

Cleric

Common Alignments:	By deity
Common Tongues:	Dominion, also by deity
Divine Patrons:	See deities list.
Races:	Dwarves, Elves, Halflings, Humans
Regions:	The Arbormists, the Dominions, Mhorzal
Prestige Classes:	Athan'es (<i>Silfarenya</i>) Belladonna (<i>Gwyneth</i>) Celindari Tactician (<i>Cyhiraeth, Damara, Tiriel</i>) Frostreaver (<i>Malakon</i>) Guardians of the Black Rose (<i>Liasiardim</i>) Hierophant Knights of Cray (<i>Celindar</i>) Shieldmaiden (<i>Damara</i>) Unbinders (<i>Any</i>)

Intermediaries to the gods. Interpreters of divine will. Orators of the holy or unholy words. Clerics occupy a position between their own people and the higher powers collectively named and identified as the gods of the world. Established as intercessors since early times, they are subject to fascination, uncertainty or even fear by most. Even the darkest of their kind can draw upon beneficial prayers; even the brightest, when roused, can rain divine vengeance upon their foes. The traditional image of a cleric usually considers her to be an individual reflective of the dogma of a divine power, bound willingly to service. She knows secrets others cannot, but bears responsibility upon her shoulders. A god's demands cannot be lightly pushed aside, and she walks through the world painfully aware of her position and status. She must fulfil what her church needs, what a higher power desires, and what her own understanding of her faith decrees. Few can truly comprehend the demands upon her, and those that do often marvel at her steadfast endurance upon an often unforgiving path. This sacrifice does not come entirely without some benefit or cost. A cleric can wield phenomenal influence at the height of her power, exemplified in the events of the past and present. Campaigns to unearth and remove priests of opposing faiths illustrates just how powerful she can be.

When demonstrating no ill-will to the community, most people accept clerics freely. The deity a priest serves will inevitably influence the limits of tolerance she enjoys; even

if she is proven to be harmless, her allegiance to a banned or feared faith is simply too dangerous. A town can never know when a dark deity might order her to take up a torch and burn homes to the ground, or recruit other members with less innocent motivations. A cleric cannot always hide behind her faith for protection or support, for in some lands her presence is unwelcome in the extreme. Though the elves and dwarves both have strong religious traditions, the people of the far north most certainly do not. Many clerics who dare the frigid seas and empty moors simply never return, a grim reminder that even the servants of the gods face opposition and threats.

Divine Patrons

A character cannot become a cleric without first receiving the blessing of a deity, a process commonly known as the Calling. The Calling is a highly personal experience forging the bonds of service between the would-be servant and the patron he follows. No one can ever share the same experience, even within a single faith. Nor does it strike only one sort of individual; it can come to someone after ten years of apprenticeship or in a moment of heady glory on the battlefield. In the Calling, a cleric receives his mandate to uphold his deity's dogma and decree from the moment he accepts the responsibilities and burdens of his order. While it is possible to venerate several divinities of similar alignment and philosophy, such as the Celindar, he may only serve one deity. In system terms, a character must select a single divine patron at Character Generation. This god bestows his class features, such as the ability to turn undead, cast spells and access special domains. His selection of deities is limited primarily by his alignment. Alignment restrictions always pertain to a cleric, and they are heavily enforced. He must always adhere to one of the acceptable alignments of his chosen deity or suffer the consequence of losing his class abilities altogether.

Like other divine spellcasters, a cleric must uphold the decrees of his faith. As its representative and literal spokesperson, he can command considerable influence and power that is not invested lightly. The gods do not tolerate the abuse of their gifts; if a cleric consciously defies his deity's mandate, he can expect to be stripped of his power immediately or experience far worse. Servants of the Veluakir especially measure their fates, all too aware of the wrath and cruel caprice of those whom they follow. The specific code any cleric is expected to follow, defend and uphold is listed under each deity file.

Races

The gods do not distinguish worshippers based entirely on race. It is thought they can see beyond the vessel and measure the worth of the person within, but such might be the ramblings of ideal sages and philosophers. Most understand clerics can be drawn from any people and fairly equally. Even so, all races definitely favour certain faiths over another, and their clerics may be drawn in larger numbers towards a specific church at the expense of another. Dwarves and elves demonstrate a clear predilection for the Celindar and Iluvatar pantheons, whilst halflings prefer Damara to the exception of most others. These tend to be standards, although they are not entirely exclusive or hard and fast. The nature of most divine philosophies leaves more than enough room for anyone to find a niche, sometimes in unexpected ways. Nevertheless, humans appear to have the greatest breadth of religious service; their favour reflects community and regional interests more than a racial overtone.

Organizations

Each cleric belongs, at least in theory, to the organized institution representing her deity's interests: her church. In some cases, this institution may be little more than a loose conglomerate of cells scattered through the country; in others, a politically powerful entity able to call upon vast resources and manpower for its needs. The church provides the foundation for her calling. It is here she receives her initial training, on-going education, support and means to pursue her personal and religious goals. The church instructs its members on higher quests and challenges, but it also facilitates her ability to follow her god's decree as she deems necessary and appropriate. Even those on the periphery of religious life, like priests in outlying communities, can benefit from the network of communication and aid a church provides. Few ever completely turn away from the establishment that nurtures them, although rare and perhaps sad cases exist.

Code

Each cleric espouses the doctrine of her deity, or more commonly, a particular element of it. Each god's portfolio and view embrace such vast concepts that a servant can only feasibly settle upon a narrow sliver of that world view. Such adaptations provide source for incredible development within a faith -- or brutal arguments and debate, depending on the nature of her philosophy. Developing a code both acceptable to her deity and reflective of her interests stands as the single greatest and most important accomplishment of a would-be priest, but the process does not end for her once she finishes outlining it in her heart, soul, and mind. Like a paladin's decree, her principals are something to live by, not to be discarded or dropped by the wayside while inconvenient. Her code shapes her relationship to the higher power she serves and how it manifests. Each cleric takes matters related to her decree extremely seriously. It governs her conduct and behaviour, ranging from simple decisions of whether to attend a possibly scandalous party to the most difficult, such as denying a lover aid because his views conflict her own. Her code dictates her commitment to her faith and what aspects define her as a defender of her faith. By no means is her path ever easy, and dedication to its ultimate outcome can demand personal sacrifices. The higher she ascends, the more she must conform to the wishes and needs of her faith.

Domain

The specific dogmas each divinity favours is outlined in his or her respective deity file. The narrower perspective taken by a cleric draws both from these beliefs and concepts a god personifies, and his choice of domains. The latter fundamentally influences his code; the two act essentially as foundations for the other. His beliefs will contribute to the aspects of the deity he worships, and these choices further reinforce his beliefs. The domains he selects must somehow connect to his divine code in a personal way. In system terms, the domains a character chooses in Character Generation must be reflected not only in his background, but also in the way he roleplays. They are more than simply an additional list of spells and interesting powers. They embody the spiritual connection between servant and god, and the very essence of what the cleric idealizes.

Regions

While every church would like to say there is no land where their presence is unfelt, such claims would be a sham at best. Clerics, while widespread, do not approach the universal distribution of other classes. In straightforward terms, a faith will not receive acceptance in all places, a fact particularly true of the Veluakir. Different regions support different churches, often to the outright exclusion of others. Underground groups may operate secretly beneath the notice of the general population and their authorities, but clerics, with their noticeable profile, do not exist in large numbers in such situations. The class as a whole is literally unknown in the north, where strong traditions of shamanism and totem worship altogether deny the existence of the southlander gods. Virulently opposed and mocked, few clerics bother traveling to Orcan Hold for fear of their lives. Elsewhere through the Dominions, they can be found on the basis of the dominant churches found there. Some countries tend to be more tolerant of allied faiths; for example, Cray welcomes all of the Celindar, although Gwyneth and Cyhiraeth enjoy the largest congregations and support. On the other hand, others limit religious activity by force or edict. Eldanor is the clearest example of the ruling power actively stamping out any embers of worship to a god other than Eldanoth, although Zahnah'deem takes more insidious methods to curb support for deities other than Liasiardim. The Arbormists and Mhorzal do allow religious tolerance but within the context of the Circle and clan or hold, respectively.

Relationships

As the leaders of broad congregations and mobilizers of their faiths, clerics are expected to get along well with anyone who worships their deity. In actual practice, this varies wildly from church to church, and even individual to individual. Some, particularly members of the Veluakir, respond poorly to classes not immediately identifiable as part of the standard worshippers. Others tolerate just about everyone. Clerics as a whole typically get along well with non-spellcasting classes, and their relationship to other divine spellcasters serving their own deity is especially strong. Even so, druids, rangers and clerics may argue over the proper way to venerate their patron. The presence of a cleric heartens most other classes, for it cannot be denied she is the most proficient healer available. Her ability to draw down blessings to

the benefit of others and willingness to do so more often than mages makes her a popular addition to groups. Nevertheless, she does not get along with everyone. She clashes violently with black-knights if not a member of that faith, and she can take a dim view of any atheist. The actions of rogues do not typically appeal to the majority of clerics, and attempts to reform or curb certain behaviour causes friction.

Reputation

Barbarians: Too many words come from his mouth, too many words to drown my thoughts. He is like rock, slowly grinding down the hill when he needs to be like the wind, light and fleet-footed. He comes, this servant of the fire, to teach my family how to shape metal instead of stone, how to turn sticky dirt into brittle stone he calls pottery. He means well, I think, but these things are impractical to me. I see the light behind his eyes, driving him. Is it eagerness? Or is it like flames from the great hearths he speaks of, ready to consume and devour? Each time they come here, they seem one and the same, these servants of the gods. They bring knowledge and language we do not need, try to teach us what we supposedly know not. I trust the druids, they understand the ways of the land. But these people, do they hear the winter's call or the whisper in the trees?

Bards: There's nowhere finer to sing than the lofty choir in Aellerian's sweetest loft in Cydonia, I swear it. To lean back and simply release the music from your heart, it's almost as though the god's watching you himself. Is anything more divine? It's a pity the clerics bustle about doing so much work. Don't they ever stop to enjoy the splendour? The place takes my breath away every time I enter, the way the light pours through the rose windows... It's magical, really, but do they enjoy it? I'm afraid they do less than they ought to, but that's the way of a priest. Always moving about, doing this, doing that. They're busy and dedicated, which isn't a bad thing, but I wonder if they ever manage to get away? Rejoice, my beloved, and behold what glory the Muse brings you today! Stop preaching and live a little!

Black-knights: Remember your teachings, slug. Anyone who does not serve the Pale Mother stands against her and the future she promises to bring to her faithful. All the rest are enemies, and these amongst the most dangerous. They speak with a serpent's tongue, spilling poisoned words into the ears of the ignorant and impressionable. Their cowardly faith locks their mind

and steels their middling resolve. A priest will think none other than he is right, the rest be damned. I treat him the same as I do anyone else who opposes the Pale Mother: deny him the glory to her children if I cannot convert him. Learn well from the leaders of our faith; their capabilities are mirrored, albeit weakly, in the liars of the false religions around us.

Courtiers: I can't help but keep some sliver of my attention focused towards the churches here. They push their own agendas, which isn't always a bad thing, but it can certainly interfere with what should be done to keep the province running smoothly. The governors certainly cannot ignore their wishes, not when they have such deep rooted support! I hate to think of what might happen if the clergy took it upon themselves to spread messages against us through their worshippers. It's a miserable thought, and gods bless me that it should never come to pass. That just illustrates how we must work together where we can, and regulate matters where we cannot. Religion is a powerful thing, don't doubt it, and an inspiring cleric is a thing to be wary of.

Druids: If only you would come outside from your stone halls and marble towers, my siblings, and see where the gods truly lie. Do they dwell within your split rafters and drafty corridors? What splendour could you provide for them greater than the world they created and nourish still? Call me your savage cousin; I know the looks you give when I walk amongst your people, the warden of the barbarians and uncivilized. Your own thoughts are confused, friend. How I wonder it is we serve the same power when our beliefs are like two peaks of the same mountain, separated by defiles of stone and icy valleys. If I can bridge the gap so easily, why can you not? Set aside the views you cling to so tightly and let me share another side of the one we both worship. Do we both not serve? Is our lady not one and the same? Put away your differences, and let us learn from one another. What have you to lose, aside from your misconceptions?

Fighters: There's nothing worse, I tell you, than getting a scrape from a dull blade. There's an orcan wind blowing today when a runt from Veia can get past my guard and give me such a nasty scratch. And with a rusting short sword dragged out from the cellar, no less! While you might expect guffawing or dirty looks down at the bar, I can at least expect my dignity to be left alone here. Mother Raina might be getting on in years, true, but I've never met another woman as kind or polite as her. She bandaged up all the scraped knees and cut arms when I was tall as a halfling, and she never said a sharp word about it. It's nothing for me to chop her up some wood and provide a little kindling when I get out to the Glarn each fortnight. Nothing's too much for a

lady who devotes herself, heart and soul, to the community. She's taken in everything from rabbits with broken legs to critically wounded soldiers -- some of my own men -- and made them right as new again. You won't find a better heart in this town.

Monks: Am I wrong to say you seek enlightenment, friend? It is strange to me how you go about it. Where I look within, you look without, to an external force. I try to perfect myself internally; you seek perfection through another, even if it is merely a concept you model yourself after. My ideal is my own self, yours a god. No, do not take me as godless, for I am not. I simply do not use faith in the search for refining from myself the baser elements, the impurities and imperfections. Do you not find it interesting that we seek the same goal but use different fashions to attain it? I wonder what each path achieves, how similar the results might be. I commend you for your determination, although your way is not mine. You still hold to your values, and for that I commend you.

Paladins: We are taught to respect those who worship other deities not of our own faith, if those gods are allied to our pantheon. It gives me no trouble or problem then to tolerate the worshippers of the Celindar. The Iluvatar can provide some difficulty; am I to accept a person whose ultimate ideal would be the absolute overthrow of the status quo and order? Such a task can stretch my reserve and bring need and my code into conflict. I do not intend to ever violate the expectations of Cyhiraeth but I still contemplate what may be asked of me by happenstance. I do not agree with the beliefs of Palahi and listening to one of his priests prattle on and on about snubbing order and living counter to the established norm smacks of anarchy. Live and let live, I suppose, unless he crosses the line.

Rangers: True, we serve the same lord, but I wouldn't want to be tied down in the way that you are. I love the freedom I have, wandering through the highlands where the sky kisses the mountains. I do not dwell in the same place one night to the next, and the only roof I need are Gilthonas' stars and clouds. Does the evening sky seem as bright to you beneath the glimmer of lanterns? Do you ever wish you could escape to the far edges of the world, become one with the winds and move? I pity you, sometimes, when you are subject to the needs of this place, tied down. At least you can still feel the pulse of the wind and the desire to move. Your brethren across the way bind themselves to their forges and their pews, turning their eyes away from the wonders out here. Does it galvanize their soul against it? They make fierce foes, you know, wrapped up in their dreams.

Rogues: Clerics come in two kinds: the ones who want to reform me, or the ones who want to -- and would -- join me. The first use their powers of persuasion or force, depending on the sort, to 'convince' me to join their faith, and pool my resources into their own interests. Now, I didn't risk my neck getting out from under that domineering brute I call my uncle to go about relinquishing my freedom to some church. I have my devotions, sure, but I'm not about to prostrate myself on a cold floor and give up every hard earned coin just to keep some deity who probably doesn't care for it happy. The second, they're rather dangerous if they aren't watched, but they can make an excellent cover if they're of the right sort. There's nothing like having a little fortune to ease you on your way through a squeaky window, or better, a patching up after a run in with some unhappy friends from an old gang. Use the ones who would like to run with you where you can, and don't do them overmuch harm, but the first... well, they're not going to let you be until you give them a final answer they like or don't. There's only so many times a priest will be duped before he expects me to pay up or pay out, and their price ain't pretty!

Shamans: Let them come to the north, let them see what power their pathetic illusions give them! Their supposed gods are figments of their undeveloped minds, flimsy images like mist upon the moors. They grovel and bow like slaves before blank stone images, laying out their sacrifices on altars to things which do not exist, cannot hear, would not care. So content in their superiority, fattened on the ignorance of the sheep who follow their every command, what wastes of blood! Spineless creatures, they could not last a day amongst my people, in my realm. Their corrupt, rotting flesh would provide hardly anything for the totems to devour. Such would be an honour for a southlander, though they squirm at the mention. Their own devotion to a delusion blinds them, strips them of their senses. I am not party to their lies, their deceits painted behind colourful masks and displays of devotion to their own madness. Kill them, brothers, before they try our patience.

Sorcerers: I'm of two minds about the new priest, really. On one hand, he is rather handsome and has a certain presence about him I can't deny. That's a great deal better than the last fellow; I thought he was going to run outside and vanquish some invisible foe lurking behind the granary bin! While I don't think our newest resident is quite so zealous, I've seen the way he looks at me. Oh, don't give me that look; it's not in a romantic fashion at all. He saw the Fetter and whenever he goes on about remaining upright and honest, he gives me a dirty glance as though I'm guilty. Can I help what I am?

It's hard enough having the rest of the town treat me normally, the last thing I need is some Tirielite taking it upon himself to expose my "nefarious and illicit activities." While the rest of them might forget, I certainly haven't let go of the fact the Torch-bearers were led by a few less than savoury clerics who put a number of my type to the torch.

Wizards: Despite the prejudice layered upon my kind, my studies have not made me entirely blind to the consequences of religion through the centuries. The first great war to threaten the stability of fair Seraphos came not from those who practice the high Art, but rather the petty followers of Nynthari and Tiri. Pity they couldn't figure out how to settle their differences as the rest of us do, but such is the way of religion. Does it not seem to drive a person to excess, to cloud her judgment and lead her down a dangerous path? Perhaps more parallels exist between the common folk's perception of us and the servants of the gods, more than they care to admit? Such a strange situation, that we should be subject to such hate and they to acceptance or even adoration. I am happy to say I do not think clerics good or bad on the whole, but measure each individually. Can they do the same?

History

"When did the gods first deign to touch the mortals occupying the world they created with inspiration? Only they can know. Why did they seek figures to spread their word? Only they can say. Their servants walk amongst us now as they have for generations, bringing hope and fear, promise and lies. Their quarrels have undoubtedly shaped at least some of the known history of the world; their participation has brought about change and success or failure, just as everyone else's has. The history of any church can read like a fragment of the history of the territory where it resides, of the people who support it. How can a scholar pinpoint where the church diverges from the course of the anonymous population and forges its own history? I dare suspect we cannot. Each faith keeps its own legends and accounts of what has happened over the past many years, but these do not form a conclusive background. Interwoven through the delicate tapestry of history are numerous threads of legend, myth, story and half-recalled facts.

"Rather than focus on assumptions and the mysteries only fate might divine, it is better to assess the history of faith in a broader scope. We know not how many gods existed from the beginnings of the world, although some entered the pantheons during our lifetime. The most famous two, both female, were undoubtedly mortal and their strife provoked terrible suffering and the end

of suffering. Old texts say Nashale was once the highest priestess of Damara, a hierophant of great recognition and power. Both churches diverge violently in the story behind Nashale and impartial literary sources are difficult to come by. Nevertheless, she served as a committed and highly loyal member of the church of Mercy. She stands as a paragon of how clerics could be perceived in early times; most testaments prior to her fall recount her compassion and generosity, how she aided the people her church served. The extent of her influence, both political and social, will never be known but it can be expected that she could call upon her sisters and brothers at any time. Nashale's great tragedy arose out of a wayward prayer, said to be an inquiry on a matter she sought her goddess' approval for. Somehow Kaerul entered the picture and as may be the case for the highly seated servitors of the divinities, he manipulated events to turn her away from the love of Damara. He replaced the blush of love in her heart with a shadow of cruelty, perverting the mantra of serenity and compassion with intense selfishness and covetousness. She hid the transformation behind deceit and lies, until Damara herself is said to have administered a test for the woman's soul.

"Nashale's cruelty seems tempered by the belief she still served Damara, a lesson many clerics must learn. Self-reflection upon one's own behaviour is necessary to retain any sense of perspective, a quality lacking through history's figures spawning disaster and sorrow. Rather than linger too long, let it be said this cleric was one of the very few ever reported to come face to face with her goddess. Rather than giving her any sort of respect, Nashale struck Damara to the ground and Kaerul rushed down to seize up the mortal's soul. We have no church to crown the site, it is thought, where this terrible scene took place because Damara and Kaerul were said to have ripped each other's material forms into nothingness in their terrible fury. Two lessons abound from this story. One, when the gods deign to join our world, it comes only with the worst and most destructive of circumstances. Two, a cleric can be a powerful tool and the cause of awful misery or lasting happiness.

"Other clerics lead much quieter lives through history, becoming known only through others noting their activities and participation in important matters. We know of so many only in fragments, passing mention of their contributions to their people. Clerics have served in armies and led regiments in battle; they have tended the ill and they have rained down unholy or holy fire to defend their causes. They rarely rise into the spotlight alone, but when they do, the results tend to be considerable. For modern comparisons, one only need look towards the south for clear examples of this. Eldanor is a fine example of what the churches can achieve when mobilized importantly. During Firandir's final years, when the monarchy began

to collapse, three churches struggled to hold the country together and re-establish some form of order. The Tiriellites and Cyhiraethe worked to keep Firandir intact through another line of nobility against the competing claims, most spurious. On the other hand, the Eldanothi turned their eye upon a nation falling apart piece by piece. They waged a war of violence, politics and terror to bring the disparate areas under their thumb, often resorting to deception and outright bribery to achieve what was necessary. Although Firandir would not fall until the last century, the Eldanothi mounted an aggressive campaign that ultimately succeeded.

"Other instances of the counterpoise between religion and politics, or the course of history in general, do not always include such drama, though they remain important. Recent history demonstrates the importance of churches in preserving and protecting lifestyles and even population groups in times of strife. The valiant efforts of the clergy of Isindrya presumably saved the lives of thousands of mages, although many died before help could be offered. This church tried desperately to bring the Mage Hunts to an end during and after the Dragon Flights. They ultimately reached success by allying with the Cyhiraethe and together these two churches called upon their allies and members to defend any suspected or accused mages until order could be restored. The Damarans and Aelleriads gave their support to the cause and together, the churches managed to lessen the impact of the Mage Hunts in many areas. They ultimately negotiated a pact with the Queen of Cray and the Grand Craeian Mages' Guild to enforce the Fettering laws.

"Even today, the churches do much to keep populations content and society stable. Their contributions cannot be measured entirely in monetary values, but rather in the participation of their members in all levels of society. Many are actively involved with numerous facets of the community; some choose to teach students, others serve on patrols or the guard. Others still work as craftspeople, healers, parents and artisans. Some travel on land or by sea, taking news and hope from one place to the next. Others control governments and others still take to the wild places of the world, away from the concerns of life."

Opinions

It is nearly impossible to classify the different opinions of clerics on other classes. What one faith decries, another supports; what one accepts, another refuses to tolerate, and so the circle goes on. Opinions on class remain a function of the decree of the gods. In general, it is possible to generalize and say that they are accepting of the primary classes found in their congregation. Other classes may be tolerated or despised, depending on the situation.