accept the adherence on an informal basis of ‘companions’ – mostly archers and the like. Clerics are considered the same as knights in terms of their status within the order, and many consistories are commanded and officered by clerics.

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: Truth Knights are equipped as most standard knights, though their leaders are exempt from the usual rules of property and have the right to keep any weapons, armour and treasure they find.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE PAST

The Guardians are a widespread order, to be found in almost every Lawful and most Neutral states throughout the known world. Even some chaotic kingdoms grudgingly maintain a small Knowledge temple and consistory in their capital, for access to the vast knowledge the order maintains.

Unlike the repositories of the Arcane Order, the Guardians’ libraries only contain books and scrolls, and they do not have the extensive workshops of other orders. Instead, guarded by the most intensive and interwoven magical wards, their Libraries – the focus of their large consistories – are huge storehouses of written knowledge on almost any subject one can care to imagine. They are obsessive about history, and keep their own records of the passing days in every kingdom and city in which they are housed. Every knight is trained to be a scribe as well as a warrior, and spends long hours in the Library, learning and copying (this takes the place of the more religious indoctrination applied by most other orders. To the Guardians, all knowledge is the word of their god.

The Guardians provide a valuable service to monarchs, traders and men of learning, allowing access to their records for a fee, and using the money raised to add to their libraries. Although acquisitive, the Guardians rarely make war just to obtain more books, although their smaller consistories (which do not have their own Libraries and serve otherwise as information-gathering points





Auxiliaries: The Guardians are a self-contained order, in which knights may serve as cavalry, infantry, missile troops, engineers or other specialists. Their clerics and other specialists are also styled as 'knights' and can rise through the ranks of the organisation as easily as can their true knights.

for the larger houses) will raid the lands of those who do not worship the god of knowledge to see what can be gathered. The order is normally very defensive, and protective of its existing Libraries. However, it has fought aggressive holy wars against book-burning cultures.

Membership: Humans mostly, but also elves, dwarves, gnomes and others with an interest in knowledge.

Application: The Guardians are obsessive collectors of books and scrolls. Any character who presents the order with a suitably rare volume will be admitted. If the applicant has no such volume, they are directed to a distant city where a particular item might be acquired.

Alignment: Chaotic not admitted.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The god of history (Knowledge & Protection).

Remit: The collection and protection of knowledge.

Symbol: A stylised scroll.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Guardians have access to the greatest repositories of knowledge and typically have Knowledge skills of a much higher level than their contemporaries. Each time a Guardian spends four full points on any skill, he gains a +2 divine bonus to any Knowledge skill he possesses.

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: The Guardians are equipped as standard knights.

THE DRAGONS

The Dragons may be the original military order, though back in the mists of time it is unlikely that they worshipped the one god, the all-father. Instead, it is believed that they were a warrior elite within an ancient empire, long destroyed, and that after the loss of their patrons the Dragons sought out a new direction for the order, which they found first through one of the most powerful deities of a sky pantheon, and then more recently through association with the religion of the all-father.

Despite the many changes they have endured, the Dragons have never lost their association with the creatures that adorn their shields and banners. The Dragons consider themselves to be the most elite of all the military orders, although their most recent military history hardly bears this out, and only accept those they deem to be worthy of their order. In practice, this means blue-bloods, although hard gold has also been known to find favour.

As to what they represent, the Dragons themselves are highly reticent to talk about this. The crusades they embark on, at the urging of the temples of the one god, follow no obvious pattern. One moment they are fighting chaotic humanoids in dungeons in the mountains, the next they are engaged in a war over doctrine with the followers of a lawful deity in

a civilised city-state. The Dragons like to take part in set-piece battles on open plains, in which their undoubted superiority as heavy cavalry can be most effective, and they attempt to make short work of sieges and other periods in camp, away from the luxuries of their consistories.

Membership: Humans, though open to demi-humans.

Application: Deliberately exclusive, the Dragons present a series of complicated and seemingly impossible challenges to common applicants, while seeming to fast-track the nobility into their ranks.

Alignment: Any, though most consistories have a lawful character.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The god of all but also an aspect of the one god in which he appears as a golden dragon (all domains).

Remit: Vague and secretive.

Symbol: A golden dragon on a red background, either painted on a shield or stitched to a surcoat.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None.

Auxiliaries: The Dragon Knights are heavy cavalry, though there are rumours that in a great war, they ride dragons into battle. All other military functions are provided by retainers and mercenaries.

MC: 13

Typical Equipment: The order's smiths have learned the secrets of simulating dragon scales from hardened steel for the manufacturing of armour, breastplates and shields. Any of these items granted by the order is considered to be masterworked.

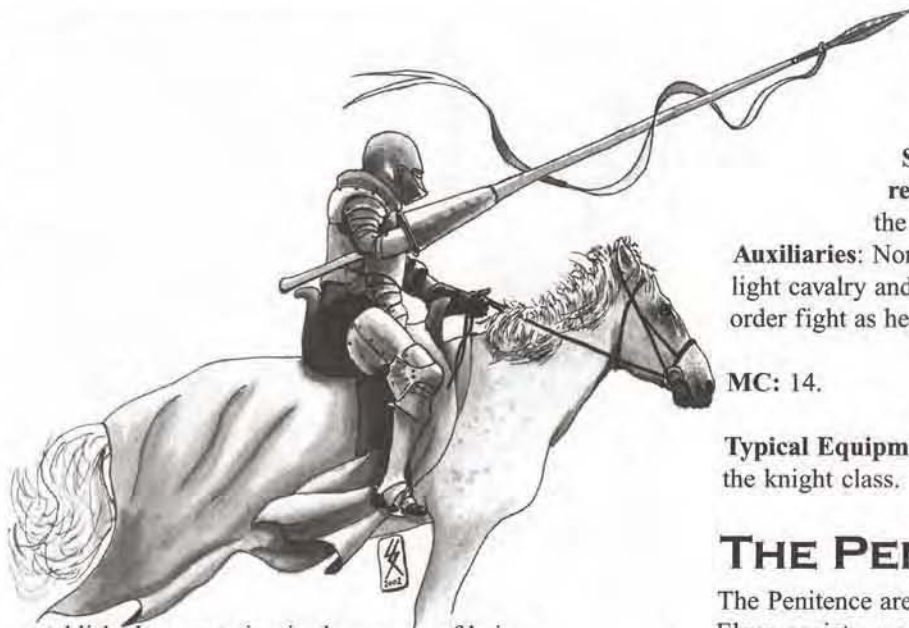
THE SILVER BRETHREN

The Order of the Silver Brethren was formed by a renowned elven warrior-poet many centuries back, following the desecration of some elven holy places by wild humanoid races. Originally a warrior brotherhood, it started to offer its services to the various temples of the elven pantheon, copying the already successful trend among human and dwarven religions. Even some elven temples that had their own military orders were glad to contribute funds and resources to the Silver Knights, who quickly formed a reputation as highly-skilled warriors.



The poetry of the original founder was rarely heard outside of elf society, mostly because it dealt with some complicated elven philosophical matters, but also because the elves were aware that it had a dark thread of racism running through it – many of the poems spoke of a time to come when the ‘lesser races’ would have been purged from the world and the elves would experience an age of glory. Where this theme has been noted by non-elves, it is normally explained away as meaning only the destruction of the chaotic humanoid races, and that no enmity is meant towards dwarves, humans or halflings. As evidence of this, apologists point out the many times when the Silver Brethren have sided with these races in holy wars against the creatures of darkness.

Many elves may believe that this is true but it is not *the* truth. The poems and the philosophy they evoke are supremacist, and the leaders of the Silver Brethren are sworn to seek ways to bring about that age of glory. For now, that is best served by siding with humans and others in their holy wars against clearly common foes, but the Silver Brethren have



Symbol: A silver sword design on shields, clothing and banners.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None specific to the order.

Auxiliaries: Non-knights serve as archers, light cavalry and infantry (members of the order fight as heavy cavalry and infantry).

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class.

THE PENITENCE

The Penitence are a band of outcasts from Elven society, made up of individuals who have disgraced themselves through some act that brought them before a religious tribunal attached to one of the major religions. Where elves mix closely with other races, such as in some cities, non-elf 'convicts' are recommended to the order, and some of these are accepted as members.

The rationale behind the order is that these outcasts can attempt to find their way back into society by fighting in the name of higher powers. The patron deity of the order and its sponsoring religion is the elven deity of redemption, a god not widely recognised even in elven society, which makes this order a small and fringe one. However, small bodies of Penitent Knights attach themselves to crusading armies, sometimes travelling thousands of miles to fight or die in the name of Law or Good, and at the conclusion of the crusade they disband and the individual survivors return to their former lives.

There are no medium or large consistories, and the smaller ones are isolated, bleak fortresses in the borderlands. It is rumoured that some Penitent Knights wander the world's byways as individual heroes, seeking some great cause to attach themselves to so that they can be freed of their guilt. More typically the small consistories, which are so forbidding as to appear to be prisons to the uninformed eye, supply manpower to the armies of other religions' holy wars, and when there are none of these, patrol the wild borderlands looking for small brush wars they can participate in. Very few Penitent Knights survive long enough to remove their armour and return home.

established a reputation in these wars of being heedless of the casualties suffered by their ally so long as victory is achieved. It is also true that the Silver Brethren are very quick to act against chaotic or renegade human religions when these commit some heresy against the truths elves hold dear.

So, for now, most non-elf orders among the civilised races view the Brethren as powerful, if slightly non-dependable allies. A time will surely come, though, when they are forced to confront the Silver Knights as the most dangerous of enemies.

Membership: Elves.

Application: The Brethren are open to all applicants, though they set some trivial tests (proving one's prowess with different combat weapons, or showing magical aptitude). These, in fact, disguise the fact that what they are testing is the attitude of the applicant – so long as they can be sure that he or she believes in elven supremacy, success or failure in these tests is largely irrelevant.

Alignment: A tendency towards lawful, though not exclusively.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: All elven deities (Healing & Law).

Remit: To prove, by lance and sword, the supremacy of elven martial prowess. Secretly, they are also plotting for the day when elves will be the foremost race on the planet, though such aims are known only to the very highest members of the order, and are not even suspected by their sponsoring religions.



Membership: Principally elves but also many half-breeds and some humans, halflings and centaurs.

Application: Applicants are welcomed, though the order does not publicise its existence. Those who have been found guilty of crimes in religious courts are sometimes steered towards the order.

Alignment: Any. Evil characters are expected to 'reform'.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The elven god of repentance and redemption (Law & Knowledge).

Remit: To allow the guilty to find redemption and forgiveness by society through acts of repentance or ultimate sacrifice.

Symbol: A tattoo on the forearm with a symbol of the crime the knight had committed before joining. Their banners portray a branding iron.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None specific to the order.

Auxiliaries: None. Being open to all classes, the Penitence has characters with varied skills in its ranks, and therefore deploys infantry, cavalry, archers and others within its ranks. All are styled 'knights'.

MC: 16. This MC only applies to small actions, involving less than 20 Penitent Knights. When 20-50 are involved, this falls to 15; when 51-100 are engaged, their MC is 14; when there are more knights still, their MC is just 13. The order has a very loose command structure compared to many others and does not attract stable or competent leaders.

Typical Equipment: Members of the Penitence start with scale armour and a buckler. The order is more likely than any other to turn a blind eye to characters with personal possessions, so long as these are not the product of crime. Weapons, armour and other items looted from the enemy are not pooled as with other orders.

THE ORDER OF THE HAMMER

The Order of the Hammer is one of the most numerous orders, with consistories scattered far and wide through the lands of humans, dwarves and elves. The vast majority of these are small, acting as hostleries for travellers and way stations for messengers and couriers. Indeed, it has been said the order is the militant arm of the world's innkeepers. Larger consistories are located in more remote areas – the reverse of the practice in most orders. From here, patrols are constantly on the look-out for 'eruptions' of subterranean dwellers, for their outposts and egress points. These are attacked constantly.

On the whole, though, the order is defensive and quite passive. It takes a great deal to provoke them to anger, though once they are committed to a crusade they pursue it with fierce determination. Their armies are normally large hosts, unwieldy, with many different troop types organised in small groups under the command of their consistory officers. As such, these hosts have been out-manoeuvred on many battlefields, though their sheer numbers and the individual quality of their well-equipped fighting men rarely see the order humiliated.

When they campaign, Sky Knights, as they are also known, make directly for enemy centres, seeking



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ways to destroy the enemy's means to continue the war, and also reducing their population to a simpler and more acceptable state by razing their cities or bringing down the roofs of their dungeons. They also send out small parties to attack the enemy's leaders, seeking ways to avoid making destructive war on the ordinary population of even the most evil races. This naivety has led the order to have to repeatedly return to attack and contain fresh outbreaks of trouble from foes they have vanquished.

Membership: Dwarves, humans, some elves (though mostly half-elves), and a few centaurs.

Application: The Order of the Hammer is a widespread and very open order. They accept recruits from all kinds of classes, even those such as wizards who are unlikely ever to don armour and fight in the ranks. All that they require is some sign that the applicant is of good character. The Sky Knights have a strict code of chivalric behaviour that they expect their followers to adhere to. This code includes charitable works, and it is frequently the case that they accept members readily who have shown themselves prepared to work for the common good and to assist the unfortunate.

Alignment: Good.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The sky deity (Air & Magic).

Remit: The protection of all under the sky. This has been defined to mean all travellers, and all those who work outdoors. Curiously, this means that the Sky Knights even protect the lower orders of evil races from persecution, so long as they are at peace and living out their lives simply. The order reviles subterranean races, on the other hand, and works tirelessly to seal off cave complexes and the entrances to underground domains. They detest campaigning underground, however, and only undertake offensive action in the most extreme circumstances.

Symbol: A silver hammer embroidered onto plain blue cloth.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Sky Knights rarely pursue offensive action underground. If forced into combat out of sight of the sky, they lose their Knightly Virtue class feature and suffer a –2 MC penalty. The members of the Order of the Hammer may not actually use the hammer as a

weapon, seeing this as the divine right of their deity alone.

Auxiliaries: All members of the order are styled 'knights', no matter what function they perform – there are no auxiliaries as such. Most fighters act as heavy infantry, though the larger consistories also employ heavy, armoured cavalry. The few centaurs attracted to the order serve as light cavalry and the bulk of its archers are half-elven. The order also has many spell-casters in its ranks, and these occupy special towers within medium and large consistories, engaged in pure research into combat magic and creating basic magical items, which this order has in greater quantity than almost any other. Curiously, there are no temples at the consistories, even though the sky god has many fine places of worship built in his honour. Instead, clerics worship and prepare their spells in open stone circles close by.

MC: 13.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class. The axe or pike is the order's chosen weapon.

THE GRANITE ORDER

The Granite Order are dedicated to the concepts of 'high' dwarven ideals, and are probably more of a racial order than a religious one, though they are closely tied to the precepts of the Earth God, at least as they are understood by dwarves. It is this that allows the various sub-species of dwarves to have consistories of Granite Knights, though these are unrecognisable as part of the same order in practice and each claims to be the 'true' inheritor of some original tradition. These different varieties of Granite Knight are called 'seams'.

Granite Knights are redoubtable defensive fighters, and incredibly patient when called upon to fight an offensive crusade. Rather than face an enemy field army, Granite Knights will manoeuvre below ground, out-flanking enemy armies by tunnelling or waiting patiently in sturdily-built and constantly evolving fortresses. They will then seek to bring their might against enemy centres, cities and towns, where they feel the enemy will lose any advantage of greater mobility and where they can be bombarded into submission. This patient approach is not without ironic cost for there is a recorded instance of a dwarven crusade against a gnome city-state, which took so long to reach its destination that

the gnomes had completely forgotten the original cause of the dispute and were completely surprised by the attack. Even more surprised were the gnolls who had conquered the city in the intervening decades.

Despite the racial character of the order and the bitter depths of the grudges they hold, many Granite Order consistories are populated with knights from other races, especially halflings and gnomes. This is largely to do with the small population of many dwarven communities and their relative isolation, which has left the order short on manpower. The inclusion of other races in an order that often stresses the primacy of the dwarves requires some sleight of hand and ingenuity from the order's leaders, but almost all of them seem to be capable of this.

Membership: Dwarves. Deep halflings join consistories that are lawful or neutral and similar arrangements exist allowing gnomes and other of the 'smaller' races into other consistories.

Application: As in requirements for knight class. All of the different seams of the order demand that applicants be 'heroes.' This vague term usually implies that the new knight has performed some act of heroism against one of the order's enemies, or has proven himself in battle. Being highly-regarded by bards or having one's name inscribed in the clan or city chronicles is a typical standard of recognition required by the order.

Alignment: Lawful.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: Principally the earth deity (Earth & Protection) but also all specific dwarven deities and demi-gods.

Remit: The protection of dwarven settlements, the 'cleansing' of the ground. Each different seam of the order also considers itself to be the one 'true' version, and thus appends an oath to uphold their beliefs against those of the 'heretics'. It is an unspoken part of the creed of any Granite Knight that he wage war secretly against those knights of the other seams.

Symbol: One of several complicated knot-work designs, picked out in a verdant green, woven into the fabric of the knight's shirt, and emblazoned on his shield.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Granite Knights are experts at fighting in enclosed

spaces, and receive a +2 bonus to their MC when engaged in battle below ground or when fighting in a tight valley or city street. They are also extensively schooled in siegecraft and, in either defence or attack, should receive a +2 bonus to all checks directly connected to the conduct of the siege. If forced above ground into the open, Granite Knights suffer a -2 MC penalty.

Auxiliaries: All Granite Knights are heavy infantry. They have no need for cavalry, but even small consistories recruit crossbow-armed dwarves to provide missile defence though many halflings serve as sling-armed auxiliaries, and the larger ones are lavishly equipped with catapults, ballistae and siege engines.

MC: 15.

Typical Equipment: Granite Knights typically start at a lower level of equipment than other orders, but have greater access to magic items later on. This means they start with scale mail instead of a breastplate but that up to 1,500gp per class level is permitted for magical items. The order prefers the axe as its primary weapon.



THE HIGH ORDER OF THE OAK

There are several dozen elven military orders, but the High Order of the Oak is different in that it also accepts recruits from a variety of races. The binding force that holds the order together is worship of the forest goddess and a belief in the sanctity of life, especially the fauna and flora of the woodland.

Oak Knight consistories tend to be small, scattered about deep forests across the world, although they do have a small number of medium and larger consistories in areas bordering hostile states where they have not been able to establish themselves directly in the area's woodland.

Oak Knights tend to have a defensive mentality and are perhaps even more elusive and reclusive than other Knights, though they patrol their domains constantly. It takes a great deal to drive them to an offensive campaign, though they wage war on the servants of various death cults vigorously. Ill-equipped for siege warfare, and in any case disinclined to tangle with larger towns, Oak Knights will seek to achieve victory through prowess and success on the battlefield, then dictate terms which fulfil the goals of their crusade. Historically, they



are one of the most successful military orders, and their battle standards record dozens of renowned victories.

Those standards are likely to be further enhanced in the future. The High Order has a lengthy history of enmity with other orders, especially the Arachnid Sisterhood, the Brotherhood of the Broken Lance, Hobgoblin Jihad and the Portal Order. In practice, the Oak Knights are in a state of almost permanent crusade with these other orders and clashes between them are frequent at local level. It only takes the hint of a wider acceptance of a crusade within elven society for the Oak Knights to rally all their resources, ready to lead the army into battle. They also provide support for other religions' crusades when it is likely to mean combat against their foes.

Membership: Elves, half-elves, gnomes, halflings, rangers and druids.

Application: The High Order of the Oak demands a high level of sacrifice from all its knights and, in common with other orders which require that candidates have shown decades of service to the community and as defenders of the forest, the High Order has a 'paper' requirement that candidates have spent ten years as 'novice' members, associates of the order who act as rangers and stewards of the forest. However, recognising that humans and other races have shorter lifespans, the High Order have ruled that any candidate who has reached a particular level as a druid or ranger may rise to the same level as a knight within the order. Even this rule is sometimes overlooked – the lavishly equipped Oak Knights need a lot of maintenance, and a large cash payment or the donation of a magic item is often enough to ensure that the rules are bent.

Alignment: Neutral good. Pure elves may also be lawful good or neutral.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The forest (Animal & Plant).

Remit: The protection of ancient forest and heath; veneration of life.

Symbol: An oak leaf, engraved into almost any metallic item, but principally shield bosses, helms, sword blades, etc.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None specific to the order.

Auxiliaries: Oak Knights are of mixed combat types, with infantry, archers, heavy and light cavalry drawn directly from their ranks. Consequently, they employ no auxiliaries.

MC: 16.

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class. Members of the order are forbidden to wield an axe.

THE ARACHNID SISTERHOOD

The only known exclusively female military order, the Arachnid Sisterhood recruits solely from among the ranks of militant drow female clerics. Although the Sisterhood has campaigned in Underworld crusades – wars with other elven races are not at all infrequent either – the Sister-Knights' preferred method for dealing with offences against their tightly-held beliefs is to assassinate the leaders of their enemies. They will identify the most vocal of their opponents by arranging military attacks by allies and mercenaries on remote outposts, and seeing who complains the most. A warband of drow Sister-Knights will then be despatched to kill the offender.

Because their beliefs are scarcely more extreme than those of the ordinary drow, the Sister-Knights do not need to live separately from them, and they have only a tiny number of small consistories for training and indoctrination purposes. They are extremely secretive, and nothing at all is known about their senior officers by any other race.

Field battles are fought only as a last resort, and never without the support of auxiliaries. En masse, the Sisterhood are no great threat to any other order, although they are dangerous skirmishers and lethal opponents in single-combat.

Membership: Drow female clerics.

Application: The sisterhood welcome all applicants, especially those who have proven themselves as assassins and who bring proof of their deeds to the door of an Arachnid consistory. A drow who can prove herself as the killer of a noble of any other race is automatically accepted.

Alignment: Evil.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The Underworld (Chaos & Evil).

Remit: Assassination of the high-born and powerful of any other race.

Symbol: A black-bladed dagger with a silver handle. All Arachnid Sisters receive such a blade on being 'knighted'; they also wear the symbol on the inside of their cloaks, on their undergarments and tattooed on their backs.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Arachnid Knights are trained to ride giant spiders into battle. If forced to fight in daylight, Arachnid Knights suffer a –2 MC penalty.

Auxiliaries: Almost all Arachnid Knights are medium cavalry. Their retainers form a loose corps of infantry. Other troop types are hired from among the Underworld races as mercenaries when required.

MC: 13

Typical Equipment: The sisters wear leather armour and carry no shield. They do have an increased allowance for equipment of 1,500gp per level. Their chosen weapons are bows, envenomed daggers and short swords.



THE STEEL MARINES

The Steel Marines are a wholly amphibian force, based in deep-water consistories of all sizes throughout the world. Their religious affiliation is less to any water or sea god, and more towards the idea of the deep waters of the world as an all-embracing domain. Therefore, they embark on purely religious crusades less often than other orders, in the sense of targeting the worshippers of some rival god, instead reacting with force against those land-dwellers who would damage the seas environment by their actions. They are particularly severe against races and cultures they accuse of over-fishing, though they have come to recognise over the years that some exploitation of the sea by land-peoples is inevitable.

There is some justification for viewing the Steel Marines as almost separate from the rest of Sea Elf society, in as much as they appear to act without requiring the authority of their secular masters or any religious 'blessing'. However, they are not arbitrary and seem to reflect exactly the general beliefs and reactions of their wider brethren.

When roused to anger, Sea Elves attack shipping in the target area,



barely recognising any difference between those who roused them to wrath in the first place and other neutral sea-travellers. They also launch attacks against coastal targets, sweeping into harbours and settlements, destroying religious and secular targets with equal efficiency.

A holy war against the Steel Marines normally ends solely because they wish it so, for diplomacy is difficult with so remote and secretive a foe, and the Steel Marines are well known for a lightning campaign of great power and effect, followed by sudden silence until their anger is next roused.

Membership: Sea elves and mermen.

Application: The Steel Marines are extremely demanding of their members and insist on a probationary period for all applicants. Although applicants can adopt the knight class and be part of the Steel Marines as normal with other orders, until they reach fourth level, they have to provide their own possessions.

Alignment: Neutral.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The Sea (Animal & Water).

Remit: The purity and sanctity of the ocean.

Symbol: A pictograph of waves, a net and a trident tattooed onto the skin and also woven into surcoats.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Steel Marines use the Ride skill for sea creatures.

Auxiliaries: Steel Marines employ no auxiliaries, though probationary members of the order are not considered true knights, and perform many of the duties true knights feel are beneath them, such as scouting, foraging and setting up camp. Their 'cavalry' are mounted on dolphins and killer whales.

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: Steel Marines wear a form of toughened hide armour. They wield long spears, lances and swords as chosen weapons.

THE ORDER OF MIRRORS AND MIST

The Order of Mirrors and Mist would not describe themselves as a crusading order. They would argue that the purpose of the order is purely defensive, and that all Gnome strategy is based around avoiding military confrontation by guile and trickery. However, any survivors of the attacks the order has made on kobold or goblin lairs would testify that this is not the whole truth.

Consistories exist in most gnomish communities, attached to the temples of their protector deity. They are considered the front line in the defence of the community, whose task it is to lure the enemy away from the settlement by guile and deception, ambushing elements of an attacking army well away from the civilian population, hoping to so demoralise and confuse the enemy that they retreat. The order has, over centuries, compiled detailed maps of the areas around their settlements that are a wonder to behold, and which show how the defending members of the order should draw off invading forces into places of entrapment and ambush, or just into unpopulated areas away from gnome settlements.

Because of the way gnomes crop up in the cities and communities of many civilised nations, they have sought to accept rogues and illusionists from other races who swear a solemn oath of secrecy and are then trained and equipped by the order, though few ever rise to be high officers. In general, the order recruits fighters, illusionists and rogues who prove themselves over time to be patient, cunning and efficient, rather than brutish warriors.

At the same time, the gnomes have such a fierce hatred of goblins and kobolds that when the order makes war on one of these races, a level of brutality occurs which is shockingly at odds with the fey reputation and mannerisms of the race as a whole. At the least provocation by these racial enemies, the gnome priesthood declares a crusade against enemy lands and lairs far and wide, and the order then sets off, attempting to obscure their approach through illusion as they cross the territory of uninvolved races, but then unleashing great violence against the offenders.

Membership: Gnomes, rogues and illusionists.

Application: Extremely difficult to apply for the gnomes prefer to recruit from those they have observed closely over a number of years.

Alignment: Neutral good though small numbers of other neutrals accepted.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The Invisible Guardian, a gnomish protector deity (Trickery & Protection).

Remit: The protection of gnome communities; the eradication of goblins and kobolds.

Symbol: A woven square of reed or straw, fastened to the shield or to armour. A stylised yellow painted design has the same symbolic value. The order also awards its valued members with amber discs inscribed with the same complicated design.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None specific for the order.

Auxiliaries: None. The order is self-contained.

MC: 12.

Typical Equipment: Most members of the order dispense with armour unless the individual themselves purchases light or medium armour. They receive an allowance of 1,500gp per level for possessions.



THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE BROKEN LANCE

The Brotherhood of the Broken Lance was formed in direct response to and in imitation of the military orders of the dwarves, elves and humans, once the effectiveness of these forces had been proven. Initially, the goblinoids attempted to match their enemies blow for blow, knight for knight, but this proved catastrophic.

The Brotherhood was recast, therefore, as a looser order, operating in smaller units capable of ambushing enemy formations while on the march or in their encampments. Even where a goblinoid army is forced into battle, the Brotherhood's consistories (or dens, as they are styled) operate mostly independently, in small units, sniping at the flanks of enemy formations, looking to turn the tide of battle in their favour by repeated pin-prick attacks that wear down the enemy.

Officered by hobgoblins with bugbear sub-commanders, the brotherhood has no large consistories and medium-sized ones only in the main centres of goblinoid society, where they enjoy a highly privileged existence. Smaller consistories

are scattered everywhere, especially in deeply wooded or mountainous areas, close to the main approaches to goblin kingdoms, or within striking distance of the trade routes of their enemies. All such encampments are temporary forts; permanent castles attract too much attention.

Membership: Bugbears, hobgoblins and goblins.

Application: The Brotherhood are open to all applicants. Given their high turnover through aggressive campaigning and heavy losses, the order sometimes pressgangs goblins and even hobgoblins into its ranks.

Alignment: Chaotic/evil.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The fanged deity (Chaos, Evil & Trickery).

Remit: To kill paladins and knights of all other races.

Symbol: A broken lance painted on the knight's shield; talismans taken from fallen enemies worn on the belt.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Hobgoblin commanders and specifically trained sub-units of the Brotherhood ride into battle on dire wolves and boars. If forced into a battle not of their choosing against an enemy military order, Knights of the Brotherhood suffer an MC penalty of -3.

Auxiliaries: The Brotherhood has no auxiliaries of its own, though the high prestige of the order means its commanders regularly take command of small units of specialist troops, especially archers, for specific purposes.

MC: 15

Typical Equipment: As in the description of the knight class, except that the order, being poverty-stricken, starts by issuing only padded armour to its members.

THE ALLIANCE OF THE NORTH

The Alliance is a loose confederation of northern warlords, who co-operate in religious war periodically in order to raid, seize and terrorise more temperate lands to the south, especially those owned or controlled by religious authorities, who



they fight vigorously when circumstances allow. Each warlord is effectively autonomous, and they war with each other as often as they fight outsiders, but when the clerics of the thunder deity manage to unite them, the Alliance manages a more or less coherent front. Since the warlords effectively control and govern the territory their armies command, the Alliance sometimes appear to be more like bandits, but they do operate as a military order in practice, allowing non-members in captured territory to run civilian government more or less as they see fit, so long as they supply soldiers, weapons and tribute.

Each consistory is dominated by one race, although there are mixes of races, classes and beliefs in each warband. The mountain fortresses controlled by the warbands have never been successfully attacked, even by crusading armies of the more lawful and powerful southern kingdoms. It is equally true that the Alliance have never achieved that much either, other than raiding or looting, with one exception. Joined in a crusade against a short-lived lawful evil regime by the warriors of the Eagle Legion, the Alliance were able to sweep down from their frozen homes in the dead of winter, deposing the clerics of the enemy regime, and gaining territory they had coveted for decades. They then remembered all the feuds and vendettas that had divided them the last time they had held the same territory, and the various warlords reduced the region to anarchy...

The Alliance has a deep respect for lawful military orders, modelling their own organisation on them and they make war on other chaotic-aligned orders much more readily. They are almost undefeatable in their own terrain, but lack the flexibility, mobility and cohesion to make lasting inroads into the southern kingdoms.

Membership: Barbarians, frost giants, chaotic dwarves, other chaotic-aligned races of the north.

Application: Being a confederation of warlords, the Alliance accepts any individual or group prepared to fight on their side.

Alignment: Chaotic.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The northern god of thunder and conflict (War and Destruction).

Remit: The enrichment of the confederation's warlords. A place in the Heroes' Hall for all martyrs.

Symbol: A white shield with three blue arrows converging from the upper edges.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: None specific to the order.

Auxiliaries: The Alliance treat any who will not undertake worship of the thunder god as 'mercenaries' and outside the order proper, though every individual warlord accepts troops, clerics and wizards – just about anyone who will follow the banner – as auxiliaries, serving in battle with almost no distinction from the Alliance proper, though their wearing of the Alliance's device confers no advantages.

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: Members of the Alliance are typically poorly equipped, with first level knights being given only studded leather armour. In addition, magical items are never granted to a knight by the order, though each member is allowed to keep whatever loot they find. The order prefers use of the greatsword.



THE JIHAD

Within the tightly-ordered martial society of the hobgoblins, there is an inner core of even more dedicated fighters, known as Jihad. Each consistory of the order is based in core tribal territory and recruits its hobgoblin 'officers' exclusively from the tribe, though goblins and orcs are drawn from much wider recruiting areas.

The Jihad is controlled tightly by the clerics of the Hobgoblins' chief deity and operates independently of the wider tribal military leadership. Contact between the consistories is carried on in great secrecy, using clerical magic; the Jihad are paranoid about their plans and objectives being uncovered.

Their consistories are numerous and each shows the same careful layering of defences, with walls and/or ditches protecting the tribal lair, funnelling attacking troops into killing grounds dominated by traps and other killing devices.

This same paranoia is also shown by the structure, purpose and activity of the order. In essence, this goes back to their origin, as guerrilla fighters in former hobgoblin lands taken over by other races, mostly human or elves. Tightly organised and controlled by their clerical leaders, the original Jihad cells nevertheless acted in a chaotic and almost random fashion, preferring acts of blind destruction to any program which might, in time, have liberated their lands. As Jihad grew into the elite religious warrior caste of hobgoblin society, this same schism appeared in their ethos – they are lawful and obedient to their masters in the extreme, but carry out the most brutal and bloody attacks for no gain, and following no plan.

This almost arbitrary behaviour extends to how the order is prepared to put itself into the pay of other masters for specific crusades, or even for purely mercenary reasons. Nothing they do seems to make any sense, often against their published program of seeking the overthrow of all kingdoms occupying ancestral hobgoblin lands. They delight in the destruction of the temples of good deities and commit appalling brutalities against their worshippers and clerics.

Membership: Hobgoblins, goblins and orcs.

Application: Controlled tightly by individual hobgoblin tribes.

Alignment: Lawful or chaotic/evil.

Religious Affiliation and Domains: The god of the First Tribe (Destruction & Evil).

Remit: The reclamation of 'lost' hobgoblin lands.

Symbol: A symbol of life, such as a tree, wild animal or a human face, crossed through in red.

Specific skills, talents and restrictions: Formations of the Jihad receive an additional +1 MC when attacking from ambush.

Auxiliaries: Other members of the wider tribe are considered auxiliaries to the order.

MC: 14.

Typical Equipment: On joining, members of Jihad start with no armour at all, and receive Leather armour only at 2nd level. They also have little allowance for magic and other equipment – just 200gp per each level.



THE CARROCCIO

When they embark on a crusade, many military orders employ a carroccio, a cart or wagon pulled by oxen or other heavy beasts of burden (aquatic orders may use a submersible raft towed by killer whales or other large aquatic beasts), with an open platform on which a number of high-ranking priests are stationed.

The carroccio is the centrepiece of the divine presence in the army; it serves as a rallying point, altar and reliquary, as well as a source for powerful magic. In addition to the spells known by the accompanying priests themselves, the carroccio has tablets of metal or glass on which are inscribed mighty spells, which the clerics use as if they were scrolls.

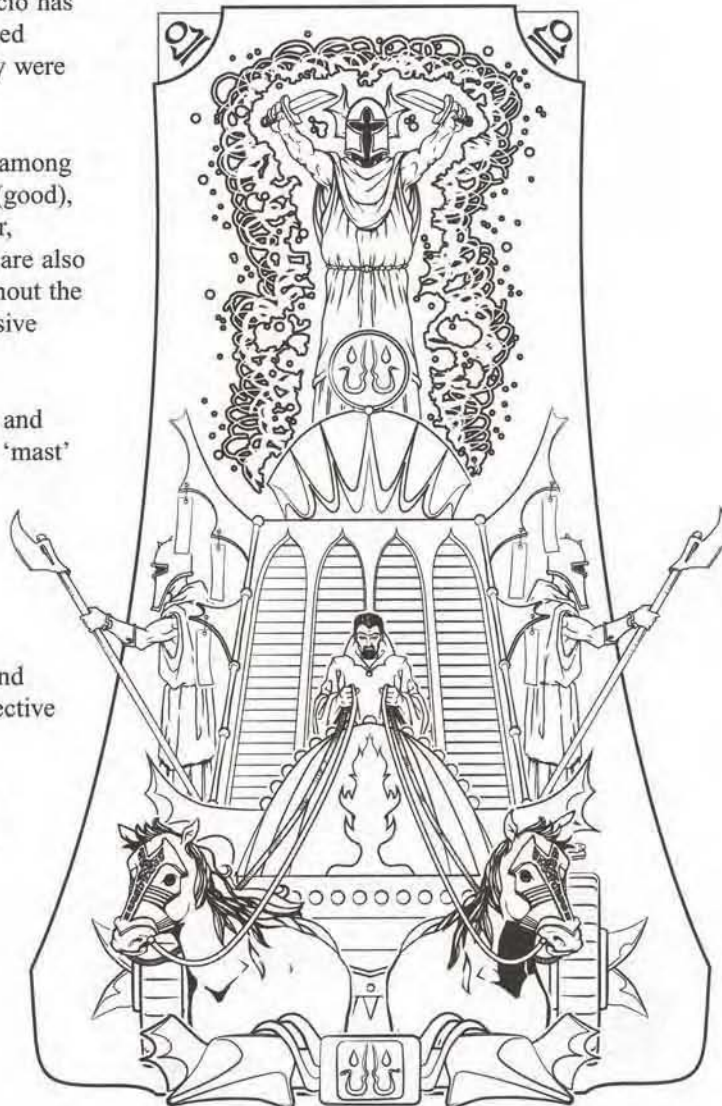
Typically, such spells are at least 7th Level – among those favoured are *blasphemy* (evil), *dictum* (good), *holy word* (law) and *word of chaos*. However, *control weather* and various defensive spells are also common and carroccios rarely go to war without the benefit of mighty and divinely granted offensive firepower.

Each carroccio is decorated with the designs and talismans of its religion and will have a high 'mast' from which crusade banners are flown. These inspire and encourage the troops, having the effect of the *Instil Faith* feat (see p22) on all allied troops within sixty feet. Naturally, on the battlefield the carroccio itself can become the target of aggressive enemy action, especially spells, and so they tend to be shielded by powerful protective magicks.

Carroccios will also carry holy items of the religion, although it is rare for these to have any great significance, since the carroccio might be accidentally lost, or taken in battle. However, the relics of revered saints and perhaps some smaller magical items are often stored in the well of the cart, below the deck on which the priests stand. Blessed crusade standards and other devices are also mounted on the frame of the cart.

Because of its importance, the carroccio is guarded at all times by an elite, a chosen number of knights and warriors from the military order, charged with protecting the carroccio at all costs. If facing defeat, a whole army might draw back in defence of its carroccio, to give it time to flee the battlefield.

The loss of a carroccio can often mean the end of a battle or even an entire war because of the devastating blow to morale its capture entails. While the main object of a crusade might be to punish an offending religion by burning its temples, two manoeuvring crusading armies are often just as concerned with finding a plan to destroy the enemy's carroccio, knowing that it will mean the almost certain collapse of their will to fight.



RUNNING A CRUSADE CAMPAIGN

A crusade – a holy war between two distinct cultures – makes for a superb campaign backdrop. Regardless of whether they are directly involved or merely operating opportunistically (as player characters are wont to do!) in a land torn by religious wars, the backdrop can be used to provide adventure ideas and narratives for players to really get their teeth into. The next few chapters are going to take a look at these ideas and at what being involved in a crusade means in practice for Games Masters and their players, in terms of how the characters might be involved and how they will operate in a setting in which massive armies can be involved, perhaps even the gods themselves.

Running a crusade is not that different to running any other kind of campaign, except in the way the Games Master handles events in the background. You may be used to dropping in snippets of information to your players - tavern rumours, that kind of thing – which they are not supposed to be able to react to directly. They are local colour; backgrounds to long-running campaign themes and so forth.

When running a crusade, especially one that consumes the whole of society in the region in

which the player characters are based, every rumour becomes part of the storyline, because almost everyone has an agenda, and even the most trivial events take on 'divine' character. For example, most player characters will be familiar with the idea of arriving in a new town and trying to locate the local thieves' guild through persuasion or bribery and watching for shady characters in the roughest inns. In certain circumstances, the Games Master might have answered players' questions, conscious of the fact the locals might be suspicious of outsiders or that the innkeeper might have a personal agenda affecting his answers.

In a crusade campaign, the levels of paranoia, mistrust, hatred and fear amongst the general populace run so high that almost every event, from the most mundane conversation to an interview with a sage or king, becomes coloured by the existence of the crusade. Just about everyone feels they are being watched, tested and judged. Religious wars polarise everything – there is no longer any room for 'grey'. You are either for or against.

INTRODUCING THE CAUSE

Crusades begin in many ways and several examples are outlined in the information below.

Sometimes, a crusade can be a planned part of the Games Master's plans for the development of the campaign. At other times, it might happen more organically, as a reaction to events the player characters are a party to. In either event, this information should give the Games Master the necessary start.



The table below gives a sample list of typical causes of religious wars. It has been designed so the Games Master can use a random dice roll to get the ball rolling in his campaign, although it is more likely that the Games Master will design a situation sparking the war or that the Cause in the table below is something directly attributable to the player characters themselves. Several of

'This, boys, will be easy.'

The cavalry officer stretched in the stirrups of his superb mount, better to see along the lines of enemy troops arrayed thinly across the rising ground in front of them. 'There's not more than a couple of thousand of them. We'll just ride them down.'

He turned and grinned to his junior officers and the front rank of the Guard Horse, each man upright, lance in hand, as he held his horse firmly in the line. Two hundred of the King's own regiment, their uniforms the colour of blood and molten gold, waited in four ranks. Several of their giant warhorses pawed the ground.

The officer looked across at the half-elf at his side, dressed in field armour, shielding his eyes against the daylight as he scanned the distant enemy. The elf wore the same golden disk as the cavalry officer, though his was more prominent on his shield, permanently engraved there, catching the light.

'Wondering why they didn't hold the bridge? I was too, but frankly I don't much care any more. They're only gnolls; probably too stupid to realise they really didn't want to face cavalry in open country. Our good fortune, their bad.' He laughed. 'Don't take it to heart, Sun-Prior. Maybe the Order will get an easy target of its own next time.'

He drew his sword, and two hundred lances were levelled at the distant lines a heartbeat later. The officer threw back his head and laughed, and then galloped off up the rise, followed by his men. Drowned in the thunder of their hooves, none heard the half-elf add: 'Not only gnolls. I see goblins, orcs, even men among them.'

The Guard Horse were slaughtered in less than five minutes. They rode into the hidden pits, were thrown and broken, and then gored and butchered by long handled axes. The half-elf turned and walked back to the general's party at the edge of the village.

'Were they Portal?'

'Yes, General Steere. I didn't make out the device on their shields at first, but they are Death Knights all right.'

Steere spat, and called for maps. Maybe there would be another bridge further upstream.

these causes lend themselves very nicely to player characters as the unwitting agents who start the war.

Table 1.1 Causes of the Crusade

1d10	Cause	Reaction Modifier *
1	Blasphemy	0
2	Heresy	1
3	Defilement of holy place	1
4	Harassment of followers	1
5	Murder of prominent cleric	2
6	Expulsion	2
7	Invasion	3
8	Massacre	4
9	Proactive holy war	5
10	The word of god	6

* The Reaction Modifier is applied to Tables 1.2 and 1.3 below.

The same table can also be used where the Games Master wishes to establish a cause of war created not by the enemy but by the kinds of religions the player characters support. It is also possible that the reason given above is false, either the result of hysterical rumour or one deliberately put about by the leaders of one religion to give themselves an excuse to target the followers of another.

This is the first phase of a crusade campaign. Everywhere the player characters go, they will be aware of rumours and stories about the shocking events in such-and-such a town. Street-corner speakers, bar room bullies, priests in the temples, every merchant and trader they meet will be brimming over with their take on the story. Here are some examples of things the player characters might hear, based on the table;

Blasphemy and Heresy: Almost anything one religion believes becomes blasphemy in the ears of





followers of a different faith but there are times when particular offence is taken, when something is said or done which seems to cut directly to the heart of one creed's beliefs.

'Did you hear what they are saying in Edgeport? That since the sun does not penetrate the depths of the sea but there is still life there, that the Light of the Sky is not the giver of all life!'

People of the same faith have also fought over the phrasing of a book or the methodology of worship – this is called a schism. Something that challenges the fundamental nature of their relationship to a deity they believe interacts with their daily lives – perhaps one that they even witnessed providing miracles – scares and motivates people out of all proportion.

Heresy takes this offence a stage further. Not only have the unbelievers spoken and written appalling lies but the very practice of their religion is an offence. How else can a religion that venerates life view altar sacrifice? For fervent followers of good-aligned religions, the very existence of a creed that reveres evil must be a permanent heresy – and vice versa.

'I saw it myself, just the other month when I was trading in Paresi; the sign of the goddess of death upon the walls, windows boarded up to make dark makeshift temples that stank of blood. They say they still venerate the other gods but I swear the whole town has gone over to the way of death.'

Defilement of Holy Places/Harassment of followers: A direct level of threat to believers of one faith is to see their holy places attacked and their fellow believers harassed and threatened. It is one

thing to know an opposing religion has beliefs and practices that contradict something you hold to be sacred but when its followers begin acting as if their faith were the only truth and treating your co-religionists as apostates, then enough is enough.

'When are they going to do something about the fire-worshippers? Isn't it bad enough they snatch our druids off the streets and burn their beards, now they set fire to our groves and shrines? Lightning strike, my behind...'

The effect such actions have can be modified by distance involved, at the Games Master's discretion. For example, if attacks took place in the same city, locals of the offended creed would not only be upset, they might consider that they could be next. It will also become easier for them to demand or take action in revenge.

Murder: The killing of a priest always has a galvanising effect on his followers, exciting them to revenge – it is an act that seems to be aimed directly at the priest's deity, a direct assault on one of his mortal 'voices'. The more highly-placed the priest, the wider the ripples from the assassination. The death of a local village priest may not cause concern too far outside of his own parish but the murder of a senior cleric, on the other hand, might stir all those of his faith into action.

'I am telling you, if they will kill a priest, none of us are safe. It is the same as if they stuck a sword in the belly of our lady herself. Well, their priests are just flesh and blood too, and I say we should go shed some!'

Expulsion/Invasion: If the initial cause of the dispute is this serious, things are already in a perilous state. If the people of one belief expel from their territory those who follow a different creed, or invade their territory, a crusade is surely nigh.

REACTION

Whatever the cause of the dispute, in terms of some kind of igniting spark, deeper and older hatreds will soon surface which drive the participants into war. The exact nature of the hatred between two deities

or two religions really depends on those involved and the Games Master will already have, as part of the mythology of his campaign, some idea of what the enmity is based on and how deep it runs.

This clearly affects the reaction to the initial cause and the way in which the offended party reacts to what has been done. The next two tables allow Games Masters to also quickly gauge the reaction of both ordinary followers and the members of the religion's establishment to the cause of the crusade. Use the Reaction modifier from the previous table in both cases.

Obviously, the effect is diluted by both time and distance, but these are the most noticeable consequences of the event created on the previous table.

Apathy: Apart from the rumourmongers (whoever they may be - merchants recently back from the affected area, religious or government couriers or bards), no-one seems at all excited by the news of the 'outrage'. Perhaps it is because such events happen too often, perhaps there are other, more pressing concerns or perhaps it is a time when dedication to the offended deity is slackening. Whatever the reason, when the issue is raised in taverns or on street-corners, ordinary citizens shrug their shoulders, while in the halls of government, anxious priests are placed at the back of the queue to see the prince...

Uncertainty: Although the news shocks and offends the populace, there is no great movement to seek revenge. Instead, there are a lot of dark mutterings wherever men gather to discuss events, while eyes turn to the temples and secular government for some kind of clear sign as to how to respond. While there

may be street demonstrations and street-corner hecklers demanding action, most people want to be guided and their hope is that the radicals in the religious hierarchy will be restrained by wiser counsel.

'No-one wants war on account of this paltry nonsense. If our madmen want to go and fight their madmen, I say let them get on with it and leave us about our business.'

Offence: People are genuinely offended and upset by the news, and the more their clerics tell them how bad it is, the more offended they become. If the roll on Table 1.3 is higher than the modified 4-5 scored on Table 1.2, the populace are easily swayed by their clerics towards grudging support for the government, so long as they do not feel their own lives are going to be put at risk. Only a very small number of volunteers will step forward, offering support to religion and state, and be prepared to undertake action against the enemy.

'Somebody needs to do something. We pay our taxes, we pay our tithes... what is it all for if these heretics can just come along and insult us?'

Grudging Support: The news brings people out onto the streets, though not in great numbers. Attendances at temples swell as the citizenry seek answers and the governing classes are either pressed to offer a solution or find it easy to take steps, with the slow, steady support of the general population. There is a tendency to believe rumours, the wilder the better.

'Listen, you do not need to tell me something should be done. My own brother volunteered to join the militia this morning and if the guild says we need to contribute extra taxes, then fine. Just so long as

Table 1.2 Followers' Reaction to the Cause

1d6 + Reaction		
Modifier	Reaction	Practical Effect
1	Apathy	Ordinary people ignore the offence and all calls to arms; resistance to any calls for volunteers, extra taxes, etc.
2-3	Uncertainty	Wait and see; support for all efforts to solve the crisis without bloodshed.
4-5	Offence	Small numbers of volunteers; secular government makes limited moves to support offended clerics.
6	Grudging support	Support for government, so long as aims are limited and proportionate.
7	Anger	Local reprisals, thousands of volunteers swell military forces. Government launches military attacks on offenders.
8	Blind support	Spontaneous demonstrations and action; large numbers join military forces; secular government committed to brutal war against offenders.
9	Fury	Fervent demands for action; massive effort by secular government to avenge insult. Supporters of offended religion mobilise in great numbers, ready to be lead in a holy war.
10+	Hysteria	Vast numbers set off on crusade regardless of attitude of leaders and clerics.



they do something with the money, something that will make a difference. I am sick of hearing about these inhuman scum and their sick god. I say send the army and crush their sick creed once and for all!

Anger: At this level, there is real fear and paranoia for people are anxious to see something done to protect their beliefs from attack. In city, town and village alike, ordinary people swarm onto the streets in protest. The secular government, if it is not itself outraged and ready to act, finds itself swept along in a tide of furious protest. Those few voices who call for caution, diplomacy and patience are drowned by those who want to see the military unleashed. The government will undoubtedly go along with this, if only to dissipate the emotion. Generous contributions of money and equipment from nobles and merchants, along with a flood of volunteers, make it easy for the government to raise troops or despatch the standing army to the source of the problem. Meanwhile, if there are any local manifestations of the offending religion – temples, shrines, priests, believers – these are attacked by mobs. Violence is in the air.

Blind Support: Especially if the priesthood are even more aroused to anger and action (i.e. if the result on Table 1.3 is higher than a modified 8), the general populace and their government commit themselves wholly to action against the offending religion. Any local practitioners of that cult are driven from the area, with many assaulted and a few killed as a result. Their places of worship are ordered closed by the government and vandalised or destroyed by mobs. Any rabble-rousing priest can easily create a climate of fear or anger, leading to acts of revenge, and the calls from the temple steps for action become shrill and demanding. The army marches.

'Those bastards have had this coming for years. Remember the war of '77? We should have scoured them off the land back then but this time, no mistake, we will have our revenge. Hey! There's Father Ophrim! Bring your collection tin over here, Father; I will happily empty my purse if it means we get rid of those blood-suckers this time.'

Fury: Everybody who has any affection or loyalty for the

offended religion is driven to fury by the news of the outrage. There is no tolerance left in society at all; mob rule extends not only to all aspects of the enemy religion, but to any other with a similar profile or demographic. This fury is not localised or short-lasting for armed bands will form that spontaneously march to neighbouring cities or regions where rumour fuels their belief that the enemy is committing the worst offences. Where there is no opportunity for the population to vent their anger against close targets, they will flock to the colours of organised warbands and crusading armies, prepared to spend months or even years in distant lands. The government will mobilise all its resources to pursue a military campaign against the enemy and this will be brutal and total. For as long as the crusade has energy behind it, the whole culture that supports it will be geared to the savage repression of the enemy religion – the foe will be scourged from the land.

'What are we waiting for? There must be ten thousand of us here, ready to march! I say we should go, now... let us not endure another day sharing air with this carrion. Supplies? We don't need them; we can take what we want from their towns before we burn them. You! You there! You think the same way, don't you? Join us!'

Hysteria: Madness reigns. People are so terrified of what they have heard, so sickened by the news, that they fly beyond all reason. There is no need for clerics to whip up their fervour from the pulpit for the whole population is out on the streets, howling for blood and vengeance. The government throws its full might into a crusade, attempting to direct this



panic against the enemy but it becomes impossible to contain. Not only does the mob target those who show any allegiance at all to the enemy creed, they attack anything that does not conform to their own beliefs. In the face of such madness, there is no place for neutrality.

'You are either with us – or you die!'

One would expect the broad mass of the population to have a less subtle understanding of the nature of a religious crisis, so Table 1.3 concerns itself with the more committed members of society – principally clerics and other dedicated adherents and servants of the offended religion.

Cynical: Any insult to the 'mother' religion cannot be ignored but on the whole the clerics of the offended belief are strangely quiet in the face of this challenge. Perhaps they have a greater understanding of the cause of the crisis or perhaps they know their own religion is just as guilty. If there is a greater sense of outrage in the wider community (signified by a modified result of 3 or more on Table 1.2), the religion's leaders will speak out more vociferously and demand compensation or retribution, but on the whole they refuse to be diverted from their existing programs.



Guarded: The religion's leaders express the belief that, no matter what was done, a measured response is the only alternative. The public argument will run that war is too costly and revenge attacks against the clerics and buildings of the enemy religion only lead to anarchy. In short, the offended clergy will publicly deplore the incident, but will downplay its consequences. However, behind the scenes, plans will be set in motion to protect the offended religion against future incidents. Messages will be sent to all consistories of the religion's crusading order, putting them on alert. More importantly, the religion will accept the assistance of mercenaries (player characters, perhaps...) to attack specially designated targets.

'We have already discovered that the shaman who ordered the attack on Bishop Kulm is hiding among the hobgoblins in the Shantaz region. If you could go there and either capture him and bring him back

Table 1.3 Religion's Reaction to the Cause

1d6 + Reaction Modifier	Reaction	Practical Effect
1	Cynical	Lip-service paid to how terrible the offence is, but no genuine response.
2	Guarded	Public restraint in calling for retaliation, covert support for acts of revenge.
3-4	Wary	Defensive deployment of Military Orders; hiring of mercenaries (and perhaps player characters) for specific counter-measures.
5-6	Anger	Offensive deployment of Military Orders; shrill demands for volunteers and action by secular government.
7	Rage	Action against local followers of offending religion, including expulsion and destruction of religious sites, temples, etc.
8	Fury	Complete backing and support for all secular action against enemy religion; heavy commitment of own resources against the enemy.
9	Holy war	Massive and disproportionate reaction, heedless of loss, until the original offence has been repaid several times over.
10+	To the death	Hysterical over-reaction, with the full resources of the religion thrown into a fight to the finish.



RUNNING A CRUSADE CAMPAIGN

for us to question, or find definite proof of their involvement in future plans, we would be in a much better position to take action later.'

The aim would not be to escalate the crisis but rather to send a subtle signal to the enemy, while still maintaining deniability should anything go wrong.

Wary: The offended religion finds itself in a difficult position. On the one hand, the incident that sparked the crisis cannot be ignored but, on the other, it is difficult to seek retribution or recompense with the resources possessed by the religion alone. In such circumstances, the religion will determine its overt, public actions based on the support of the population at large, appealing for support to the secular leaders and their followers. In game terms, if the roll on Table 1.2 was a modified 5 or greater, the clerical leaders will modify their public stance from Wary to Anger. If this is not the case, they will only undertake defensive measures, such as increasing security at their temples and shrines, and having the crusading orders at their command undertake defensive patrols and operations. They will also seek out small-scale resources they can employ to perform covert missions against the enemy's religion – an ideal commission for player characters, perhaps. These missions will not be designed to escalate the original offence (although over-enthusiastic player characters can soon change that) since the clerics will not be looking to start a costly crusade. Rather, suitable revenge will be uppermost in their mind.

Anger: The religion finds the situation intolerable for the incident is just unacceptable and steps must be taken. Regardless of how the wider society views the situation, immediate plans are made to seek revenge and punish the aggressors. Primarily, this involves the deployment of the religion's crusader order but the senior clerics will also deploy all the resources at their command to compel support from the secular government and from the religion's followers. This falls short of commanding or demanding a crusade but it will include shrill and continued demands for action to be taken.

'An eye for an eye, that is what we believe in and if that rule does not hold true here and now, when does it apply? We have to show these creatures they cannot attack us with impunity; you say you worship our god – now is the time to prove it.'

Rage: Using every resource it can command, the offended religion takes action against its enemy. Any military resources it commands or can demand from the secular government will be thrown into a



campaign – a crusade – targeted against both the direct resources of the enemy, such as temples and other holy places, and the territories that support it. Action will be punitive rather than designed to conquer and occupy, and once the energy of the initial retaliation is spent, there will be no further action unless the enemy in turn escalates the crisis. The attacks will also be limited to the religion's own home territory and border regions, for the crusaders will not journey great distances in pursuit of their goals.

Fury: From the moment news arrives of the initial incident, the religion attempts to mobilise strong popular opinion behind its demands for retaliation. Preachers will attempt to stir up popular support and high-level clerics will use their diplomatic skills to call for secular aid. This will mostly involve the religion being willing to spend all its 'credit' on calling for aid. For example, princes will be promised funds, titles and any religious dispensation (such as forgiveness for past sins, or the equivalent in 'evil' terms). Such 'blessing' for action will encourage secular forces. In practice this means the roll on Table 1.2 for the secular reaction should be increased by +1, as the populace realises what their religious leaders demand. Their anger is completely genuine and, regardless of the outcome, the religion's own resources will be thrown headlong into retaliatory action. If there is any element of restraint, it comes solely in the form of not permitting the action to drag into an all-out, everlasting war of attrition.

Holy War: Whatever the original cause, the offended religion wants blood in return. The high priest will call 'crusade' – the holy war – promising all who take part in it divine reward in whatever form is appropriate. Any who are killed in its cause will have the status of martyrs and those who fight most steadfastly will receive honour, respect and the keys to paradise. The religion will direct and support action against the enemy, wherever they may lie. Land will be sold to raise money for ships and future tithes pawned to provide supplies. Just as terrifyingly, whatever magic the religion possesses will be deployed, including the summoning of celestials and fiends, and the unleashing of any power the deity has granted. On a more down-to-earth level, priests will harangue the population from pulpit and street corner, demanding support, even threatening those slow to react with punishment. Pressure is placed upon everyone, even the priesthood and supporters of rival or friendly religions in those regions where the offended religion is most powerful.

To The Death: Insanity takes over the religion from top to bottom, with almost every priest infected with what amounts to a divine madness, a religious fervour bordering on psychosis. Throwing all caution and sense to the wind, priests high and low will use all their influence and power to whip the general population into joining the crusade they call. Anyone who resists the call will be excommunicated, pilloried, cajoled and beaten into submission. Clerical courts will run witch-hunts and neutral religions will find themselves harassed. No matter what it takes, the offended religion will throw all it has into the fray in an all-out effort to eradicate the priests, structures and followers of the enemy religion, along with any who support them or hinder the crusade. The most powerful magicks will be called in and perhaps the gods themselves will be summoned, unable to ignore the death-struggle between their followers. Thus begins a cataclysmic war.

Games Masters can use these tables to set up the background to a crusade, filling in the details as required, drawing the player characters into the war either as obvious, open participants – joining a religious-military order or a crusading host led by the King – or as covert agents for one of the sides involved, perhaps leading a raid to steal a holy relic

or magical item of great importance to the other side. The important thing is to think big. Paint huge pictures of the scale of the struggle and let the player characters find their own level within that.

ESCALATION

A frequent factor in religious wars is that they all-too-soon escalate out of all control, especially where religious leaders on one side see previous events as so offensive to their beliefs or their god that small-scale reprisals can never be enough. Then, like a feud between warring neighbours, each new action only fuels the hatred with an act of vengeance becoming the new cause of fresh violence. Using the tables above, for example, there could be a simple beginning to a religious conflict – some abusive and blasphemous remarks by the ruler of a nearby dwarven monarch (roll of 1 on Table 1.1) which does nothing to excite the wider populace of their human neighbours (roll of 3 on Table 1.2) but which leads the elders of the temple of the moon goddess to sanction a raid on a small temple of the dwarven thunder god (roll of 4 on Table 1.3). This is precisely the kind of scenario player characters might be drawn into.

The Games Master could then decide that, looked at from the dwarven perspective, this counts as defilement of a holy place (the equivalent of a 4 on Table 1.1) and that once news of this action is received back in the dwarf homeland, they may react in turn. A roll of 1, modified to 2, on Table 1.2 shows that most ordinary dwarves cannot take this retaliation seriously and perhaps their secular leaders know all too well that it was their monarch's remarks which created the situation in the first place.

However, a roll of 6, modified to 7 on Table 1.3, reveals the dwarven clerics of the thunder god cannot let this rest. At the same time as demanding the monarchy respond, they launch immediate acts of revenge themselves, with clerics, paladins, members of the Order of the Hammer and hired help being instructed to harass followers of the moon goddess and to attack shrines and temples on dwarven territory (and who knows, this violence might spill over into attacks on other non-dwarven religions too). Clearly, they will also attempt to find the perpetrators of the defilement of their temple in the human lands and the player characters' first warning that they are in grave danger could come when the priest who sponsored their actions is attacked.

The dwarves' actions now constitute a fresh offence against the moon goddess in turn, perhaps

'When you strike a blow in the name of god, try not to miss. It embarrasses both of you.'

The Collected Aphorisms of a Hero



Table 1.4 Religious War Escalation

1d6	Level of Conflict	Practical effect and Future modifier
1-3	Short of War	Covert action and small-scale violence possible, but only defensive military measures.
4	Skirmishing	Military orders and border forces clash; violence against minorities in centres of involved religions. +1 modifier to next roll.
5	Raids	Border raids against temples and other sites of the opposing religion; enemy temples on home soil ransacked. +2 modifier to next roll.
6	Small Battles	Military orders clash, manoeuvring of secular armies and increasingly strident demands for compensation. At home, increasing violence against any followers of the enemy religion, possibly including small-scale massacre. +3 modifier to next roll.
7	Invasion	Large scale military action by both religious and secular authorities. Large battles and the destruction of targeted locations; capture and trial of enemy religious leaders. +4 modifier to next roll.
8	Occupation	Systematic action to scourge enemy religion from all controlled territory. Religious ethnic cleansing and summary execution of enemy priests. +5 modifier to next roll.
9	Signs and Portents	Indirect divine intervention; use of godly powers to attack enemy armies, towns, temples and clerics. +6 modifier to next roll.
10	Intervention	The direct employment of the deities' avatars and other-worldly servants alongside clerical and secular armies.
11	Hands-On	The direct involvement of the gods themselves, both in the material world and on other planes.
12	Armageddon	A fight to the finish between the opposing deities, with awesome consequences on the ground.



equivalent to a roll of 4-6 on Table 1.1. This would be a good time for the Games Master to check the humans' reactions once again.

The religious war will continue to fuel itself to greater heights in this way for as long as there is a response from one side greater than the offence which caused it. The attack on the dwarven temple was greater than the blasphemy that prompted it, so it is fair for the Games Master to check dwarven opinion. This, in turn, has led to a greater response from the dwarves which means, after a delay for the news to arrive, it would again be right for the Games Master to check the humans for their reaction.

A couple of low rolls for the humans, who thereby stop short of actual war, means that the dispute remains at this level of bickering until resolved. However, it is just as likely – perhaps more so – that the conflict will escalate. Table 1.4 above extends the rules to show just how far things might go. The Games Master should switch to this table instead of testing for reactions by individual sides once an action equivalent to a result of 7 or more on Table 1.1 has occurred – both sides will now act in much the same way. Use the table periodically in the campaign to see how the action so far has affected the overall mood and character of the war, following the same rule as before. Stop checking once the escalation has peaked.

Short of War: Either or both religions might wish for otherwise but so far there is no real war as such. Throughout the land, people will observe military preparations – repair work on fortresses, larger garrisons in strategically-placed castles – but almost all activity is defensive and preparatory. The exception is the kind of spontaneous riot associated with mobs in the cities or countryside and covert missions using the religion’s own assets, mercenaries or player characters. These actions risk tipping the situation over into a war that no-one outside of the two religions truly wants.

Skirmishes: In the midst of all the talk, some action is undertaken. The crusader orders of both sides may not yet have been committed to a crusade in a distant region but they are on a high alert and their patrols and reconnaissance forces clash repeatedly along the borders. In cities and towns, there are angry riots directed at anything seen as being close to the enemy religion but this energy is disorganised and all attempts to direct it to a greater purpose fail for now. However, it is times like these when player characters who offer to take a more proactive role in the religion’s name can receive the best support and intelligence.

Raids: Although one or both religions may have proclaimed this a holy war and sought to involve the secular powers of the land, there is a stubborn reticence on the part of the government and people to throw themselves into a costly war, particularly since they may not understand the theological problems that have the clergy so excited. However, mobs will prey on the temples of the enemy religion where they can be found easily and nobles in the border regions will take the opportunity to raid enemy territory under the cloak of religious patronage, perhaps bolstered by the creed’s resources. These fitful attacks cause trouble and do a lot of localised damage, which may cause the governments of both sides to intervene more forcefully but mostly they are an opportunity for warlords, mercenaries and player characters to take action under a cloak of religious respectability.

Small Battles: A holy war has been proclaimed but it is not carried out by either side with much conviction. Instead, local commanders operate independently, skirmishing and raiding in border regions, stealing territory and plunder where they can, doing damage and seeking to exact revenge on a small scale. The bulk of the work is carried out by the religions’ own crusader forces, although secular armies manoeuvre for position and undertake defensive duties. Most of the activity at such a time is diplomatic, as both sides make strident

accusations and seek the support of allies. However, soft targets, especially those centres and followers of the enemy religion which are on ‘home’ soil, are attacked and rooted out by mobs under the direction or protection of their creed.

Invasion: At this level, the crusade is still more-or-less reminiscent of a conventional war. Armies will seek out the enemy, trying to bring him to battle, destroy his defences or occupy his territory, much as in a dispute between kings. The scale is quite large, with both sides committing massive resources to the fray but the crusade remains an affair of men, and often secular men, though the priests and the crusader orders will have a central role in directing policy. The long-term future of invaded lands will depend on circumstances. Some border areas will be occupied, where this can be achieved simply, other regions will be heavily pillaged, rendered defenceless and left to the mercies of neighbouring peoples. The most isolated or hard-to-reach areas of the enemy’s domains – especially the smaller ones – may be left to small groups of specialists (player characters, perhaps) who can carry ‘justice’ or revenge against the worst transgressors, capturing enemy priests and stealing valuable plunder, to be brought back to the homeland.

Occupation: The crusade’s leaders will set themselves the highest goals – the only way to





punish the heretics for their crimes and to make sure these cannot be repeated is to eradicate them once and for all. In any land they occupy, the religious leaders of both sides will systematically seek out any sign of the enemy religion, displacing or massacring populations, razing temples to the ground and defiling holy places so they can never be used in the same way again. This action is systematic and brutal, and will be extended as far as either side's armed forces can reach. While the armies manoeuvre for battle, smaller bands – perhaps even the player characters as a party – will be sent on specific missions to purge villages or small towns, seeking out any they suspect of being, or harbouring, the enemy.

Signs and Portents: Any lingering doubt that the crusade is being fought not only in the name of the gods but with their blessings are dispelled when events take place which show direct signs of their wishes. The earth shakes under the city of the unbelievers, black clouds boil over the temple of the faithful for fifty days and nights, and plague grips a town in the crusaders' path. In a world of high magic, of course, these events could have been caused by a mortal wizard but the sheer scale of the calamities and disasters are such that any magic users among the player characters should realise that if a wizard is doing this, he is more powerful than any heard of before. It is also true that it does not matter who or what triggered the catastrophe, so

long as the clerics of one (or both) religions see the hand of their deity behind it. Prophecies from ancient books will be quoted and dire warnings given. Unless direct proof can be found to disprove them, the clerics and religious leaders will take complete control and the war will escalate even further.

Intervention: The direct involvement of the gods escalates to the employment of their key servants. By whatever names these are known – celestials, fiends or avatars – these otherworldly creatures are extremely powerful and if unopposed can have a devastating effect on ordinary mortal affairs. Such an avatar, for example, could take on a large body of men on a crucial battlefield, decimating their numbers and throwing them back in panic and confusion. For player characters to stand up against such a being is incredibly hazardous but in the course of a crusade campaign that has escalated to this extent, they may have no choice. Avatars will hunt down the principal actors in this drama, seeking them out for destruction.

Hands On: The two deities at the centre of the dispute, and possibly their allies and other 'neutrals', become directly involved in the war, to the extent of their personal incarnations manifesting on the battlefield and in other moments of crisis, seeking to turn the tide to their advantage. The destruction they cause is massive but localised at any one moment, though the gods jump from plane to plane and nation to nation swiftly. The worst danger for the player characters comes if an opposed god sees them as a focal point in the war, in which case they might just find themselves directly face-to-face with divine power...

Armageddon: The worst possible outcome – an all-out war between two or more deities, one that sucks in all of their avatars, servants, religions and followers, whatever and wherever they may be. This war has no restraint and the devastation it causes is terrible in the extreme, with cities, regions and whole nations devastated by floods, earthquakes, firestorms and the like. Player characters are caught up in forces beyond their understanding, let alone control, and can only play the smallest part in the divine war that follows, just trying to survive and do their best to frustrate the enemy until, one way or the other, the war comes to a conclusion.

As you can see, unless something is done to pacify a religious war, or it in some way dies out through natural causes, the end result of a major crusade in a fantasy environment can be devastating. It may also seem that, at the extreme end, it is much too

destructive an environment for low or medium-level characters to exist in. That is true, if they insist on taking a central role in the proceedings but the events described above are mostly only intended as staging and background that the Games Master uses to describe the action around the player characters – events they observe or hear about. It should give them a sense of urgency in completing whatever tasks they take on, because at any moment some powerful being could turn up to destroy them.

However, heroes being heroes, it is inevitable that player characters will find themselves involved in events that are of a much higher order of danger than they are used to. In the next two chapters, this book looks at two of those situations – battlefields and direct battle with the gods and their servants.

HOW DOES IT END?

Obviously, the Games Master will time the ending of the crusading campaign much as he did its origin, in order to maximise the dramatic backdrop for the players. However, the following information can be used as a quick guide to the way a crusade may come to an end – assuming the two deities did not actually bring fire and brimstone down upon each other.

In the list of generic deities and religions to be found in the Gods and Followers chapter, a new score described is Zeal. Put simply, this is the measure of that religion's ability to stick to its guns and hold the line against the unbelievers, no matter what the cost. Followers of the more powerful and warlike deities tend to be able to maintain a crusade for longer and can resist the temptation to back off after a few reverses.

Use Zeal as a base measure of the religion's morale and alter the score over time to reflect events in the campaign. After any event that appears decisive or critical in the course of the crusade, make a Zeal check for both religions involved by rolling 1d20 and adding their Zeal. Both are testing against a DC of 20 - should the check be failed, the followers become prepared for peace, cease most or all offensive action and open negotiations. Should both sides begin negotiations, then the war can quickly come to an end, though it is possible pockets of extremists might continue the fight for a long time afterwards. Should either religion's Zeal check result in a score of 0 or less, they surrender immediately. If a religion passes its Zeal check, its passion for the crusade will continue unabated by setback or disaster.

Various modifiers can alter the Zeal of a religion's followers over time, as shown below.

Event	Zeal Modifier
Massacre of opponents	+2
Massacre of own followers	-2
Destruction of religious site	-1
Death of senior religious leader	-3
Minor military defeat	-1
Major military defeat	-10
Military victory	+5
Loss of significant holy item	-5
Intervention of opponent deity's avatars	-5
Intervention of opposing deity	-15
Intervention of own deity	+15

In addition, Zeal on both sides falls by 1 point each week, to reflect exhaustion with the war.

Zeal is a mechanical way of determining events in the background. Naturally, the Games Master can decide the outcome of the holy war at any time, pacing events to suit his campaign. As always, use the figures above to colour your descriptions and sharpen roleplaying. So, when a religion which had a Zeal of 30 suffers a major military defeat in which two senior priests were killed, do not just tell players that its Zeal fell from 30 to 24 – explain to them how there is a marked chill in the streets of the city and that anxious citizens are starting to whisper, wondering if this is not all a terrible mistake. When that Zeal subsequently falls to 15 and there is a real possibility that a Zeal check might fail, do not just simply roll the dice but instead describe how there are rumours of surrender sweeping through the population.



PLAYER CHARACTERS AND CRUSADES

Given the scale of a crusade campaign, some Games Masters might be concerned about just how they would involve player characters. This chapter will look at relevant issues and provide ideas as to the kinds of adventures player characters can undertake. While the tables and descriptive text in the previous chapter describe the whole sweep of the war, this chapter will look at opportunities for player characters embroiled within it.

SIZE MATTERS

The first thing to recognise in any crusade campaign is that no player character is going to be involved centrally in every event. A fantasy holy war can become international or global, perhaps even reach out to the planes, and the player characters cannot be everywhere. In any case, you would not want them to be able to go everywhere even if they could, because there are going to be some events and creatures involved they could not face repeatedly and sensibly survive.

At the most extreme end, for example, it is quite possible that the gods themselves become involved in the war. If you allow the player characters to defeat them by fudging dice rolls, you make the gods petty monsters like any other. If you play it by the numbers, the player characters will be swatted aside like flies. So, how do you run adventures at this scale?

The simple answer is that you allow the player characters to be central to events but not the be-all-and-end-all. Many of the situations and phases of a crusade provide great opportunities for them to become involved and play a pivotal role in events but this does not mean they have to go head-to-head with avatars of the god of fire. Instead, they can participate at the margins, still playing an important part in events but not as if they were the only thing that mattered.

The trick is to keep the scale of events in the player characters' immediate sphere of influence at a human level, especially if the player characters are of low level, where they are unlikely to be leaders, officers, commanders, notable priests, nobles or anything else. This means that you should not bombard them with details of the political situation, or whose army did what where, as if they were meant to do something about it. Information like that should be background colour that helps shape the players' perceptions about what they *can* do.

On the flip side of that coin, the campaign becomes all the more personal and involving if the players perceive themselves as having played key roles in big events. It is all well and good if they get a jumped up sense of their own importance, so long as the 'reality' behind the plot is a little less contrived.



Take the following example;

The player characters, operating independently, find a small temple in an orc village they are busy wiping out. Having killed every orc they can find, they ransack the temple and take away a few precious items, one of which is what appears to be a dwarven shield with the emblem of a gold-veined rock masterfully crafted upon it, crudely daubed through with gaudy red dye.

This is just a standard bit of treasure-hunting fare, it seems, until they take the shield to a dwarf merchant who almost falls over himself with joy. The shield, it turns out, is a fabled relic of a former war, in which a great warrior-king was killed in the final, victorious battle; it had been kept in a consistory of the Order of Soil, he tells the player characters, until stolen a decade before by orc raiders. 'Take it back to the Soil Knights,' he says, 'and they will reward you.'

The dwarves are suitably impressed and fete their new friends publicly. But that is where their troubles begin, because for orcs and others in the ranks of the evil races, this shield was just as holy. As a hated symbol of a foe they killed, even at a moment of defeat, it represented their tenacity and strength, their determination to take back lost lands and slay the invaders. The orcs want 'their' shield back and the hobgoblin Jihad becomes the vehicle by which they seek to reclaim it...

THE CAUSE OF WAR

This kind of example shows the simplest and easiest way to get the player characters involved in the campaign. Not only do they occupy centre stage at the beginning but they become one of the reasons the war continues as their enemies seek revenge.

Here is how this can be handled. In the course of an ordinary adventure of the kind the players are used to, the Games Master includes the kind of target they find irresistible. In the middle of a castle they are exploring for some completely different reason, there is an extremely ornate temple of a high standard of workmanship and clearly very old. The Games Master does not have to make any big thing of this, just mention the incongruity of this shrine being where it is, at the heart of the castle, and how it is quite different in architecture or decoration to the rest of the structure. Player characters being what they are, they will probably trash the place as they search it for treasure.

It may be that, within that temple, they find an item, heavily guarded by complex traps and wards. Naturally, they take it. Now they have defiled the temple and stolen a valued artefact.

Or how about this - as they are searching a dungeon complex, the player characters are rushed by a group of well-armed enemy fighters, who all bear the same symbol on their armour. These warriors seem quite prepared to throw their lives away against the party's firepower, which seems crazy until in the background the player characters see a party of shamans and more warriors shielding a central character, rushing him towards an exit. The player characters will probably attack (and even if they do not, the enemy will believe this was an assassination attempt) and when they have slaughtered this group, they find that the figure the group was protecting was another shaman, one more venerable and well-dressed than his protectors but just another shaman all the same. Let them continue the adventure as before. It is only later they will find out they killed a key figure in the religious hierarchy of a very determined enemy, who was just unlucky to be visiting the complex at the time.



Or this, perhaps the most obvious example - the player characters wipe out the occupants of a remote humanoid community. Looking back on it, contemplating their good fortune, the players can be made to realise their characters encountered quite a lot of clerical magic set in defence of the place and that many of the defenders appeared to be simple farmers and servants, tending to the needs of a few of the more resolute defenders. Still, no matter. The scum are massacred now and the place burned to the ground. Score one for the good guys.

This particular trick does not have to be used at the start of a crusade campaign. It is just as effective to use once a holy war has broken out but when there is a lower level of crisis, or when the energy has gone out of the war and things are starting to quieten down. At that very moment, the player characters - doing what they do best - fan the dying fire back into life through their actions. Dealt with this way, it is quite possible that they manage to upset not only the enemy, but their own side too, who have had enough of the bloodshed.

SEEING THE LIGHT

Each one of the causes on Table 1.1 in the previous chapter is something that the player characters might make happen themselves, in complete ignorance of what they have done. It does not have to happen this way, as the Games Master might

design the adventure so they were hired deliberately by the high priest of a major temple, looking for some deniable means to damage the enemy. However, making the player characters the unwitting cause of all that follows has a certain poetry to it and gives them a stake in seeing the crusade brought to a swift and victorious end.

By burying the cause in the middle of another adventure, the Games Master does not give the game away too early. At this point, the player characters have no idea what they have done, even if they are a little suspicious about some of what they encountered.

The next phase is for them to be caught in the storm that follows. The race or religion they have offended will want revenge or restitution along the lines covered in Tables 1.2 and 1.3 in the previous chapter. Now the player characters become the target of an attack by the other side.

Again, the Games Master does not need to give away too much too fast. The first attack against them can appear accidental, as if they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. But when they are targeted more than once and then their enemies are consistently of the same type, bearing the same symbol or crying out the same war cries, then the players may start asking themselves 'what did we do to upset this lot?'

At this point, their minds should go back to the original incident. If not, it is for the Games Master to have a seer or local wise man, or perhaps a priest or nobleman worried about the collateral damage occurring around the player characters, to put part of the puzzle together for them.

'The orcs are restive these last few weeks, though no-one is entirely sure why. Some speak of the death of one of their disgusting blood-priests and the theft of a spear they say belonged to their ancient priest-king. If you knew anything about that, perhaps the mystery would be solved.'

Now, a really craven and cowardly bunch of player characters might just find this the right time to send the spear back by courier with a note of apology but it is much more likely they will see their actions as wholly justified and their loot likewise. If the attacks on them are so fierce that the player characters do consider repairing what damage they can, the Games Master can make life more complicated by placing a death sentence on their heads, or have some third party buy or take the disputed loot back from them. Making it difficult or impossible for the player characters to undo what they did is part of the fun...



At some point in this phase of the campaign, have the player characters face a really brutal and determined attack, a much tougher challenge than they are used to, in a public arena. Make them expend resources to stay alive. Hurt them, make them fear for their lives and put them under extreme pressure from skilled and determined attackers. Not only will they suffer lost resources but the onlookers around them will be caught in the cross-fire and many will be killed or injured. Now not only the player characters but others will be asking 'what on earth is going on?'

ETERNAL FLAME

At this point, when the population of the region is both being damaged by the attacks on the player characters and getting pretty angry in their own right, the players can start to learn a little more of the history of the enmity between the followers of the religion they attacked and those of the culture in which they normally find shelter. They can also start to see the growing sense of fanatical zeal in the population around them, perhaps especially among the clergy who are also, of course, the best source of information as to what exactly has happened, maybe calling in the player character cleric for a little 'chat.' This is where the players are made aware that their characters are a cause of the crisis and that it is not just a question of them making things right or waiting for the fuss to die down.

The exact information the Games Master gives is, of course, dependent on the cosmology and mythology of the campaign as a whole. At its simplest though, the crisis will boil down to the fact that here are two gods, two religions and two peoples who have hated each other for centuries. No-one blames the player characters for what they have done for similar attacks have been made by each side against the other for aeons. All that has happened on this occasion is that the player characters have managed to get the enemy more excitable than usual because of the specific action they took. No-one suggests they should offer any kind of compensation to the other side.

The crisis will begin to slip out of the player characters' control. They may have triggered it, they may have various schemes in their



heads to escape the consequences but the war, if war there must be, is the property of others now. This is where the characters slip from being the leads in a small drama to being central, but not key, players on a much larger stage.

Use the information in the previous chapter to show the way the crisis boils up over the days, weeks and months that follow. Here are a few sample incidents that should stick in the players' minds.

The Feast of Honour: The local lord or priest invites the player characters to a feast in their honour perhaps trying to steal a little of the limelight, the way such people do. The player characters are feted and given gifts, and made to feel very important. There are a few anxious souls at the banquet who report on revenge attacks made by the enemy and the general sense of disquiet in the region - they want to know what is to be done. The player characters will be asked their advice but unless it fits in with the mood of the religious and secular leadership, it will be ignored. Larger forces are at play already.

Street Corners: The player characters are recognisable faces in the crowd for a while. This has its benefits - free meals and board at the tavern, winks and smiles from the opposite sex, back-slapping and adulation from all sides. Let them enjoy it while they can, because as soon as trouble starts to follow them like a shadow, those same well-wishers will melt away, fearful of being caught in the storm that whirls around the player characters as their enemy increases the pressure. Now, instead of free beds, the player characters can find no inn willing to take them in at all.

The Temple of Hope: The player characters are asked to attend an audience with the most senior priest in the locality. He tells them he needs to compile a report for his superiors, which will also be placed before the King, explaining how it is that followers of the enemy religion have been stirred into activity. It is his opinion that the player characters have done no more

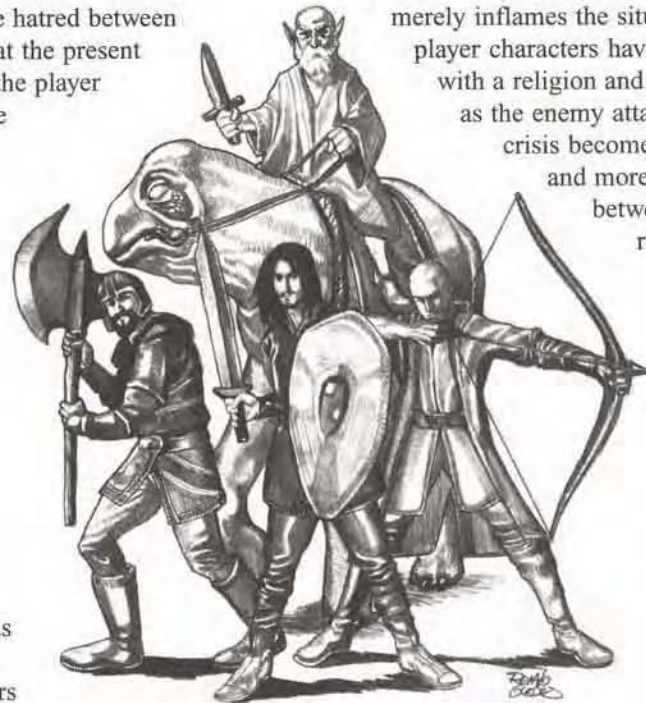
than is right and that if only more people did their 'duty' by means of taking the fight to the foe, everyone would be a lot better off. He tells them all he knows, both of the history of the hatred between the two religions and the situation at the present time. Once he knows the dangers the player characters have faced, he agrees the best solution is for the temple to place them under direct protection and that this can best be dealt with by them sheltering at the nearest consistory of a crusader order. He writes an introductory letter and directs them to the place.

The Consistory: The player characters visit or seek shelter with the knights of an order opposed to the religion they have offended. The senior knight there welcomes them and offers shelter, though it soon becomes clear he has an ulterior motive – the employment of the player characters as sacrificial goats, a lure to draw the enemy out of hiding. The party's fighters and clerics are invited to join the order and it becomes clear that continued protection and support is dependent upon this. The consistory offers training, equipment and protection.

Hostages: The player characters hear of agents of the enemy religion continuing to follow their trail and seeking out information about their identity and background. If any player characters have family or friends in the locality, over time these are attacked. Some will be killed whilst others taken as hostage. The enemy will do anything to lure the player characters out of hiding and into a place where the enemy has the advantage of numbers and intelligence. If the player characters are drawn into such a desperate gamble, they may find themselves in great danger indeed.

The Growing Storm: The hunt for the player characters grows in intensity. The first few times they are attacked, it is by small bands of mercenaries or followers of the offended religion, normally commanded by a cleric or perhaps by a single knight of that religion's order. Assuming this attack is defeated easily enough, the enemy realises that the player characters are more of a challenge than they feared and increases the resources used against them. For the first time knights of the enemy's order are used against them in number and the fighting is harder. Even if the player characters

are able to withstand such an attack, the locality they inhabit may not and there will be collateral damage. This, of course, merely inflames the situation. If the player characters have an association with a religion and it suffers losses as the enemy attacks them, the crisis becomes focussed more and more on the clash between the two religions and less on the player characters themselves. Depending on just how much damage is done and how the locals react to it, the situation drifts inexorably towards a holy war.



COVERT OPERATIONS

Regardless of their involvement in the causative phase of the campaign, as the violence and chaos escalates, the player characters are drawn in either voluntarily or just through the increasing tension of the situation. By now, the player characters have either sought and received the patronage and protection of a religion or the actions of the enemy have, in turn, brought them into conflict with a second religion, one more friendly and acceptable to the player characters. Before things have gone as far as outright holy war there are numerous opportunities for them to carry out actions against the enemy, acting in concert with their new allies.

In this phase of the campaign, it matters less whether the player characters were involved in the original causes of the crisis. What matters is that they are willing to carry the fight back to the enemy. In the previous chapter, we showed how there were stages of the conflict in which one or both sides were still acting cautiously or defensively, at least in terms of holding back the armed might they control, but where they were more than ready to unleash covert missions against the foe. Player characters who can introduce themselves to the clerical hierarchy can involve themselves centrally in such actions.

There are many missions the player characters can undertake which would make testing adventures

within the campaign as a whole. Presented below are a few ideas.

Assassination

The priests of the allied religion introduce the name of a key priest or shaman in the enemy camp, the prime agent in the crisis on the other side. If the player characters have been the target of attacks, the mission will be shown to them as one of partial self-interest, since if the shaman is killed, the controlling hand behind the attacks will be stilled. As best they can, the allies of the player characters provide intelligence on his whereabouts, though it is likely this is inaccurate.

The enemy priest is a powerful figure in his own right, a challenging foe for the player characters. He is also normally to be found only in closely-guarded environments, such as the central temple. The player characters can lessen the danger involved in confronting him by scouting his movements and waiting for a time when he is in a more remote location, but this comes with its own risks, since they must operate deep within enemy territory.

Assuming the attack is a success, the player characters have to flee from the hue and cry that follows and if the enemy gets to hear they were the assassins, the attacks and pressure will be stepped up. The assassination may well have wider effects too, making it more likely that the crisis veers towards holy war and crusade. As for positive benefits, they are few and far between. The players will learn that if you kill one fanatic, all you do is create three more to take his place. Unless the enemy are weakened already and in the mood for peace, it is extremely unlikely that killing one leader will achieve anything in the long-term.

One exception to this would be the assassination of a seer or prophetess, someone of irreplaceable divine powers. However, such a target would possess formidable might and could be too much for player characters to deal with regardless of any other defences.

The Destruction of the Temple of Wonders

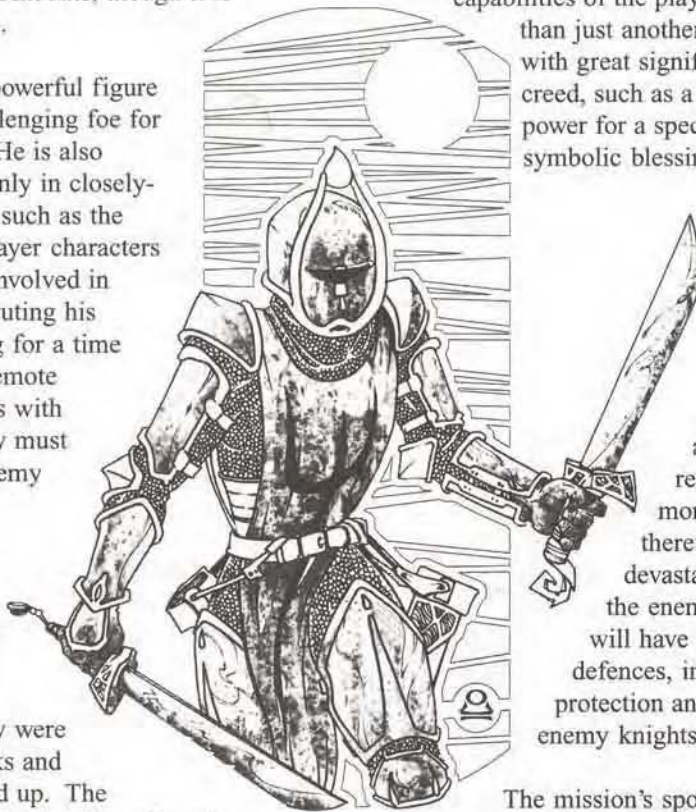
Another mission which would suit a small party of heroes is one in which a high-profile site of great significance to the enemy is destroyed or defiled. This would deal a huge blow to the enemy's morale, and render them much more likely to sue for peace - in theory, at least. The target can be large or small but be it temple, shrine, holy place or pilgrimage site, it is going to be deep within enemy territory and heavily defended. The exact target and its importance should be matched to the power and capabilities of the players. It should be more

than just another temple, instead a place with great significance to the enemy creed, such as a shrine and source of power for a specific avatar or the symbolic blessing-place for the enemy's

holy warriors, without which their morale will be damaged.

Only a high-level party should be unleashed at a vital site but low-level parties can be sent to attack targets of local or regional importance. The more important it is, and therefore the more

devastating its loss would be to the enemy, the more resources will have been committed to its defences, including traps, divine protection and a close garrison of enemy knights.



The mission's sponsors will probably have to provide the means for the destruction of a larger site - perhaps a scroll which can be used to raze or burn the building, or which causes some devastating pollution or defilement of the site, rendering it unusable. Short of that, the player characters will have to find a way to destroy the place which is bound to be hazardous, since it will expose them to discovery and capture for long periods of time. A mission like this is extremely hazardous but even a partial success might provide lasting gains for the player characters' allies in this war.

Theft

Slightly less hazardous is the mission wherein the player characters attack an enemy site, seeking not its destruction but the removal or destruction of

some symbolic or magical item of great importance. This is an almost classic roleplaying scenario, given an extra twist by being part of a crusade campaign in that the effects of a successful mission will benefit the player characters and their allies greatly thereafter.

The item does not have to be kept in a place of great security, such as the vaults of a major temple within a key enemy city, but if the item is supposed to be important, then its defences will be equally potent. Enemy knights will be on hand close by, even in a remote location, and the item itself will be heavily guarded with divine wards and magicks designed to prevent its removal. It may be easier for the player characters to plan a hit-and-run mission against such a target, but that does not mean the artefact itself should be easy to steal or destroy.

There are many different types of items which could be the target of such a mission - a blessed banner or standard, used as part of the oath ceremony for new knights; a sword, armour or shield which belonged to a long-dead hero, carried into battle by the

Commander of the enemy's crusader order; an item of power-giving magic, such as an oracle stone or holy relic. The closer the association the item has to a deity, the more powerful and significant it becomes. This could mean that something extremely powerful is awakened the moment the item is taken, pursuing the thieves to get it back...

Defensive Duties

Each of the above missions, and others too, can be turned around so that instead of trying to achieve a positive success against the enemy, the player characters defend a target against attack. This is a different kind of challenge for most player character parties, since they are more used to the instant success or failure of being on the attack. Defending a target, even when there is a known threat, involves diligent preparation and fighting at a time of the enemy's choosing. On the other hand, there is huge potential in an 'Alamo' or 'Rorke's Drift' last stand against what seem to be insurmountable odds and this may well appeal to players and Games Master alike.

Martyrdom

A Games Master who is more used to running a cynical, dark campaign can add spice to one or more of these adventures by designing a mission that is actually impossible. When the player characters' 'allies' send them on the adventure, they omit key intelligence about the defences to be faced or just how deep into enemy territory the target lies. If the player characters give the mission their best shot, they face overwhelming enemy strength and their lives are in the greatest danger. Only by realising that the task is hopeless and fleeing for their lives can they survive.

It is then up to the Games Master just how much of the truth he reveals, though a few tantalising clues will add to the players' paranoia. What has happened is that the so-called friendly religion has started to see the player characters as more of a liability than an asset. Those skills they possess are duplicable and the positive effect they have had on morale can be actually increased if they become heroic martyrs. The assets being used to protect them could be so much better deployed elsewhere. In short, a discussion took place in a secret conclave of the religious leaders in which it was decided that they might just be better off with the player characters dead rather than alive. Several of these missions, if successful, will incense the enemy even more, escalating the crisis (as was shown in the previous chapter).



In all these missions, the religion that has commissioned the player characters can provide logistical support. This does not include large amounts of money as pay for the temple leaders will not want an arrangement which is so impious as to include crude payment. They will provide generously for travel and other expenses, however. They can also supply other very important resources, such as the hospitality of temples and other sanctuaries along the way (along with all the other services available at a temple, provided *gratis*), a supply of potions and scrolls to provide divine magical assistance and the good offices and patronage of the religion, wherever that reaches.

IN THE MIDST OF WAR

Once the dispute has reached the stage where armies are on the march, the adventures the player characters can undertake become more and more dangerous, while it must seem that their part in the proceedings becomes smaller and smaller. Unless they are of a high enough level to take command, at least of some smaller body of warriors, the player characters are most likely to be foot-soldiers in the crusading army, taking orders and probably having to follow them – which is extremely unusual behaviour for most parties.

The next chapter of this book describes how to handle adventures centred on the battlefield. However, there is still scope for the player characters to continue the kind of small-scale but important missions that may suit them better.

Scouting

With the kind of vast distances crusades can be fought over, there is a critical need for intelligence. Player characters can scout ahead of the army, sometimes weeks or even months ahead, searching for defences, targets and sources of supply. Just what they find can become the subject of a tense, dangerous adventure, as they attempt to get the information back to the crusading army, or take some action to counteract what they have found. For example, they might discover that a valley along the crusading army's route of march has been turned into a gigantic trap, with hidden forts from which ambushes might be launched and vast traps which use divine magic to bring whole mountains down upon anyone passing through the valley.

Operating deep in enemy territory makes this kind of operation even more hazardous. It is likely that the party can find no support at all in this hostile

land. The climate and terrain may be alien. The people certainly will be and if there is a racial element in the holy war, it is impossible or at best difficult for the player characters to pass themselves off as locals. They will have to work alone.

Because of this, it may be that when they discover the information, their presence is revealed and they have to try and escape the country and get back to their own army whilst being hunted down ruthlessly. Or they may be captured and have to find a way to escape from a prison before they can take word back to their friends. Either way, the 'deadline' element, caused by the fact that their crusading army will walk into this deadly trap, should add to the tension and danger the player characters feel.

This particular adventure also works in reverse, as a defensive scenario, wherein the player characters are detailed to find the location of an invading enemy army. Time is running out if their own army is to be deployed in the best position, so the player characters have to ride hard and fast. They climb



over a ridge, or enter a complex of caves, only to find that not only is the enemy army extremely close at hand, but they have arrived in vast numbers. Can the player characters avoid the enemy's clutches long enough to warn their friends that disaster looms?

False Trails

This is the inverse of the scouting adventure. The player characters, perhaps accompanied by a small force of soldiers to add weight to the deception, are given the job of parading along a particular route, as if they were the vanguard of the main army, trying to deceive the enemy into reacting while the actual crusader force takes a different route. They are required to ride back and forth, kicking up clouds of dust and crash into villages and small towns, sweeping up supplies as if they were foraging for a huge host. The deception needs to last as long as possible, so the enemy is kept off-balance for as long as it can be but this is a dangerous ploy. Sooner or later, the player characters' small force is going to run into a larger patrol sent out by the enemy to find out what is going on.

Cutting off the Head

This is another extremely hazardous mission. The player characters are told the enemy's army is commanded by an individual who is very dangerous. He is widely feared and it is considered that the enemy army is only held together by his charismatic presence. There is only one solution...

This assassination mission is even more dangerous than the one before. Now the target is not in a fixed place but moving all the time and is surrounded by an entire army! Just what plan will allow the player characters to get close enough to even make the attempt?

The risks of such a mission are balanced by the potential effects. While one fanatic can be easily replaced by another, a gifted leader's assassination may undo much of the enemy's plans. If the player characters achieve the goal, they will have struck a major blow for their cause and the rewards they receive should be great. However, it is also likely that they will risk a great deal in the attempt.

The Challenge of Champions

This adventure can take place at any time, although it is often a precursor to a skirmish or battle. Word arrives from the enemy army that their leader or champion has issued a challenge to personal combat. This challenge could even be directed personally at the player characters, if they are wanted men or somehow notorious in the enemy's eyes. At some site between the two enemy hosts, preferably where the combat can be witnessed by all, the challenge is played out.

The opposition needs to be a worthy challenge for the player characters – knights, wizards and clerics of comparable level are all suitable foes. One way to quickly alter a combat too easy for the player characters is to have the enemy 'cheat,' perhaps through sneaking additional warriors or resources onto the challenge site.

The outcome of the fight has an effect on the opposing armies. If there is a clear winner, the Military Cohesion (see next chapter) of the winning side is raised by one and that of the loser penalised by a similar amount.



THE CINEMATIC BATTLE SYSTEM

An important part of any Crusade campaign will be sieges and pitched battles between huge crusader armies. After all, it is the function of the crusade to destroy and punish the unbelievers, and to do that, you have to sweep aside their defenders.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to provide a full d20 battle system but the following should allow you to involve player characters on the battlefield, or as part of a siege, without making your games hopelessly complicated. The following system is designed as an alternative to the Open Mass Combat System found in *The Quintessential Fighter*, also by Mongoose Publishing. Games Masters are welcome to use either battle system within their crusade campaigns.

The crusade battle system is intended to allow for fast resolution of large scale battles, not for them to be played out with the players as commanders. The real aim is to allow for player characters, operating

on the battlefield, to be part of and influence the outcome of the battle through roleplaying, using the battlefield as a setting much as you would a dungeon or a city. At the same time, it does not make them seem to be the only important factor on the battlefield, which makes little sense when they are at lower levels or when the battle involves thousands of troops. There is a fine line to be walked here as, on the one hand, no Games Master wants his players to feel their characters are so insignificant that they could just be swept away by chance and happenstance. On the other, the battle is reduced to something petty if the player characters wade through a few enemy soldiers and the whole army collapses. A happy medium needs to be struck here.

The assumption is that the player characters are a cut above the rank and file on the battlefield and that their heroic actions will encourage those around them to greater efforts, reinforcing their side's morale and military cohesion, whilst weakening the enemy's.

THE CRUSADING ARMY

For the purposes of this chapter and the concept of a crusade battle fought out in the context of the campaign, each of the crusader orders listed on p26 has been given a Military Cohesion (MC) score. This reflects their ability to continue to operate effectively on the battlefield in the face of enemy missile fire, spells and melee combat. Once their cohesion is gone (reduced to zero or below), the unit is no longer effective and they break and flee the field. Prior to that, as their MC falls towards zero, they fight with less and less capability, reflecting casualties, dropping morale and willingness to follow orders. Although this score reflects casualties, it makes no attempt to measure them. The aim of the system is to give a fast impression of the action, not to detail the losses of each unit.

Crusader orders are unlikely to be the only forces in a crusading army, of course, though they are the most important. Where other military forces of the same race or religion are present, their MC can be thought of as being between one and four points lower than those of their trained, hardened brethren. So, for example, the Brotherhood of the Broken Lance has a base MC of 12. It is probably fair to assume that a unit of bugbears would have an MC of 11, while goblins lacking any bugbear leaders could be as low as 8. When assigning a base MC to an army or part of an army, the Games Master needs to take into account the discipline and fighting ability





THE CINEMATIC BATTLE SYSTEM

of its warriors. Lawful troops are usually better drilled than chaotics, for example, though if the chaotics have an innate warrior sensibility, this need not be the case.

Various items can modify the base MC of a unit. A good commanding officer could add a bonus, especially when he has the Battle Tactics feat (see

p21) whilst a unit might suffer penalties through being weary or on unfamiliar terrain. Even during the course of the battle, there can be temporary bonuses and penalties reflecting the ruses and stratagems of the commanders, weather and magical effects. The Games Master will determine the MC of armies and sub-units when a battle is set up, based on information from the campaign.

Young men, seated around a campfire, talk. They always talk. The more frightened they are, the more they talk to mask their fear.

The youngest was looking at the simple sun disc stitched to his surcoat. The march across the desert had burned his skin and bleached the colour from his tunic and scarf, but the golden disk was as bright as ever.

‘Does anyone here believe these things mean anything?’ he asked. ‘I mean, we aren’t Solar Knights, we’re just soldiers. Why did they tell us to put these on?’

There were a few bitter chuckles from the darkness, but only one of the veterans had the energy after that day’s march to reply.

‘That there, boy, that’s magic. Ask anyone. The Solar Knights, they know things, boy – powerful magics, spells and rituals that would make your hair turn as white as mine. That rag they pinned to your chest? That’s magic, boy. A virgin cut that disc from the dress she wore when they made her a priestess, and she pledged that she would marry the man who brought it back to her, so long as he served the sun god bravely. They all did, all them priestesses back home; we all got us a virgin waiting for us.’

There was a great deal of barely-concealed laughter. The young recruit cursed at the veteran.

‘All right, boy, try this. Each one of these discs was blessed by a priest of the Solar Order, and so long as we wear them, we can’t never be hurt by any missile.’ As the last word left his lip, he snapped his right hand into the air and snatched down an apple core that had been thrown at him from outside the circle of the campfire’s glow. ‘See?’

The boy looked at him, suspiciously. ‘You just caught it, that’s not magic...’

‘No, you’re not listening. The magic is that it couldn’t hit me, so I caught it, and if I hadn’t caught it, it would have missed. That’s how it works. If you believe, really believe, the sun won’t let you be hit. Here, you try.’

He motioned to throw the apple core, and the boy put his hands up in front of his face. The veteran waited to be sure he was ready, drew back his hand, once, twice, a third time, and then lobbed the core into the waiting hands of the recruit.

At the same moment, the boy was bombarded by bread, canteens, rocks, two buckets and various items of clothing including his own boots. Every one of them hit him, and he was knocked to the ground, stunned and dazed by the attack.

‘Doesn’t work for everyone, mind,’ the veteran mused as he stirred the soup. ‘You gots to believe. I guess this also means your virgin will be staying that way until the next crusade.’

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS AS COMMANDERS

If the player characters command units on the battlefield, it may be that both they and the Games Master will wish to take the game away from roleplay and into tabletop battle. Unless one or all somehow commands the whole army, there is still a case for using the information in this chapter as a fast-resolution system to work out what happens on those parts of the battlefield the player characters do not command.

If the number of warriors placed under the player characters is not too large, they can still work out their actions on the battlefield through normal roleplaying. The section below, Player Character Actions shows how to handle their personal outcomes. In order to determine what happens to the warriors they command, keep a tally of the hit point losses the player characters suffer compared to those they deal out to enemy units and characters and use this table to determine how many of their subordinates are disabled or killed. This can either be calculated over the battle as a whole, or for its individual phases (see below).



Damage dealt to hit points lost	Subordinate Losses
Greater than 3-1	None
Between 2-1 and 3-1	10%
From even to 2-1	20%
Less than even to 1-2	33%
Between 1-2 and 1-3	50%
Worse than 1-3	75%

THE BATTLEFIELD

The first thing to do is determine the size of the battle and the player characters relative place within it. For this purpose, battles have been broken up into three sizes; small, medium and large.

Small Battles

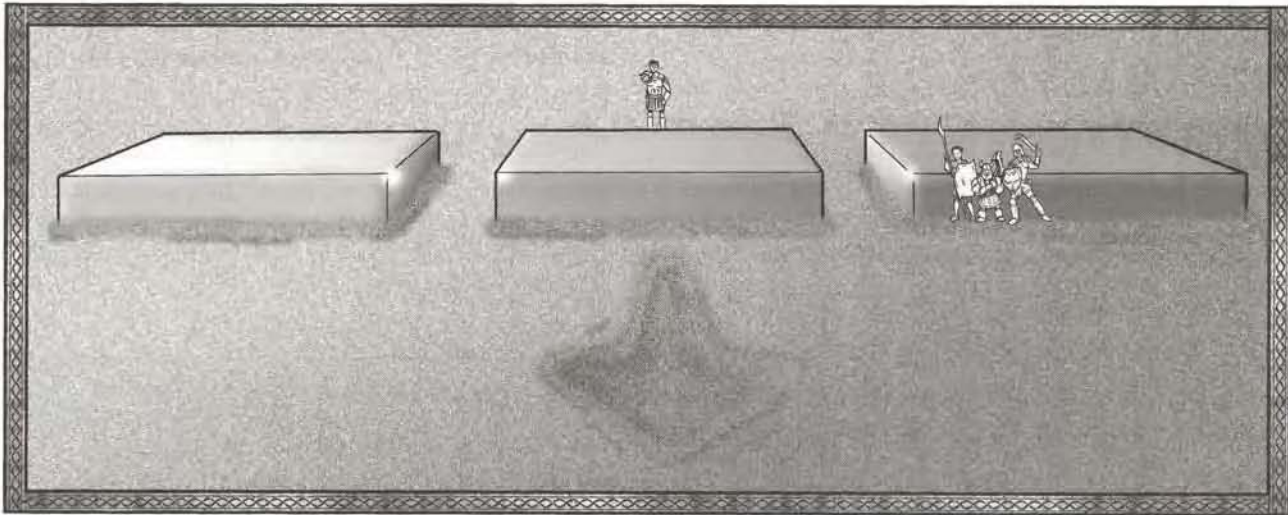
A small battle is any in which the actions player characters undertake can be seen by most or all of the participants. Obviously many factors can affect this, such as terrain or weather but on an open battlefield, a small battle can be thought of as any in which the two sides number a thousand or less in total and where, broadly speaking, each army is drawn up into a more-or-less single mass, with the commanding generals being able to see the whole of their force.

In a battle like this, if the player characters do something out of the ordinary, it will be visible to almost all combatants and their successes or failures can have a profound effect upon the outcome of the whole battle. Just as importantly, the player characters can see everything going on around them, judging the flow of the battle, and be able to react to its ups and downs. This allows the players to react to events around their characters and through roleplaying try to influence them.

Each army is covered by a single MC rating. If the troop types are mixed, an average rating should be worked out for the entire force.

Medium Battles

A medium battle is one in which, because of the size of the armies (perhaps 3-5,000 a side on an open battlefield), the terrain, weather or tactical necessity, the armies are divided into two or three formations or 'wings.' It is most likely that the player characters are serving with and will influence the behaviour of just one of these formations.



A medium battle. MCs are calculated for each 'battle', though the commander's MC only affects them all if he can command all three. The player characters are in the front rank of the battle viewed here on the right.

Such armies will operate on a simple model of having a march order of vanguard, main and rearguard formations. The vanguard and rearguard usually contain the majority of the faster-moving troops, either light infantry or cavalry, placed to defend the flanks of the main force.

The player characters can still see and influence the outcome of their immediate battlefield environment, as in small battles, but the effect of their actions and their ability to know what is going on around them becomes restricted to the formation of which they are part. Put simply, theirs becomes a battle within a battle. The Games Master will determine and describe in detail what is going on around them but will then determine secretly what is happening elsewhere and only let the players know when the tide of battle on another part of the field critically affects them one way or the other.

In a medium battle, therefore, each formation of an army has its own MC and these will be checked separately as the battle goes on.

Large Battles

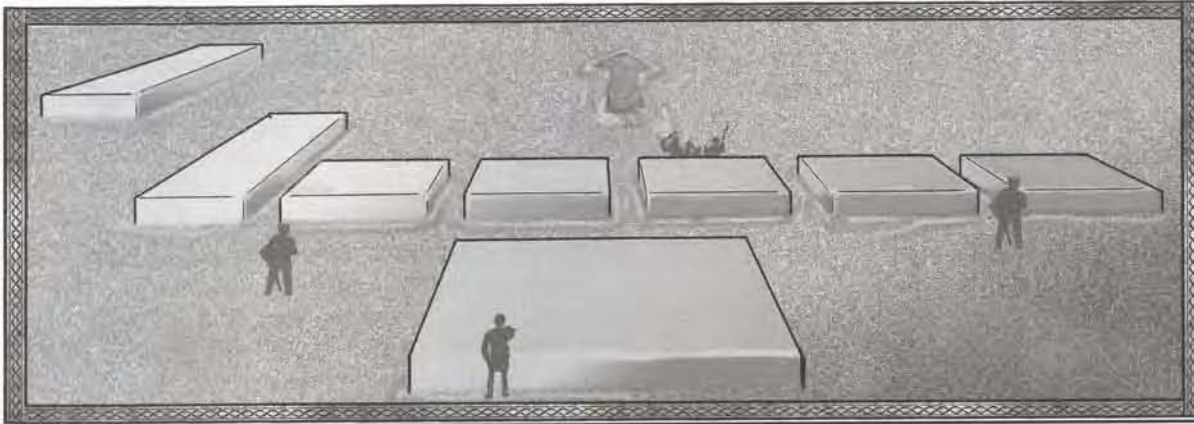
Scaling up even further, the Games Master may need to cater for outcomes of battles involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of troops. The level of detail he develops about the battle need not get much larger than for a medium battle, however. The player characters are directly involved in a small battle as before, wrapped up in combat between two formations, each part of a greater struggle between massive armies.

What the Games Master needs to know in order to paint the picture of how things are progressing for the players, is the general sweep of the battle, not its every detail. So, treat the area of the field where the player characters are fighting as a medium-sized battle and work out the MC and outcomes for that part of the greater battle as before. On the wider battlefield, give each formation its own MC and leave it at that.

THE BATTLE

In the days before the coming battle, the Games Master should build up the tension about events to come, spreading false rumours about the strength of the enemy, having priests move around the camps collecting wills and last letters home and other similar events. As much as possible, players should be left with the edgy feeling almost anything might happen and that the random fluctuations of the fight could so easily lay them low. Let them discuss plans and make all the preparations they can.

Once it starts, the battle will quickly lose any real coherence for the men on the ground and this should be as true for the player characters as for any common warrior. As the adage has it, no plan survives contact with the enemy. The key to translating this confusion to the players is to remember two things. Restrict what you tell them and remember that a game based on action round combat in a dungeon is not always the easiest thing to use to detail a battle. In short, be prepared to wing it!



A large battle. The commander at the rear may only be able to affect the MC of his large reserve (the unit directly to his front). More likely, MCs will be developed for the right wing corps, the three battalions in the centre (where the player characters are) and one more for the corps on the left. There is an argument that the battalion on the far left, advancing alone, could be treated separately.

PLAYER CHARACTER ACTIONS

At the start of the battle, unless it is an ambush or you have some specific reason to dive straight into the action, develop the scene for your players, describing the terrain, weather and look of the enemy forces across the field. Most battles commence with a period of manoeuvre and missile bombardment, and this is time in which you can get across some of the feel of the approaching conflict to players.

Also, this is a good time to develop some specific opportunities for the player characters, in terms of more human-scale actions they may wish to undertake. You can talk about the small farmhouse ahead of their lines which looks like a good defensive position, or the mill on the rising ground on the enemy left which will need to be cleared. Describe enemy movements or the rumours circulating around the body of warriors to whom the player characters are attached and listen out for their planned actions so you can personalise the coming combat.

There may be a great deal of magic flying across the battlefield at this point but even though death can be very arbitrary in combat of this scale, be wary of creating any circumstance in which player characters can be severely incapacitated by random spell or missile fire in this opening exchange. An incoming *fireball* might require a few saving throws but the brunt of its force should fall among others. Likewise, make a few combat rolls for enemy arrow fire but do not pepper the player characters with too

much as the enemy's fire should really just goad them into action. This is just a function of heroic roleplaying – player characters are not killed by random arrows fired by a faceless foe in the ranks opposite.

When the time comes and the player characters are ready to act in response to some stimulus you have provided, keep the combat relatively personalised. The press of fighting men on either side effectively makes the combat area around the player characters a small and defined space, unless there is a break in the action while the two opposing units manoeuvre for position or take a breather or there is a sudden break into more fluid action, perhaps as the opposing force moves back rapidly. During the fighting, allow for the player characters to step back from being in the front rank for healing and rest. Bursts of intense energy and danger interspersed with moments of calm are quite acceptable and realistic. Clerics and other healers will operate behind the main line, restoring wounded characters as best they are able, for as long as they have spells or healing powers.

Because they are extremely likely to seek battlefield glory, player characters will find themselves away from the lines more often than most, usually trying to perform some specific task which they believe will turn the tide of combat. Unless they can manoeuvre unseen and under cover, their actions are likely to attract hostile attention and for the sake of realism the Games Master should have the enemy react to their movement, either bombarding them with spells or missiles, or counter-attacking with a small body of soldiers. This does not have to be



excessive as the enemy will not waste fifty men chasing six into no-man's land, nor will they waste spells or missiles. The response will be proportionate. After all, the enemy are not to know these are bold player characters. . .

If, on the other hand, the player characters are accompanied by a number of other retainers, mercenaries or soldiers, the Games Master can afford to be more aggressive in how the enemy attack. The response will still be broadly proportionate, with the enemy not wishing to throw too many resources at something that may only be a diversion, but the greater numbers involved mean this response will more powerful. In reality, a hail of arrows directed at a body of men that happens to include the player characters might just catch one of them. However, a really serious wound might be a little hard for a character to take, so the secret is to treat non-player characters accompanying the party more or less as 'hit point banks' who take the brunt of all damage. They are the ones hit five or six times by arrows and the ones at the centre of the *fireball's* blast. The player characters have to take some loss but it is proportionately small.

BATTLE OUTCOMES

At various stages of the battle, the Games Master should perform opposed MC checks of formations in combat. Just as in an opposed skill check, whichever force gets the higher result wins that

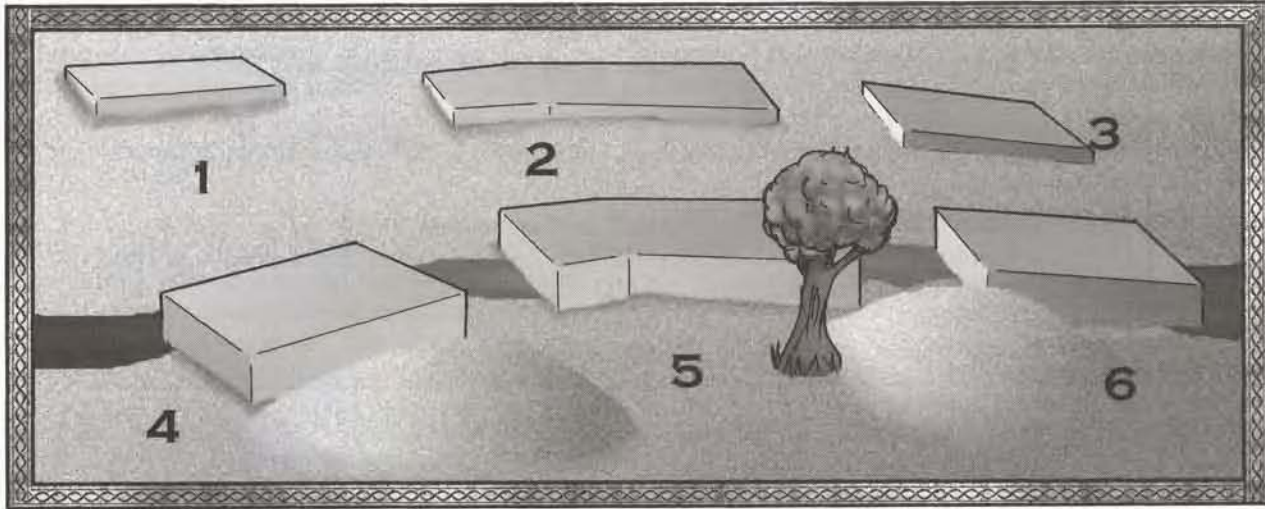
phase of the contest. You only need to test when a unit or corps you have assigned an MC to is in combat, or under fire from missiles or magic and you should not test more than every 30-60 minutes game time.

The outcome of the opposed MC check determines the ongoing ability of both units to continue fighting. Use the table below to determine this. The MC check column shows the difference between two units' opposed MC checks with each side applying the appropriate outcome and modifying their MC score as a result.

MC Check	Outcome
+21 or more	Major success; unit pushes forward in pursuit of defeated enemy; MC+2
+16-20	Important success; unit rallies and prepares to advance; MC+1
+11-15	Success; unit gains a breathing space
+6-10	Tactical advantage; unit with upper hand; MC-1
+1-5	Hard-fought advantage; unit tiring, but pressing on; MC-2
0	Press of pike; MC-2
-1-5	Under pressure; unit tiring; MC-3
-6-10	Front ranks crumbling; morale falling; MC-4
-11-15	Unit retreats; MC-6
-16-20	Unit pushed back; heavy losses and collapse of command; MC-8
-21 or less	Unit routed; MC-10

For example, a formation with a modified MC of 12 attacks an enemy with MC 11. They are evenly matched and so the Games Master determines that an hour passes before any advantage to either side becomes possible. Rolling 1d20 for each side, he gets a result of 5 for the attacking MC 12 formation for a total of 17, and 9 for the defending MC 11 formation for a total of 20. Consulting the table, the attacking formation is under pressure, suffering a -3 penalty to its MC. The defenders have a hard fought advantage and suffer a -2 penalty to their MC.

Various events can also modify a unit's MC during the battle. The loss of a commander; the capture of a carroccio or battle-standard; the unit becoming detached from the main army, or becoming flanked; taking damage from spells or missiles against which the unit has no defence. A few of these and their effects, are summarised below. The Games Master will have to decide if one of these events has occurred, based on what he knows of the opposing



A force comprising of units 1, 2 and 3 ambushes three battalions as they march along a road. The MCs for the respective units are modified as follows:

- Unit 1 (skirmishers) - Base MC =16, ambush +2, outnumbered -2. Total MC 16
- Unit 2 (main body) - Base MC =18, ambush +2. Total MC 20
- Unit 3 (diversionary attack) - Base MC =16, ambush +2, outnumbered -2. Total MC 16
- Unit 4 (vanguard) - Base MC =18, flanked -1. Total MC 17
- Unit 5 (main body) - Base MC =16, flanked -1, outnumbered -2. Total MC 13
- Unit 6 (rearguard)) - Base MC =16, flanked -1. Total MC 15

forces. Keeping a small diagram of the battlefield will show the Games Master what threats any formation faces.

Event	MC Modifier
Unit is defending behind walls	+4
Unit is defending behind a river, fence or obstacle	+2
Unit attacks from ambush	+2
Unit is outnumbered by 2-1 or greater	-2
Unit is surprised	-2
Unit takes incoming missile fire it cannot reply to	-1
Unit is attacked by cavalry or elite troops	-2
In a previous phase, flanking friendly units gave ground	-1
Enemy forces operating on the unit's flank	-1
Enemy forces operating to the unit's rear	-2

A Games Master may also determine if a formation has been struck by particularly bad luck during battle, representing the fog of war and the dissolution of any plan in the face of the enemy. If any formation rolls a natural 1 for its opposed MC check, consult the table on pg76.

THE EFFECT OF PLAYER CHARACTERS

As heroes, player characters are going to do more to influence the outcome of the battle than ordinary warriors, though this is always in proportion to their character level. If they command troops, this effect is magnified. The Games Master should either penalise the enemy's MC one or two points, or allow the player characters' unit to recover a point of MC whenever they do something suitably dramatic and heroic. This can be in addition to any MC gains or losses connected to their action (the player characters get their extra award for being 'flashy'), so if they cut their way through the enemy's ranks and capture a battle-standard, the enemy would lose whatever bonus the standard brought them, plus perhaps another 2 MC for the suitably heroic way in which the players achieve this.

What counts as a dramatic action? This is where those adventure seeds mentioned earlier come into their own. If the Games Master points out a small building bristling with orc archers which is taking a heavy toll of the men in the front rank of the player character's army and they agree something needs to

Random Events

1d20	Event	MC Modifier
1-2	Commander killed	Loss of any MC bonus; additional -2MC
3-4	Unit struck by offensive magic	-2 MC
5-6	Standard lost	Loss of any MC bonus; additional -2 MC
7-8	Loss of key position	-1MC
9-10	Unit expends missile weapons	-1MC
11-12	Disorientated	-1MC (and unit retreats)
13-14	Rash order	-1MC (and unit manoeuvres into dangerous position)
15-16	Defences crumble/attack falters	-2 MC
17-18	False rumour	-2MC
19-20	'Run for your lives!'	-4MC (and unit routs)

be done about it, this becomes the equivalent of an adventure goal, the same kind of scenario as when they defeat an evil wizard in his tower or rescue a kidnapped prince in a regular game. Just because the adventure is set on a battlefield, it does not mean it is not possible to roleplay in exactly the same way as normal. Just keep the atmosphere extremely unfriendly. Every time the player characters step forward from the ranks, with or without support, they become the target of missiles and spells, counter-attacks and indirect force, as outlined earlier.

The player characters can have repeated MC effects as the battle continues and each can take place in a very compressed amount of time. While most checks for unit combat are made only every 30-60 minutes of battle-time, player characters might achieve a breakthrough success in just a dozen combat rounds. This is the role of heroes in battle.

EXAMPLE BATTLE

Here is an example of how a Games Master can use the guidelines within this chapter to run a battle scenario within a crusade campaign.

The player characters are knights of the High Order of the Oak, serving with a crusading army out to smash the waves of goblinoids who have swept through the area. The Games Master has determined that, on the march through goblinoid territory, the army is ambushed by the Brotherhood of the Broken Lance. The Oak Knights are the vanguard of the army but the main attack falls instead on the main formation which is flanking the baggage train. The numerous hobgoblins are clearly more interested in a fast, distracting attack and some loot, than a major battle with enemy knights.

The hobgoblins have a base MC of 15 though they will be fighting a weakened enemy as they have launched an ambush. The Oak Knights have an MC

of 16 and the rest of the elven army have an MC of 14, though whilst they are surprised at the ambush, this is modified to MC 13 and 11 respectively (-2 for being surprised, -1 for having enemy at their flank) for the first Military Cohesion check. In the context of this particular campaign, the Games Master has also decided that the hobgoblins are led by a tenacious and skilled warlord giving their main body an MC bonus of +2 and both sides are operating under either a blessed crusading banner or wearing crusading symbols granting another +2 bonus to their MC, for a total of MC 19 for the Brotherhood of the Broken Lance, MC 15 for the Oak Knights and MC 13 for their allied elves during the initial stage of this battle.

The first the player characters know of the ambush is a sudden clamour to the rear. The Games Master describes a terrible cry from further back down the trail and a brief flurry of arrows from the trees to the south of the road, as hobgoblin skirmishers attempt to disrupt the Oak Knights. The player characters, who have command of two dozen knights and their retainers within the 800-strong vanguard formation, decide they will charge the tree line to clear away the skirmishers while the rest of the Order turns to face the enemy. As they discuss their plans, the Games Master makes initial MC checks for the various combatants.

The hobgoblins attacking the vanguard are outnumbered and so will suffer a -2 penalty to their MC. They check results in a roll of 31 (13 + a 1d20 roll of 18), while the Oak Knights roll a total of 24 (15 + a 1d20 roll of 8). This is an outcome of -9 to the Oak Knights, who therefore suffer a total MC loss of -4. The hobgoblins, at +9, only suffer a -1 penalty to their MC. The Games Master will not describe the action in such terms, however. As the player characters charge, he tells them how a hail of arrows cuts down troops around them. It is up to the player to determine how brave they are feeling and whether they continue their charge.

If they press on, the action becomes a more recognisable melee, with the player characters closing on the hobgoblins. Assuming the player characters do a good job and drop twenty or thirty of their opponents, their heroism will be such that the hobgoblins suffer an additional -2 MC penalty in the next check.

After several rounds of combat, the Games Master determines that this is a good time to take stock of the situation again and so fresh opposed Military Cohesion checks are made. The hobgoblins facing the vanguard formation have now lost many of their advantages as the Oak Knights have recovered from the surprise of the ambush. They have lost -2 MC for being cowed by the player characters' heroism and so now have just MC 16 (MC 15, +2 for their warlord, +2 for their banner, -1 for the last combat outcome, -2 for the players' actions). The Oak Knights are no longer outflanked and are now on MC 13. The fresh opposed checks the Games Master makes give results of 23 (16 + a 1d20 roll of 11) for the hobgoblins and 25 (13 + a 1d20 roll of 12) for the Oak Knights. It is not a decisive turn in the pace of events but the pressure on the vanguard formation has eased. The Games Master describes how the Oak Knights are forming up to follow the player characters into the trees while also sending detachments back along the road to the centre.

The player characters will undoubtedly ask what is happening in the rest of the battle at this point. The Games Master makes rolls for the centre and rearguard formation for the first phase of the action.

In that initial ambush, the main hobgoblin formation in the centre, led by their commander, achieved a +2 outcome result over the elven centre – not enough to cause any real concerns. He tells the players that from what little they can see, there is ongoing heavy fighting back there. He then checks for this second phase, when the initial hobgoblin rush has been spent. This time the net result is +4 in the elves' favour.

The player characters, having taken a breather, advance once more along the side of the road, coming gradually closer to the action in the centre. The Games Master describes events there in greater detail, telling the players the hobgoblins are trying to make off with supply wagons. The players try to stop this and several more rounds of standard combat take place as they drive the goblinoids back from two of the supply wagons. Nothing spectacular happens in this action and the Games Master decides no additional MC advantage accrues to the elves as a result.

The attack on the rearguard formation, after a similar narrow success in the first phase, fades away after the second. The Games Master determines the hobgoblins will retire, licking their wounds. The ambush has been greatly disruptive but not fatal to the elves' crusade. The fighting was heaviest with the main formation but losses are not problematic. Rather more worrying are the dead and dying among the elite vanguard formation. . .

The thirteenth day of the third summermonth, on the road to Calpeth, some leagues west of the river crossing at Kayplar.

Most Holy and Revered brother,

I send word by courier on this evening, following an action on our march into the Calpeth province. As suspected, the contagious followers of the Death god have invaded this province in great numbers, and we were ambushed on the road by the accursed Portal dogs, who I think to have been of somewhat smaller number than our own force, though to hear some talk of it they numbered 10,000. I count their dead as 500; ours as perhaps 720. It seems they were trying to steal our supply wagons, though whether this was for their own needs or to starve us of supplies, I know not.

Reverend brother; the dog-soldiers wore the axe upon their shields, which is how I know them to be Portal. Many had the same design painted on their pelts, or daubed on skin (for there were orcs and even some barbarian slaves among their numbered dead). It seems you are right, therefore, most holy one, to believe they have declared an unholy war against us for their own crazed and vile reasons, and that your blessing upon this crusade carries the word of our beloved Goddess of the Forest.

As soon as we have reordered ourselves, I shall march once more on Calpeth, and relieve the city. Then we will scourge this land of the sign of Death.

It is with regret that I must inform you, Most Inspired One, that of our losses some 60 were Knights of the High Order, hunted down by archers at the commencement of the attack. The remainder are even more devoted to our holy cause now, seeking vengeance as well as righteous justice and good outcome. It is a good sign that I can report that of their number, these named ones were conspicuously heroic, and sent many of the Portal to the dark embrace of their God...



GODS & FOLLOWERS

Involving divinely-powered creatures in a campaign may seem daunting, especially as they are bound to be so much more powerful than the player characters. Facing off against a deity or his servants should certainly be the climax of any adventure but it does not have to be a fight to the death in which either the player characters are swept aside or in which they manage to 'kill' an immortal.

Just how gods behave depends on the set-up of your campaign and its mythology for there are many variables. For example, you may have a mythology in which the gods depend on the number and fervour of their followers for their power, in which case they have a strong interest in seeing those followers protected. Alternatively, the gods in your campaign might be supra-powerful beings but aloof and independent of their followers.



So, in any crusade campaign, the Games Master has to decide how likely it is that deities will become involved in the actions of their mortal followers, either directly or through other-worldly agents. For the purposes of this book, the assumption is that the gods do take an interest in the affairs of the mundane world, if only to protect their reputation and followers. At the same time, they are wary about doing too much, since this merely provokes the other deities in the pantheon to act as well and none can win if the gods become so enraged they fight an all-out war on the mortal plane.

THE GODS

In this section, we are going to take a brief look at some of the more obvious archetypes of campaign deities, and how they might influence a crusade fought in their name. Naturally, Games Masters will alter this information to take note of the specifics of their campaign's mythology.

To do this, we are going to treat domains as separate entities which characterise the deities associated with them and define the followers of those gods in terms of the powers and duties he/she/it imposes upon them. Naturally, since most deities and clerics follow more than one domain, these various aspects have to be combined.

The following information is presented for each domain.

Zeal: How likely the followers of the deity are to embark on a crusade and keep going once it has started, as detailed in the *Crusades: An Overview* chapter. Where domains are combined within a single religion, an average Zeal score should be calculated.

Divine Magic: Suggested changes to the standard clerical spell list whilst a crusade is taking place. These changes are in addition to the granted powers and domain spells presented in *Core Rulebook I*.

Divine Intervention: How likely it is that the deity will intervene in a crusade, either directly or through avatars.

Deities of Air

Zeal: 25. If crusading against a Fire deity, 30.

Divine Magic: Any fire spell cast uses up two of the cleric's slots at that level (unless the deity also covers the domain of fire).

Divine Intervention: Air deities have a tendency to

involve themselves in all matters on the mortal plane, seeing their interests in reaching everywhere. They will often send out a small part of their essence, in the form of an avatar or even masquerading as a mortal. This allows them to tinker with events, providing assistance and guidance in small packets. For example, the deity might hide among the population of an enemy city, controlling the weather to disrupt their preparations for war, ruin their harvest, etc. Air deities are less likely to appear in person on the battlefield but unleash elemental avatars and powerful magicks from their home plane.

Deities of Animals

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: No additional changes.

Divine Intervention: Animal deities, though frequently less powerful than other gods, are quick to act in defence of their interests, and will appear in person as a giant, otherworldly form of their animal representation. They will surround themselves with creatures of their kind, and attack ferociously, though they are quickly subdued by large losses among their creatures, whereas they can see



horrendous casualties sustained amongst their humanoid worshippers and barely bat an eye. Their avatars, which also appear frequently and which are spoken of as children of the deity, as they very well may be, frequently walk the mortal plane, and involve themselves in crusades, albeit clandestinely. Animal deities abhor mass destruction, and will not tolerate the destruction of habitats in the course of a holy war – their instructions will be to attack centres of population directly and swiftly.

Deities of Chaos

Zeal: 25. After an event that changes the religion's Zeal, toss a coin. On a result of heads, double the loss/gain; on a tails, reverse it.

Divine Magic: Cannot cast any lawful spells.

Divine Intervention: Chaotic deities revel in meddling in mundane affairs, and frequently stir up their followers and the chaotic races just to see what the outcome will be. They are capricious and cruel, as much to their own followers as to any others – they will often curse or kill a successful commander simply because they can. They do become involved in holy wars, but are fickle in the support they give their clerics, and often lose interest even at the most critical moments, which can leave their followers fighting alone against powerful odds. Chaos deities do not employ avatars as such, but unleash powerful monsters to cause havoc against their enemies, often at random and seemingly unimportant moments.

Deities of Death

Zeal: 35.

Divine Magic: Death clerics cannot cast healing or resurrection spells without a direct appeal to the deity, making the casting times of all such spells five times as long. They may cast necromancy spells as if the caster was one level higher than he or she actually is.

Divine Intervention: Death deities involve themselves in mortal affairs all the time. The only difference during a crusade is that they stir themselves into an even greater bout of energy, encouraging their followers to wage war energetically, to increase the number of casualties. They demand the greatest of sacrifices from their followers, returning their bodies to the fray even after death, bringing back the slain as anything from skeletons to wraiths, making even the most horrific battle that much more terrible. Death deities never forget an insult or leave a 'wrong' unpunished. They do not act through avatars, but they often present themselves in varied guises, which may lead to more than one 'god of death' appearing on the mortal plane at the same time. If they need

In-as-much as the surrender had been agreed, Guild Representative Thore asked if there was any role for the Council in the future governance of the city. High Councillor Jedill informed the chamber that General Steere had asked for representatives from the city to continue to run the day-to-day aspects of the city's continued governance, under the guidance of a military governor, soon to be announced. The Council unanimously appointed itself to that task.

The High Councillor then informed the chamber of a number of ordinances, for the good order of the city under occupation, that General Steere had asked be posted. The first pertained to the supply of her army, which, it had been agreed, would remain outside the city, to prevent looting. The measures were passed unanimously.

The second required the establishment of a consistory of the Knights of the Solar Order, in the former depot of the militia in Pride Square. Charter of ownership, a tithe of supply and other measures were placed before the chamber. Ansalla, of the Temple of the Triune Gods, noting that this consistory would be in the same street as several of the most holy buildings of the city, asked if the occupiers intended to found a Solar Temple therein. Jedill was unable to answer.

Guild Representative Petersin asked how long the occupying army would remain on city territory. Jedill informed the chamber that General Steere was already planning to move on to their next objective, which would bring them close to the mountains whereto their crusade was bound. On hearing that only a small number of Solar Knights would remain, Ansalla announced that these 'heretics' should be allowed to build their consistory, but that they would found any temple over his dead body.

There was some continued debate on this matter, until a party of Solar Knights arrived and, on being admitted to the chamber, seized High Priest Ansalla and burned him alive in the street as an enemy of the Sun and worshipper of a false religion.

The additional requirements of the occupiers being clearly understood, all measures were passed.

Minutes from the meeting of the City Council; fifth day before midsummer, in the eighth year since the Charter of Pannes.

dedicated, non-mortal followers, they simply raise them.

Deities of Destruction

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: Destruction clerics cannot cast any conjuration (creation) spells.

Divine Intervention: Deities of destruction are easily aroused to anger, and provide divine sanction and guidance for holy war almost on demand. The price of that support is that they compel their followers to acts of blind destruction, aimed at attacking the enemy's key centres and razing them to the ground. Although less murderous than death deities, gods of destruction adore battle in which one side or the other is wiped out, and will seek decisive engagements. They despise campaigns of manoeuvre and sieges; in the latter case, if besieged, they abandon the city to its fate, sometimes even weakening its walls and defences; on the other hand, if their supporters besiege a city, they provide whatever means are required to bring the attack to a swift and cataclysmic conclusion.

Deities of Earth

Zeal: 20. All Zeal modifications are halved, rounding down.

Divine Magic: Any air spell cast uses up two of the cleric's slots at that level (unless the deity also serves the domain of air).

Divine Intervention: Deities of earth have a much longer attention span than most other gods, and take the long view on just about everything. This means they are much less likely to take offence over some trivial provocation, unless the source is some servant of a deity with whom the earth god has a long antipathy. On the other hand, once they are embarked on a holy war, followers of an earth god are normally slow, resolute and determined, capable of sustaining sacrifice for a considerable time in pursuit of victory.

Deities of Evil

Zeal: 25.

Divine Magic: Evil clerics may not cast any 'good' spells.

Divine Intervention: Evil deities are no more

inclined to begin a holy war than any other deity, but once they are drawn into one, they prosecute it diabolically. Their principle aim will be to cause as much damage to the enemy god as possible, which normally means perpetrating massacres and violence among his or her followers. No tactic is too obscene. They particularly like to perform spectacular acts of evil, something that really highlights their power, and will unleash undead and terrible monsters against defenceless targets. In fact, Evil deities prefer to work in this way, rather than directing armies into battle, and they rarely make personal appearances on the battlefield.

Deities of Fire

Zeal: 22. If using the tables to determine the reactions of followers and clerics, add +1 when checking for the reactions of hot-tempered fire religions.

Divine Magic: Any water-based spell uses up two of the cleric's slots at that level (unless the deity also serves the domain of water).

Divine Intervention: Fire deities are among the most prolific holy warriors, having fast tempers and a propensity for direct action. If they feel that their

personal standing or that of the religion that serves them has been slighted, fire deities quickly whip up their clergy and followers into a holy war, and then seek to direct that war personally. They will provide instructions and resources for their clerics, especially fire creatures, who are employed as 'shock troops' on the battlefield; their avatars will be sent into battle often, and the god may make a personal intervention at a moment of crisis. Fire deities like to see their enemies 'cleansed' through fire and are, in that sense, very destructive. On the other hand, their anger is as quick to disperse as it was to appear, and their wars tend to be short and sharp, rather than sustained.

Deities of Good

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: May not cast any 'evil' spells. If using tables to determine the reactions of good clerics, modify the result by +1 when checking for their reaction.

Divine Intervention: Most good deities are patient, even in the face of provocation. However, once angered, they prosecute their holy wars with considerable determination. For the most part, they seek direct means to avenge themselves on their enemies or seek compensation; though they will employ armies as a show of force and to drive back or destroy enemy armies, their chosen method of winning the war is to take off the opponent's head – that is, they will try to keep the destruction minimal, to avoid causing death for death's sake, and will instead try to cause the maximum disruption to the enemy at the minimum cost. Assassination, the destruction of enemy holy sites and similar actions are widely used by good deities once a holy war has been declared.

Deities of Healing

Zeal: 20.

Divine Magic: May not cast spells that cause direct harm. During a crusade, all healing spells are cast at +2 caster level.

Divine Intervention: Followers of deities of healing have a difficult task. Their gods would much sooner heal the rift between the two religions by diplomacy and compromise, than prosecute a holy war that will cause so much death and injury in their name. Although deities of healing do enter into crusades against their foes, they prefer to do so as part of a coalition of deities, and then to act as 'healers' to a more militant god's forces. Having said all that, the crusading forces of a healing deity are a particularly steadfast breed, being supplied with extensive clerical healing magic that allows them to stay in



the fray much longer than usual. Brave followers killed in battle or while on a mission in the god's name are sometimes resurrected by the direct intervention of the god or his avatars, who are numerous and active.

Deities of Knowledge

Zeal: 22.

Divine Magic: No additional changes.

Divine Intervention: Gods of knowledge are among the least likely to intervene directly in a holy war. Where they are attacked or provoked into a crusade, knowledge deities provide vital information to their followers and generals - never are scouts so well informed and no army of a knowledge deity need ever fear ambush - but neither they nor their avatars will act directly, save to preserve important knowledge centres, such as libraries and ancient temples. Their followers are instructed to use the war as an opportunity to obtain knowledge from the enemy as much as to defeat him.

Deities of Law

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: May not cast chaotic spells.

Divine Intervention: Gods of law see it as their duty to interfere, and so during a holy war they and their avatars are often extremely active. They provide detailed instructions to their clerics and to the military orders that serve them, and they expect these to be obeyed. They also expect their followers to remain steadfast, and holy wars involving a lawful deity are normally drawn-out affairs. When they make personal appearances, it is usually to undo the work of some other deity. They will attempt to banish summoned creatures, undead or beings from other planes, seeking to restore a balance to the battlefield. Their avatars are a little more proactive, attacking the leaders of the enemy crusade and joining or leading forces to attack enemy temples. More than any other deity, a lawful god demands his 'pound of flesh' before he or she agrees that the war is concluded.

Deities of Luck

Zeal: 25

Divine Magic: During a crusade, clerics of a deity of luck have the ability of good fortune increased so that it may be used once an hour instead of just once a day.

Divine Intervention: Luck deities do not care to involve themselves directly in holy wars, sitting on the sidelines and watching fate play out its course. However, if an opposing deity starts casting major spells, employing avatars or walking the mortal

plane meting out divine wrath, the luck god will almost certainly do the same, attempting to counteract divine magic with divine magic, so that the original 'gamble' is restored. Luck deities love battles and other moments 'on which the world turns', seeing them as the most complex gambles. They will not intervene until the course of the conflict has been seen to develop for good or ill, and only then do they provide aid for their followers if needed. Their avatars are quite independent creatures by comparison with many, and appear on the mortal plane to watch events and gamble on the outcome.

Deities of Magic

Zeal: 25.

Divine Magic: During a crusade, a cleric of a magical deity may cast wizard spells as if he were a wizard of the same level as he is a cleric (i.e. during the crusade, a 5th level cleric would be able to cast spells accessible to a 5th level wizard).

Divine Intervention: Magic is there to be used, or so a priest of a magical deity would argue, provided





that it is used by the godly. Many 'magic' religions believe that there is little or no difference between 'divine' and any other form of magic; all are benefits to be derived from the grace of their deity. What they abhor is the use of magic by those other than priests. Magic deities feel the same way, and are prone to look unfavourably on wizards and other mages, seeking them out for destruction both on the battlefield and elsewhere in the campaign. Deities of magic are extremely interventionist, sending avatars and casting spells from afar to negate the effects of enemy magic and to destroy their magical items. They incarnate personally as powerful priest-mages, to duel with upstart mortal spellcasters and destroy them.

Deities of Plants

Zeal: 20. If using the tables to determine the reactions of good clerics, modify the result by -1 when checking for their reaction.

Divine magic: No additional changes.

Divine intervention: Plant deities abhor holy war, since war is so destructive of all the land it passes across. Plant deities and their clerics are therefore slow to anger and quickly seek ways of negotiating

for peace. It is, after all, a belief of all plant-worshipping religions that plant life will endure where animal life soon fades, and that therefore it is futile and costly to fight a war in defence of something that cannot be destroyed. In fact, clerics of plant deities often act as brokers in peace talks between other religions. However, plant-worshipping religions will fight in defence of their faith, and are also known to work closely with the followers of water, sun and air deities. There is little to choose between the deity and its avatars, since in many cases the deity appears in many aspects. However the deity appears, its actions are usually defensive, and where there is a need to attack, it will choose covert methods rather than brutish assault.

Deities of Protection

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: Spells that afford a bonus to Armour Class or saving throws have an increased effect of +1 to any bonus granted.

Divine Intervention: Protection deities intervene in the mortal realms all the time, casting magicks that protect and sanctify their temples and senior priests. Long before any holy war begins, they will have put into place guardians, magical traps and other wards to hold off attacks by enemy armies; naturally, their temples are some of the most heavily guarded places in the mortal realm.

This is how the deity prefers to work; using powerful magicks from afar, and placing avatars at the most important and vulnerable sites, as opposed to intervening directly. On the battlefield too, they provide protective magic, and physical barriers to prevent the enemy attacking weak spots, rather than directly taking part in the fighting.

Deities of Strength

Zeal: 30.

Divine Magic: Clerics of deities of strength gain extra spells during a crusade, to a number equal to their Strength modifier. The bonus spells are of 0 or 1st level.

Divine Intervention: Deities of strength love a challenge, and relish holy war as a means for testing the mettle of their followers and achieving personal dominance over other deities. Strength gods believe that deities should come face to face if they truly believe in their cause, and so incarnate on the mortal plane for long periods during a campaign. However, they will not use their strength against 'unworthy' targets, and so find little to challenge them on most battlefields, unless a heroic stand against vast numbers is called for. Strength deities

do not believe in half-measures, covert operations or anything short of a decisive struggle. They will only assist those who are brave and who put their lives on the line. This assistance is normally based on spells that improve the character's combat capabilities; gods of strength do not like to hide behind avatars.

Deities of the Sun

Zeal: 25.

Divine Magic: Sun clerics must be in the light of the sun to learn spells. During a crusade, for each hour spent praying or meditating in sunlight, a cleric receives one additional first level spell; if in the sun for two hours, the cleric may learn an additional second level spell instead of two first, or a third level spell after three hours.

Divine Intervention: Sun deities are naturally intrusive as regards the affairs of mortals, especially those who live on the surface of the land. They and their clerics are easily offended, being inclined to think of themselves as the prime deity in any cosmology, and they are happy to see their followers undertake a holy war in their name. However, mortal concerns are also quite small and petty in their eyes, and they can lose interest quickly, after an initial burst of enthusiasm in which they supply their clerics with powerful magicks, and in which their avatars can be extremely active. The gods themselves do not incarnate upon the mortal plane, save when they are forced to intervene because of the actions of another deity.

Deities of Travel

Zeal: 20.

Divine Magic: No additional effects.

Divine Intervention: Deities of travel do not engage in holy wars often (nor are they often challenged; it is hard for other gods or their followers to become offended by a god whose main remit is a journey), and when they are so engaged they have limited staying power. Widespread and ephemeral, deities of travel do not present many easy targets to their enemies: scattered, small consistories, wayside inn/shrines and stopping places. However, such gods do have one major asset – reach. The god, his or her avatars, clerics and all followers are committed to and used to lengthy journeys, and so they find the hardships of a crusade – even one over a huge distance – quite manageable. Their military orders can manage supply and foraging quite easily; their maps and intelligence are second to none. They have ships, horses, oxen and beasts of burden of all kind at their

disposal. Should these not be enough, the deity will provide magical means to move men and equipment over vast distances. This is pretty much the limit of the involvement the deity will have in a crusade, however. As for avatars, these appear in the guise of guides, who lead the army along safe byways and into areas of rich forage.

Deities of Trickery

Zeal: 20.

Divine Magic: No additional effects.

Divine Intervention: Gods of trickery delight in the opportunities provided by a holy war, even if they do not see much profit in being involved in one. Rather than be bullied into a military confrontation, with armies and sieges and battles, they prefer to frustrate and confound their enemies through acts of trickery and petty spite, undermining the will of a more powerful enemy. Gods of trickery involve themselves in holy 'wars' all the time, even ones which do not involve them. They masquerade as other gods, they infiltrate the leadership of crusading hosts, they confuse and obscure the issues so that no-one is sure what all the fuss is about. Once a holy war has started, a trickery god will – through magic and a plethora of avatars – spread



false rumours and plant fake information. Armies will find themselves following fake orders, guided by false maps. Nothing will be as it appears to be.

Deities of War

Zeal: 40. If using tables to determine the reactions of good clerics, modify the result by +1 when checking for their reaction.

Divine Magic: On the day after a battle, clerics receive spells as if they were +2 caster level.

Divine Intervention: Naturally, no deity loves a crusade more than a war god. They are quick to allow even the most petty offence to escalate into something major, and once a war has started they revel in the carnage and seek to keep the war going for as long as possible. War gods love campaigns of epic grandeur. They will ignore all the side theatres, and positively frown on covert action (unless it is suitably 'showy' in its effects). They and their avatars (of which there are few, though each is almost as powerful as a god in its own right), seek to command and control armies and lead them into decisive battle. Even important centres of population and support are considered secondary targets compared with an immediate confrontation with the main enemy army.

Deities of Water

Zeal: 25.

Divine Magic: No additional changes.

Divine Intervention: Water deities tend to take a detached view of wars between other deities, particularly those popular with land-dwelling creatures, since they do not perceive much risk to their communities from such sources. On the other hand, with the increasing extension of land-based life onto the sea through shipping, coupled with ongoing disputes along the shorelines of the world, small-scale religious wars occur frequently. At such times, most water gods quite actively support their followers and clerics, especially defensively, providing spells to ward holy places and underwater communities, and avatars to terrorise the enemy. Water gods intervene personally only rarely,



normally relying on their simple ability to raise sea levels in a disputed area to drown effective resistance before it starts.

ADVENTURES IN THE FACE OF DIVINE POWER

There are three ways in which player characters can be involved in adventures within a crusader campaign which directly bring them into confrontation with divine power through facing magic, combating avatars, or coming face-to-face with a deity.

The first category pits the player characters against cataclysmic events, caused by an angry deity. Perhaps the god has seen his followers heavily defeated, and in the face of having to make a humiliating climb down in the war, he, she or it decides to unleash some magic of immense power. An air deity might unleash a *whirlwind*, an earth goddess could trigger an *earthquake* or a fire god send out an *incendiary cloud* (as per the spell in each case). These spells are vastly powerful, all the more so for being cast by a god, so the player characters need to be given some warning so they can attempt to rescue innocents or protect the target of the attack.

The simplest way is to have the deity issue a warning, or an explanation. Gods are notoriously showy and like their victims to know just why it is

their cities are about to be razed or their crops turned to ashes. They also like mortals to acknowledge their power, and a cowed, frightened population shrieking with fear in anticipation of a massive catastrophe undoubtedly does as much for their egos as several days of chanting and sacrifice. There will be a suitable demonstration of the deity's power against a lesser target, and then an announcement that unless the mortals in the path of the disaster abandon their crusade and acknowledge the attacking god as their new master, they will be fried, drowned or eaten before the day ends.

Player characters then get the chance to be heroes, leading those trapped in the path of the disaster away from danger, or perhaps trying to distract the angry god by some act of bravado. This kind of adventure climax is hard to balance, but it can be a desperate and compelling end to a particular storyline. The greatest difficulty comes if it is the player characters themselves who have done the most to offend and anger the god for if they become the target of the god's wrath, they stand little chance of avoiding such powerful magic, delivered from afar by a target they cannot even fight back against. The best way to handle this is to have the god act against the player characters, but not directly. Instead, he attacks the city that has sheltered them, or the army among which they march. The purpose would be to isolate the player characters from the forces that have protected them since the start of the campaign. In the same way that the collateral damage caused when fanatical assassins attacked them at the start of the crusade caused the player characters to be distanced from ordinary citizens around them, this kind of attack makes even kings and high priests anxious – and perhaps willing to abandon or sacrifice the player characters if it means the survival of them and their men.

The other effect that can be achieved by placing the player characters squarely in the path of imminent disaster is that it forces them to expend their resources just to stay alive. Scrolls and healing potions are used up whilst armour and weapons are lost or damaged. The player characters are forced back on their innate strength, intelligence and courage if they are to survive.

Do not forget, you can unleash the full weight of a god's magic against player

characters if you remember that there is also a god working on their behalf. As the god's *lightning bolt* is fired, the characters seem to notice a shimmering in the air in front of them. The charge hits, they are scattered, battered and bruised, their possessions damaged and lost but somehow they survive...

AVATARS

The second tool a deity can use against player characters is an avatar. This term has been used repeatedly in this book to signify an other-worldly servant of the deity. In actuality, they would go by many names – elementals, demons, spirits, celestials, demi-gods, etc. . . In all cases they are lesser versions of the deity they serve.

As with divine magic, throwing an avatar directly against low or mid-level characters is just too much for there is no way they can stand in its path and survive. Normally, there is no way in which you can have your players face a massively over-powerful demon in combat without them being so



to defeat the enemy, but measures are in hand to combat the avatar and its work, if only time can be bought. The player characters are needed to divert its attention, to give it cause to turn away from its allotted task for a short while. They are provided with as many resources as they can carry to keep them alive for as long as possible, but they will hear whispers in the camp before they leave that they are being sent on a suicide mission. This is one of those situations where if the player characters are *too* successful, they attract the full weight of the avatar's attention, and it seeks to swat them aside. This may be the sole reason why they survive such an attack – the avatar will be in a hurry to get back to its work and may not stay to ensure that the player characters are actually destroyed by its attack, just so long as they are left crushed!

Caught in the Middle

In the middle of what appears to be a straightforward mission in the course of the crusade, the player characters are caught in the middle as two avatars clash. These two titans are so intent on killing each other that the players may feel their characters are little more than spectators, but it should also become apparent that the avatar of their god is getting the worst of the encounter. Only by the player characters throwing themselves into the fray can the balance be redressed. The enemy avatar will continue to concentrate on the greater threat – its counterpart – but if a player character does it more damage in a particular combat round, he or she will become the target instead, which could prove to be a dangerous moment. The fight continues until either of the avatars has been killed. If the enemy avatar is the one to be destroyed, the allied being will recognise the assistance of the player characters suitably. If it is the ally who falls, the player characters will lose the goodwill of that religion's clerics, who will blame them for not doing enough.

Sample Avatars

When pitching player characters against an avatar, it is important to realise that it is almost impossible for it to be killed. Even if bested, the avatar always has the option to escape from the fray, back to its own dimension or place of origin. So, these encounters are more tests of the player characters' bravery and capabilities than true fights to the finish.

Ormain

Huge Outsider

Hit Dice: 25d8+125 (237hp)

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative feat)

Speed: 120 feet, fly 240 feet (good)

AC: 25 (-2 size, +17 natural)

Attacks: +3 Huge barbed spear either used in melee +34/+29/+24/+20 or thrown +26. Once thrown, the spear is automatically recovered to Ormain's right hand in the next combat round.

Damage: 2d6+15

Face/reach: 10ft by 5ft/15ft

Spells: Ormain learns and can cast divine spells as a 25th level cleric.

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *alter self*, *bless*, *commune with nature*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *light*, *pass without trace*, *persistent image*, *speak with plants*, as if cast by a 25th level cleric.

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 30/+3, SR 30, turn to cloud.

Saves: Fort +22, Ref +12, Will +12.

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 11, Con 22, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +25, Concentration +30, Diplomacy +25, Disguise +30, Handle Animal +25, Heal +25, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (own religion) +30, Knowledge (other religions) +15, Listen +30, Search +30, Sense Motive +30, Speak Language +25, Spot +30, Use Magic Device +25.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Spell Focus, Sunder.

Challenge Rating: 21.

Ormain is a son of the air god, the result of his relations with a mortal elf woman. He appears as a tall, powerfully-built male elf, though he can change form in one round into a cloud of water vapour, in which form he is impossible to damage, though he can be driven away by wind or fire. His clothes are loose fitting, though held at the waist by a broad and jewelled belt. He travels quickly on the high air currents in cloud form, and appears at the edge of towns, villages or camps to do his father's bidding. Dangerous when enraged, Ormain nevertheless strives to do good and is capable of acts of considerable compassion.

Ormain's main purpose is to protect followers of air and creatures of the sky. He is not interested in battle as such, but will fight to drive off attackers and will pursue those he feels have committed a grave injustice against his father's domain. Only the undersea realms are beyond his reach, though he is also uncomfortable in the deep underearth, particularly around volcanic vents and other places of poisonous air.

The air was rank with death. None had survived. Steere lay in the middle of her personal bodyguard, eviscerated and staked to the ground with the stump of the pole from which had flown the sun banner. Thirty yards away, tipped on its side, lay the army's carroccio, reduced to matchwood and kindling. Ten priests lay in a circle about it, evidence of their final stand against the magic that destroyed them.

In all, one hundred and sixty thousand had joined the crusade. The journey to the lands of their enemies had reduced that host by forty thousand, many killed in sieges and battles against others of their race, who had impeded the passage of the crusade out of fear or ignorance. Another twenty-five thousand had been lost in battles against their enemies, and as many again were laid low by disease. Allowing for the garrisons she had left behind, Steere had brought less than thirty-five thousand to this final field of battle, and the confrontation with the God of Death and his minions, who had walked through their ranks, slaying indiscriminately until all the slaying was done.

Canath

Large Outsider

Hit Dice: 15d8+90 (157hp)

Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative feat)

Speed: 20 feet, fly 120 feet (average)

AC: 32 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +20 natural)

Attacks: 2 clawed hands +20/+15/+10 melee

Damage: Each claw 1d6+6, plus corrosive secretion, a persistent d8+1 damage per round after a hit, until cleaned off.

Face/reach: 5ft by 5ft/10ft

Spells: Canath learns and can cast divine spells as a 20th level cleric.

Spell-like Ability: At will – *fear* aura, as if cast by a 20th level cleric.

Special qualities: Corrosive skin does 1d12+4 points of damage to all non-magical weapons that strike Canath. Damage reduction 20/+2, SR 25.

Saves: Fort +15, Ref +8, Will +9.

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +20, Disguise +15, Hide +10, Jump +24, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (own religion) +22, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Listen +20, Move Silently +20, Search +13, Sense Motive +20, Spot +20.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Spell Focus.

Canath is one of several demonic servants of an evil deity, a seemingly clumsy, slow-thinking, foul-smelling creature with vermilion skin and a beaked head. His hugely powerful legs allow him to leap high into the air, or to dive from distance into a fight, scattering his enemies before clawing them viciously with his taloned hands. Canath delights in battle, lurking on the flanks and watching for an isolated group of 50 or less warriors; when he sees such a group, he can leap in to attack, flailing at them and spraying them with droplets of a corrosive and persistent liquid that seeps from his skin.

Canath serves his master with complete loyalty, and cannot be persuaded from his path, though he is single-minded and, if charged, for example, to guard an evil warlord from harm, will only wreak havoc among his attackers for as long as they persist. The only exception to this is that Canath is enraged when struck by missile weapons, and will attack at once if hit by spear or arrow. He has great spell-casting powers, though he uses them infrequently, almost as if the act of casting takes too much concentration – though opponents who rely on distracting him in some way will find that when spells are required, he can fire them off almost at will.

WHEN GODS COLLIDE

The ultimate moment, for the player characters at least, of any campaign would have to be that instant in which they realise that the creature they are facing is no ordinary monster, but the incarnation of the deity whose wrath they have incurred through all their previous actions in the campaign. At that moment they should be mortally afraid, because no matter what they have in front of them, they are actually facing imminent doom.

In game terms, of course, the statistics are stacked up so badly against the player characters that worrying about the details is a waste of time. At a moment like this, the Games Master needs to come outside of the rules and accept that a deity pretty much does what he or she likes, and that there is no way a mortal can genuinely hope to defeat them.

So, what is the point of the encounter? Well, that will depend on what it is that has brought mortal and deity into confrontation. If the player characters have defeated everything else the deity's servants have thrown against them, this is the moment of the drama where their ultimate enemy



steps up and reminds them of their true place in the scheme of things. If the powers with which the player characters have sided have already won the war, this is the moment when they suffer some cost for their success and receive the 'this isn't over' warning. Gods have long memories. Deities normally exist in their full form only on the plane on which they reside. When they come to the mortal realm, they manifest in a form most suitable for the sphere or domain they represent. Typically, they adopt a giant form of some creature, humanoid or otherwise. This creature should appear otherworldly, unnatural, but only to the extent that it is larger and seems yet to move with uncanny grace and skill. When it attacks, it does so with unerring accuracy; when it is struck, though each successful blow looks as if it should have injured the beast, still it comes on.

The Games Master here adapts the applicable creature from *Core Rulebook III*. In its manifested form, the deity has similar armour class, hit points, abilities and other characteristics



of the creature, only exaggerated (+10AC, for example, and double Hit Dice). Its unworldly nature comes from its actions; the way it attacks, for example. Put simplistically – deities always roll 20s. Roll the dice each time, go through the motions but when a god attacks, it hits. When it casts a spell, it does so to maximum effect.

The effect you are after with the players is paranoia. When the seemingly ordinary (though big!) wolf claws them yet again for twenty-seven points of damage, they will start to question the encounter and wonder what they are truly up against. The effect is magnified if the god attacks in the company of other creatures of the same type it has manifested as; other wolves are all limping away after the *fireball* hits but this one just keeps coming.

Gods can be defeated in this kind of combat but they cannot be beaten and certainly cannot be killed. A deity can drop from the manifested form to appear in full majesty, or vanish back to its own plane, in the instant between a killing blow being aimed and the blade landing. A blinding light, a sudden burning cloud of smoke, and the creature is gone, leaving only its mundane and mortal fellow creatures behind. The player characters may not be able to understand immediately what they saw, but higher priests of their religion, seers or hermits steeped in lore, will be able to tell them 'that was no ordinary wolf, that was Lupus himself!' A more recognisable, awesome and terrifying visitation of the deity will only occur at a moment of the highest drama – a decisive battle perhaps, or the moment when the most important temple of that deity's religion is about to tumble. At such a time, with no more than a wave of the hand, the god will sweep away the threat to his followers. Express this to the players in whatever way is appropriate to that deity, but the force is unstoppable. Unless they pose an immediate direct threat, the force the player characters face will not be fatal, though it may be damaging and fearful.

Of course, it is just as likely that the player characters will also see a manifestation of their own deity as that of an enemy one though the circumstances will be the same. At a moment of crisis, the god appears, to fight alongside the player characters or in defence of the same goals. Its

powers will appear otherworldly, out of step with the form in which it appears.

When a holy war reaches the point in which deities are confronting each other in direct combat, leaving mere mortals scattered on the field around them, the crusade has reached its moment of armageddon. This is the moment of decision, the climax of the campaign. It is actually very hard to 'win' in this final adventure, because neither deity can be killed except by the other and they both have the ability to flee the field in a heartbeat. But a crushing victory for one side or the other, perhaps assisted by the player characters, will so demoralise the loser that the war will start to scale down from that moment on. The victors will crow about how their cause has been justified; pillage and self-congratulation will be the order of the day; the defeated people will give up ground and flee to the margins, hiding while they and their deity recover strength. Victory, if such it is, is always fleeting.

As peace settles on the land, crusader orders limp back to barracks reduced by enormous casualties and priests return to their temples to turn victory into greater tithes and more backsides on the pews: The player characters who survive may well be richer, more respected and have access to the higher corridors of power. Just what adventures can possibly follow after this remain to be seen but for the Games Master there is one sure sign that the campaign has been a success.

Next time a wolf, especially a large one, comes around the corner, snarls and rushes the players, stalwart ex-crusaders will look at each other and ask, 'it couldn't be him again, could it?'



Back in the Hall of Shields, the Grand Master took the report into his hands some five months later. He grimaced for a moment, then handed the parchment to the Master of Arms. 'It would appear,' he said, 'that the crusade is at an end.'

The Master of Arms shrugged. 'This crusade, perhaps, Grand Master. On the positive side, we have more recruits than we have seen in a generation, and the treasury is awash with loot, tribute and donations. Give it two years to whip this lot into shape, and we'll be better prepared than ever, and we have all those additional consistories on the route... next time...'

'The High Priest is minded to call this war concluded,' the Grand Master agreed. 'Their deity intervened; for whatever reason, ours did not. And the King will stand no more loss; so, there - that's the end of it. We can wait.'

'And what of those adventurers? They came back early, you will recall, having killed your opposite number in the Portal order. They have been our honoured guests ever since.'

'Kick them out,' the Grand Master commanded.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

It is a bit of a shock to realise that I am writing for what must be my fourth incarnation of the AD&D game. When I picked up the game at a games convention in London, I had no idea that I would be writing material for it 20+ years later!

This particular book comes from something that has been a bit of a gaming obsession of mine in the last few of those twenty-odd years. As someone who has become a bit of a Renaissance nut and fascinated in the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, I have repeatedly introduced threads of this nature into roleplaying campaigns I run. I find the whole nature of 'belief' to be compelling; men will actually go to war because one book says that god is one thing, while others – insisting just as vehemently theirs is the 'true' book – hold another view.

In the kind of fantasy world this book is written for, this whole subject takes another step forward, because there is actually 'evidence' in a fantasy roleplaying world of the existence of the divine – clerical magic. I am sure there are philosophers throughout the cities of fantasy who can explain away divine magic without recourse to the existence of the gods, but for the average citizen of an average kingdom (and their not-so-average kinsmen who went off to become player characters), there is very real proof the gods are present in their lives. Every time skeletons cower in front of a holy symbol, every cure light wounds spell and every disaster of nature reinforces that belief.

Not just one god either, but a myriad number of them, all with their own characters and spheres of interest, vying for the attention of mortal worshippers. Those worshippers come in all shapes and sizes too, with races as varied as gnomes and hill giants, centaurs and mermen.

What would happen when the followers of gods this varied went to war? We live in a world where fanatics can kill thousands of people with no thought other than to shock and terrify. They draw power from their beliefs, but that power is limited to the fuel it gives to their fanaticism. In a fantasy world, deities can grant *real* power, through divine magic. Imagine that in the hands of fanatics. . .

It is an implicit part of the game that the various races do not all get on but what struck me was just how much more poisonous that hatred would be when fuelled by religious grievance. Now men, elves and hobgoblins are not just fighting for their lives, they are fighting in a 'holy' cause and if they are truly favoured by their deity, just think of the horror they might unleash. From here, it was easy to imagine how the different religions of a fantasy world would find ways to express their dogma through force and from there came the knight prestige class, that single-minded holy warrior who can be aimed at a target and never question 'why'.

Finally, I just had to spend a chapter looking at just how bad things could be if a holy war accelerated to such a degree that the gods came from their distant planes and took direct part in the conflict. Naturally, many Games Masters will have different views as to just how likely it is that deities in their campaign would make an appearance on the battlefield but it is my belief some kind of 'trade' is going on between believers and the deity they believe in and that the god needs those followers, which is why he gives some of them all this magical firepower. Would such a being be content when his followers are massacred or began losing their faith because of persecution and attack?

Anyway, whatever Mongoose had in mind when they commissioned me to write this book, they got this – a treatise on brutal, mindless holy war in a fantasy environment. I do not want to be trite and say this book is dedicated in some way to the victims of September 11th 2001 but I would like to make this one final point. No matter what he believes in, what creed he follows, no man has the right to take the life of another based on his differing faith or belief. I wish all who read these words and share these beliefs – and those who do not – freedom from hate in 2002 and hereafter.

Paul Cockburn

RULES SUMMARY

Table 1.1 Causes of the Crusade

1d10	Cause	Reaction Modifier *
1	Blasphemy	0
2	Heresy	1
3	Defilement of holy place	1
4	Harassment of followers	1
5	Murder of prominent cleric	2
6	Expulsion	2
7	Invasion	3
8	Massacre	4
9	Proactive holy war	5
10	The word of god	6

* The Reaction Modifier is applied to Tables 1.2 and 1.3 below.

Zeal Modifiers

Event	Zeal Modifier
Massacre of opponents	+2
Massacre of own followers	-2
Destruction of religious site	-1
Death of senior religious leader	-3
Minor military defeat	-1
Major military defeat	-10
Military victory	+5
Loss of significant holy item	-5
Intervention of opponent deity's avatars	-5
Intervention of opposing deity	-15
Intervention of own deity	+15

Table 1.2 Followers' Reaction to the Cause

1d6 + Reaction

Modifier	Reaction	Practical Effect
1	Apathy	Ordinary people ignore the offence and all calls to arms; resistance to any calls for volunteers, extra taxes, etc.
2-3	Uncertainty	Wait and see; support for all efforts to solve the crisis without bloodshed.
4-5	Offence	Small numbers of volunteers; secular government makes limited moves to support offended clerics.
6	Grudging support	Support for government, so long as aims are limited and proportionate.
7	Anger	Local reprisals, thousands of volunteers swell military forces. Government launches military attacks on offenders.
8	Blind support	Spontaneous demonstrations and action; large numbers join military forces; secular government committed to brutal war against offenders.
9	Fury	Fervent demands for action; massive effort by secular government to avenge insult. Supporters of offended religion mobilise in great numbers, ready to be lead in a holy war.
10+	Hysteria	Vast numbers set off on crusade regardless of attitude of leaders and clerics

Table 1.3 Religion's Reaction to the Cause

1d6 + Reaction

Modifier	Reaction	Practical Effect
1	Cynical	Lip-service paid to how terrible the offence is, but no genuine response.
2	Guarded	Public restraint in calling for retaliation, covert support for acts of revenge.
3-4	Wary	Defensive deployment of Military Orders; hiring of mercenaries (and perhaps player characters) for specific counter-measures..
5-6	Anger	Offensive deployment of Military Orders; shrill demands for volunteers and action by secular government.
7	Rage	Action against local followers of offending religion, including expulsion and destruction of religious sites, temples, etc.
8	Fury	Complete backing and support for all secular action against enemy religion; heavy commitment of own resources against the enemy..
9	Holy war	Massive and disproportionate reaction, heedless of loss, until the original offence has been repaid several times over.
10+	To the death	Hysterical over-reaction, with the full resources of the religion thrown into a fight to the finish.



Table 1.4 Religious War Escalation

1d6	Level of Conflict	Practical effect and Future modifier
1-3	Short of War	Covert action and small-scale violence possible, but only defensive military measures.
4	Skirmishing	Military orders and border forces clash; violence against minorities in centres of involved religions. +1 modifier to next roll.
5	Raids	Border raids against temples and other sites of the opposing religion; enemy temples on home soil ransacked. +2 modifier to next roll.
6	Small Battles	Military orders clash, manoeuvring of secular armies and increasingly strident demands for compensation. At home, increasing violence against any followers of the enemy religion, possibly including small-scale massacre. +3 modifier to next roll.
7	Invasion	Large scale military action by both religious and secular authorities. Large battles and the destruction of targeted locations; capture and trial of enemy religious leaders. +4 modifier to next roll.
8	Occupation	Systematic action to scourge enemy religion from all controlled territory. Religious ethnic cleansing and summary execution of enemy priests. +5 modifier to next roll.
9	Signs and Portents	Indirect divine intervention; use of godly powers to attack enemy armies, towns, temples and clerics. +6 modifier to next roll.
10	Intervention	The direct employment of the deities' avatars and other-worldly servants alongside clerical and secular armies.
11	Hands-On	The direct involvement of the Gods themselves, both in the material world and on other planes.
12	Armageddon	A fight to the finish between the offended deities, with awesome consequences on the ground.

The Cinematic Battle System Outcomes

MC Check	Outcome
+21 or more	Major success; unit pushes forward in pursuit of defeated enemy; MC +2
+16-20	Important success; unit rallies and prepares to advance; MC +1
+11-15	Success; unit gains a breathing space
+6-10	Tactical advantage; unit with upper hand; MC -1
+1-5	Hard-fought advantage; unit tiring, but pressing on; MC -2
0	Press of pike; MC-2
-1-5	Under pressure; unit tiring; MC-3
-6-10	Front ranks crumbling; morale falling; MC-4
-11-15	Unit retreats; MC-6
-16-20	Unit pushed back; heavy losses and collapse of command; MC-8
-21 or less	Unit routed; MC-10

Event	Modifier
Unit is defending behind walls	+4
Unit is defending behind a river, fence or obstacle	+2
Unit is outnumbered by 2-1 or greater	-2
Unit is surprised	-2
Unit takes incoming missile fire it cannot reply to	-1
Unit is attacked by cavalry or elite troops	-2
In a previous phase, flanking friendly units gave ground	-1
Enemy forces operating on the unit's flank	-1
Enemy forces operating to the unit's rear	-2

Random Events

1d20	Event	MC Modifier
1-2	Commander killed	Loss of any MC bonus; additional -2MC
3-4	Unit struck by offensive magic	-2 MC
5-6	Standard lost	Loss of any MC bonus; additional -2 MC
7-8	Loss of key position	-1MC
9-10	Unit expends missile weapons	-1MC
11-12	Disorientated	-1MC (and unit retreats)
13-14	Rash order	-1MC (and unit manoeuvres into dangerous position)
15-16	Defences crumble/attack falters	-2 MC
17-18	False rumour	-2MC
19-20	'Run for your lives!'	-4MC (and unit routs)

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