

CHILDREN OF CLAY

A ROLEPLAYING GAME

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I. INTRODUCTION

“At the heart of it all are the children of clay. We struggle over their souls, yet in the end, only they can decide between salvation and damnation.”

- Promises XXX:XXII

1.1 WELCOME BACK

Well, here we are again dear reader. The feedback we've gotten from Children of Fire has

been far beyond our wildest expectations. It was this input that encouraged the author to expand the world even farther. As many of you have no doubt noticed, there is much in the original work that is either skimmed over or left out completely. There simply was not enough time and space to include it all.

With Children of Clay, the first in a long line of supplemental works, we try to remedy some of these ambiguities. The focus here is to better explore the material world and its mortal inhabitants. We will traverse the course of human life, from birth to death and after. Along the way we'll discuss issues of faith, belief, sorcery, and touch on some of the more important historical figures in our world. Additionally, we will explore the possibility of creating human PCs to be played in the game and all the benefits and disadvantages of doing so.

With that said... Enjoy!

1.2 ORGANIZATION AND LAYOUT

Those of you familiar with the original COF game will notice a change in the layout of this supplement. The original work was broken down into three main sections: introduction, world, and rules. There was a clear delineation between the mechanics of the game and the story elements. Such a breakdown was not possible for this supplement.

Each topic contains both story and mechanical elements. Where possible mechanics have been separated into a their own subsection, but in many cases the two are so intertwined that they can not be untangled. As always, the author encourages storytellers to ignore those rules that do not fit with their style of game play.

1.3 THE PROBLEM OF SPECIFICS

The original work is intentionally vague when it comes to the specifics of belief. Nebulous concepts of good and evil are used to represent the order of the universe. Concepts of redemption and how humans judge the merits of their life are rather ambiguous. Little mention is made of specific religious figures or dogma. These omissions help to foster the idea of universality in the world. The storyteller is able to fit the ideas into whatever belief system he wants (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc).

Unfortunately, this is no longer possible in this supplement. In Children of Clay we get to the nitty-gritty. The problem is that as we get more specific certain beliefs can get excluded. Things might appear that directly contradict

certain beliefs the storyteller or players would like to see in this game. If the approach one is taking is something other than a Judeo/Christian one, some of the concepts presented in this work may have to be tweaked slightly.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The author started Children of Fire with the precept that he would let the research dictate the course of the game not his own preconceptions. This same standard was applied when creating this supplement. Where research was available on a specific subject, it was always used. There were, however, some circumstance of ambiguity where the author was forced to use his own creativity to fill in the wholes the texts did not cover. The only criteria in these situations was to be faithful to the original game.

Many sources were referenced in the creation of this work. The following is a list of the sources that were most heavily relied on. The material on sorcery is almost completely dependent on Arthur Edward Waite's *The Book of Black Magic*. Concerning the discussions on world religions, Liz Flower's work, *The Elements of World Religion* and George W. Braswell Jr's *Understanding World Religions* proved invaluable. Additionally, the book *Compendium Maleficarum* was significantly utilized as regards witchcraft and other dark pursuits. This collection of writings by the monk Francesco Maria Guazzo provided hours of delight and astonishment. It is a wonder that a work such as this could ever have been taken seriously by the true believers of the time, but it makes for a wonderful source nonetheless. For information regarding the figures described in the Catalog of Mortal Souls, two works were heavily relied on. These were, *The Devil's Disciples* by Leonard R. N. Ashley and *Angels A to Z* by James R. Lewis and Evelyn Dorothy Oliver

Additionally, the texts referenced in the original source book were also used to maintain continuity between the two works.

The author encourages those who seek more information on these subjects to consult the books above. There is a plentiful reservoir of information and creative inspiration included in them that did not find its way into these pages.

1.5 STILL IMPROVING

The author would like your feedback on what you see in these pages. Let him know if you find any spelling, typographical, or grammatical mistakes (past experience has shown us that this is unavoidable). Additionally, make your voices heard about the content. Tell us what you like

and don't like. If you don't agree with something, let us know. Many of the ideas used in this work came as a result of reader suggestions. Since COF is an ever-evolving game, you might see some of your ideas in subsequent works.

We are especially interested in how your games are going. Let us know what story ideas you've come up with and how the mechanics work during a real gaming session. This sharing of ideas is the only way Children of Fire can continue to expand and improve.

Send you comments to:

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II. BEYOND THE SHELL OF MORTALITY

"There are two worlds, celestial and material. The celestial one makes perfect sense to us, while the material one is an enigma. Why the Almighty chose to create such a place is beyond our understanding, and it is not our place to question His plans. "

- II Metatron VI:XIV

2.1 OVERVIEW

The soul begins its journey as a perfect entity devoid of corruption and evil. For unknown reasons, the Almighty has deemed that the soul must inhabit the flesh of a material being in order to receive true salvation. Call it a test.

Unfortunately, the material realm is corrupting and often these perfect souls get muddled and lost. In the end, when all the days are done, only one question matters. Will they

prove themselves worthy to once again exist in harmony with all that is good in the universe?

In this section, we will explore the cycle that is mortality. From the moment the soul enters the body, until the instant it returns to the Heavens, we will take a brief look at this thing we call life.

2.2 BEFORE THE FLESH IS BORN

For children of clay, life begins not at the moment of conception but rather at the moment the soul enters its mortal receptacle. Until that point, nothing exists but an amalgamation of useless matter. The soul gives this mass cohesion, purpose, and a spark to start the engine running. Without a soul, the body is merely an empty husk. Unfortunately, the point at which the soul is introduced varies from case to case. Sometimes it occurs within the first few hours. While other times the child must wait the full nine months inside its mother's womb before receiving a soul. If no soul is present at the time of delivery, the baby is stillborn.

Each soul is delivered by an angel of conception. This celestial order's soul function is to retrieve souls from heaven and place them in the proper body. While in ethereal form, the angel reaches into the mother's womb (an experience the mother usually does not feel) and places the soul in the embryo. At that point life begins. For the most part, these celestials perform their duties as early as possible, but sometimes circumstances and obstacles get in the way. It is not unheard of to have an angel of conception rushing frantically to deliver a soul before the birth.

Ironically, demons tend not to interfere in this process. In fact, they want the child of clay to be born, because while it exists in heaven it is a pure thing. Only through interaction with the material world can the soul be corrupted and lead away from the Almighty.

Each soul is meant for a particular body. The angel of conception is given strict instructions as to who the soul belongs to. But sometimes things go wrong, and a soul is placed in the wrong body. This can happen either by accident or design (the original host was destroyed). The empty shell of matter will accept this "wrong" soul easy enough. This soul is destined for a hard life, though. As it grows it will begin to feel uncomfortable in its own skin. The person will become frustrated with who they are and will begin to foster a feeling (rightly so) of having been born somehow wrong. This frustration often leads to depression and even suicide.

2.3 LIFE'S MYSTERY

From the moment of birth to the moment of death, we are searching. We children of clay are trying to find meaning and purpose to life. Why are we here? What are we meant to do? Unfortunately, these questions do not have simple answers. And the conclusions we come up with differ greatly.

Free will is what makes the children of clay so special. The Almighty has given humans the ability to decide their own fate. They can choose to squander their time in the pursuit of selfish goals, or they can devote themselves to noble ambitions.

During their time on Earth, the children of clay are constantly bombarded by hardship. Life is never easy for anyone, no matter how it may appear from the outside. All humans struggle with the flesh for it is not the natural state of the soul.

In the end it is the answers to those tough questions and the way in which one handles the hardships, pain, and even success that determines the character of a child of clay.

2.4 THE MOMENT OF DEATH

Inevitably the flesh dies. Whether from disease, physical trauma, or the withering decay of age, the body can hold out only so long. At some point the heart stops, the brain ceases to function, and perception ends.

There is no real pain in death. Indeed their may be a great deal of suffering in the moments proceeding the final breath, but at the end the soul is cut off from external stimulation and retreats into the contemplative essence of itself. A sense of relief and of a great weight being lifted away is often what this soul feels. In these moments, the soul often reflects on the lessons (if any) it has learned through life, and it clings to the cherished memories of the past.

Sometimes, the pull of loved ones or the driving goal to accomplish an unfulfilled dream is enough for the soul to rebel against death. It attempts to spark the engine of life once more, as it did the first time it was introduced into the body. If the flesh is still strong enough to receive this spark, life resumes. This is a rare occurrence, and these near-death experiences often leave the physical form with a greater sense of purpose and a better understanding of the wondrous nature of the universe.

The soul does not immediately leave its vessel at the moment of death. It remains trapped by the emptiness within, no longer able to experience the

material world around it. Help is needed for the soul to be free and to drift to its natural place in the afterlife. This help comes in the form of psychopomps.

The duty of the psychopomp is to search out the recently dead and liberate their souls. All angels of this order have the ability to sense all dead children of clay who are nearby. The range of this power is determined by their grace score. More information on the roll of psychopomps can be found in the original sourcebook.

Things can go wrong, though. Sometimes the soul will get trapped on Earth and become a ghost. Other times, no psychopomp comes to free it from its prison and the flesh reanimates as one of the walking dead. These issues will be discussed later.

2.5 AFTERLIFE

Once free the soul usually drifts to the Heavens. It passes through both the First and Second Heavens enroot to its new home in the Third. It cannot willingly stop on this journey, nor can any celestial impede its progress. Its proper place seems to pull it forward like a magnet.

Once in the Third Heaven, the souls are drawn to one of two places. Those souls who have lead good lives and learned from their misdeeds travel to the Garden, while the souls of those who have walled in selfishness and depravity during their stay on Earth go to Tartarus. Either way, they resume an ethereal version of their old physical bodies. They do not necessarily appear as they did at the moment of their death. Rather, they appear as what they looked like at the height of their life (this varies for each individual soul). Still, there is a perfection to this form that could never be achieved on Earth.

They do not, however, resemble the other inhabitants of Heaven, the celestials. Angels are much larger, usually standing 10 to 20 times as tall as any of the departed souls.

For those souls making it to the Garden, eternity is a wondrous thing. The very trees and soil of this paradise have a soothing effect on the inhabitants. All that a righteous soul could ever want or desire can be found here. Two Cherubim always guard the gates, but this is more for the protection of the souls within than to prevent them from escaping. In fact, from time to time a soul will wander out of the Garden (usually disregarding the protests of the Cherub guards) and mingle with the other inhabitants of heaven. This is unusual, though, as most souls are so

contented that thoughts of leaving are remote to them.

Tartarus is another story completely. The guards here are meant to keep the unworthy souls from leaking into other parts of heaven. It is here that the wicked souls are punished for eternity. Those of Earth have often mistakenly believed that demons carry out these punishments, for what else but a demon could stomach such unending suffering. In actuality, though, it is the angel of torment who take on this mantle. Demons have nothing to do with the dead. A soul that is locked in Tartarus already signifies the victory for the fallen ones—no more need be done on their side.

2.6 THE WALKING DEAD

On rare occasions no psychopomp comes to release the soul of a recently departed child of clay. If left only for two or three days, there is no problem. The soul will wait peacefully to be freed. By the third or fourth day, however, things have changed. Now the soul becomes restless, and the decayed husk all around will begin to corrupt it. It is a form of insanity of sorts. By the fifth and sixth day it is too much to bear.

In desperation the soul reanimates the body. Once again the arms and legs begin to move, and the brain itself begins to function. But this newly revived soul is not like it was before. The decaying flesh all around has driven it mad and filled it with rage. It wanders about, lashing out at any living creatures it comes across.

It is a myth that the walking dead have a craving for human flesh. While they will almost certainly attack any human they come across, it is out of rage not hunger.

Psychopomps who find one of these wretched things can still free its soul. The task, however, is slightly harder, requiring a roll of 25 to complete. Once the soul is freed, the body is no longer animate and can be buried in peace.

When the walking dead first rises, all his aspects remain at their original level. All other traits on the character sheet are irrelevant at this point. As time passes, however, and the decaying flesh loses more and more cohesiveness, these aspects will begin to drop. The time it takes for a body to completely decay is dependent on the climate and Surroundings. The process of total decay can take from as little as a week to as long as a few months. When these aspects reach 0, the creature can no longer function.

Even when the body is completely incapacitated, the soul will remain with what is left of the bones. It will remain trapped there forever, until a psychopomp come along to free it.

2.7 GHOSTS

Sometimes a soul has lived a life neither good nor evil but somewhere in between. When such a spirit is released from its mortal shell, it tends to stay on Earth. It does not float to its natural place in either Eden or Tartarus. Many psychopomps possess the force judgment, which allows them to prod the soul in the right direction, but some angels of this order do not possess this ability.

After a few days of aimless wondering, not comprehending the nature of their situation, the soul begins to grow use to its new situation. The process of acclimating depends on the strength of the soul, but generally takes between two days and a week. While in transition, the soul cannot react to either the material or ethereal world around them. If angels find such souls (and they are easily seen in the ethereal world) it is fairly easy to still force them to ascend to Heaven.

Once the transformation is complete, the spirit becomes a ghost. Now the ghost will (in most cases) resist any attempts by psychopomps to whisk it away from the material world. Ghosts come in all forms and demeanors. Some seek to help, other want to cause mischief, and still others wish to inflict harm on those they feel are responsible for their death. For the most part, they will possess the same personality as when they were alive.

Ghosts have great difficulty interacting with the material world. Any attempt to do so comes with a high price in exertion. If a ghost stays in the material world for long enough, though, it begins to understand how to better influence the material world around it. It is able to hurl objects about with tremendous force, appear to people as a spectral apparition, or even communicate through mortal mediums.

Mechanics

When a soul becomes a ghost it loses all its mortal aspects (Perception, Health, Athleticism, etc.). These are replaced with their celestial counterparts (power, vigor, understanding, etc) and begin with a score of 5. As time progresses and the ghost gains proficiency in its new condition, these scores may increase. The maximum score a ghost can have in any aspect is 15. This makes the most powerful ghosts (and there are very few of them) greater in power than

the average angel or archangel, but substantially weaker than the celestials of the first triad.

Anytime a ghost wants to perform an action in or that can be perceived by the material world, they must make a roll using their power score. Generally the target number is of normal difficulty (20), but if the storyteller determines the action is more involving, the target can be raised.

Ghosts can still be forced to leave the material world through use the celestial force Judgment (possessed only by psychopomps). Such an attempt is made as a contested roll against the ghosts vigor score. The angel can make only one such attempt per game session.

2.8 DYBBUK

Sometime the soul resists the pull of the afterlife. The evil spirit fights against the unrelenting draw of Tartarus, knowing that only pain and suffering await it in the hereafter. But once a soul has been released from its body, it cannot return to the dead flesh. Instead, it latches on to a nearby living being, piggybacking on the soul that already resides there. Such a spirit is known as a Dybbuk.

A Dybbuk, literally meaning "a clinging soul", is a rarity. The conditions must be just right for it to occur. Firstly, the released soul must have led an exceedingly evil existence. Secondly, there must be a child of clay host nearby, one who is very ill or is at extremely diminished capacity.

As the evil soul leaves its dead husk, it feels the presence of a human body that cannot resist its intrusion. It rushes toward the host burrowing itself into the living matter. But the human body is not designed to hold two souls. Conflict arises between the two immortal spirits, and in the end a type of melding occurs.

This melding will, over time, cause the host soul to become warped by the intruder. The child of clay will begin to taken on the attributes and desires of the Dybbuk. Were these intruder souls benevolent spirits then all might be well, but their evil nature will inevitably lead the child of clay down a path of depravity and destruction.

Once a soul becomes a dybbuk, psychopomps are no longer able to use their sense death force to detect them. In fact, these vile spirits are extraordinarily hard to find. Even if there are hints that a dybbuk has invaded a child of clay, there is no way to know for sure.

Dybbuk possession and demonic possession should not be confused. They are completely different occurrences. The dybbuk does not subvert the original soul as it grows strong (the way a demon might). Rather it corrupts the host soul, which remains conscious and in control at all time. Likewise, the right of exorcism that many faith proclaim will have no effect on these spirits, though many faiths have separate rituals that deal with this issue. Children of fire can attempt to use Purest Spirit, one of the forces of protection, to expel the dybbuk, but such use is much harder, and the user's contested roll will be reduced by five.

III. SORCERY

3.1 OVERVIEW

Let us now turn to the mystic arts of Solomon — to the words written in the Sefer Raziel that gave man the power of angels. For in the study of this we will gleam insight into the hearts of the Children of Clay, and will find a rich history as yet untapped by popular scholars.

In the end, it is mankind's aspiration to improve and grow, to rise up above the rest and prove themselves worthy. Such is the nature of man. And many of the children of clay will do whatever it takes to fulfill these selfish ambitions. This included tapping into the forces prevalent in the celestial world. For this world (so different from the material one in which they live) is a source of great power, but the only way to tap into this power is through the binding of angels and demons. For the sorcerer this is the overriding goal.

But pursuit of super-human power is not an easy path to tread. Instead it comes at the price of much sacrifice and is fraught with many dangers. This section seeks to examine all aspects of sorcery — from it's roots and books of power to the often solitary lives its practitioners are forced to live. We will examine the preparation and execution of the ceremonies that are at the heart of this art. Additionally we will discuss what it takes to play a sorcerer in a Children of Fire campaign.

3.2 THE ORIGIN

All sorcery stems from one source, Sefer Raziel. Within the pages of this tome is contained the knowledge of all things celestial and how to

tap into these energies. These are elements that celestials understand intrinsically.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first, entitled *Clavis*, concerns itself with the study of stars and how they influence the ebb and flow of power in the universe. The second chapter, *Ala*, deals with stones and herbs. It addresses how they can be used for both ritualistic as well as medicinal purposes. *Tractatus Thymiamatum*, the third chapter, is completely devoted to suffumigations. In the fourth chapter, we find a discussion of how the time of the year (month, day, and season) effects the universe, and the fifth chapter talks about cleanliness (an odd topic, but one that directly effects a material beings ability to control celestial things). *Samaim*, the sixth and longest chapter in the book, describes the heavens in great detail and how celestial society is organized. The final section deals with the virtues of name, knowing the right name of the angel or demon to call upon for specific tasks.

No celestial knows quite why the angel Raziel set down these words. Some suspect he was ordered to do so by the Almighty, but others claim he did it for his own selfish interests. In either case, when the work was completed one copy was given to the Seraph, Metatron, and another copy was delivered to Adam (the first man). This gesture infuriated many angels. The children of clay were not deserving of such celestial material, and the knowledge presented was seen as a threat to the angels for it explained all their strengths and frailties. A number of the Cherubim and Thrones conspired to do away with the book. These celestials descended from haven and stole the book from Adam. It was then dropped into the ocean.

To the angels' chagrin, the Almighty ordered Rehab to retrieve the book and return it to Adam. Reluctantly, this angel did so. There was much confusion at this point. No celestial was quite sure what plan the Almighty had, for it seemed a move that could only threaten the children of fire's ability to help (and save) the children of clay.

Years past, and the book was stolen again. Time has lost the knowledge of who stole it or why, but once again it ended up at the bottom of the ocean, where it stayed for a century or more. It was Raphael who retrieved it this time, and his motives were pure. It was given to Noah so that he could learn the art of medicine and heal those who he was entrusted to protect during the great flood. This action is one that Raphael, now having seen what trouble the book has caused, dearly regrets.

The book changed hands often over time. Eventually it was given to Solomon by a Babylonian prince. Upon seeing it, Solomon immediately understood the full implications of its words. With it as a base, he formalized methods by which angels and demons could be summoned and bound to do the bidding of the sorcerer.

Sometime in the eleventh century, the book, which had always been closely guarded, disappeared. The world has not seen it since. Maybe it sits in some sorcerer's private collection, or perhaps it once again rests at the bottom of the ocean. Who can say for sure.

In the fifteenth century, an Italian translation of *Sefer Raziel* was discovered. It purports to be a direct translation of the original work by a sorcerer of great renown. Its claim, however, are unfounded, and, in fact, it bares little resemblance to the original work. Only the novice seekers search it out, for those in the know understand there is nothing to be gained from this pitiful imposter.

3.3 THE SWORN BOOK OF HONORIUS

In the fourteenth century a sorcerer of great foresight came onto the scene. His name was Honorius (not to be confused with the Pope of the same name). Honorius believed, and history would prove him right, that a great persecution was coming at which time the sorcerers would be rounded up and killed by the church. Mainstream religion, feeling threatened by the brazenness of the mystics, would attempt to squelch their art.

In preparation for this coming inquisition, Honorius set down the whole of his art in seven books. These books were composed with the help of the angel Hocroel, a member of the choir of Dominations. It is unclear why this celestial sought to help mankind maintain its hold on sorcery. While the persecution, torture, and execution of its proponents was something the children of fire vehemently opposed, the eradication of their art and the threat it posed would have been greatly appreciated. Some have hypothesized that Hocroel's help was not voluntary, having been ritualistically bound to the sorcerer.

While *Sefer Raziel* forms the foundation of sorcery, the seven books of Honorius give the details. Every nuance is spelled out in great detail, allowing even the most novice of practitioners to acquire great skill quickly.

Honorius commanded that only two copies of each book be made. Hence only twenty-one of these masterfully written texts are in existence. Because of the threat Honorius perceived, he made it a crime among sorcerers to make additional copies of these works, and any sorcerer who breaks this tradition will incur the unforgiving wrath of his brethren.

Additionally, Honorius felt that no one sorcerer should have possession of all the books. For if he was discovered, then all would be lost. Subsequently, he passed out the texts to the great sorcerers of his time, so that none would have more than one. They have remained separated ever since.

Of the seven books only one is known to exist in the mundane world. The Sworn Book of Honorius holds the kernel of all magic. It explains the philosophy, organization, and general principles of Solomonic sorcery. What it does not contain is in depth analysis of particular rituals. These details are split up among the other six books. The work can offer inspiration to the acolyte, but will not grant them any usable knowledge.

3.4 OTHER MYSTICAL BOOKS

We now turn our attention to the frivolous writings of the ignorant. The books that follow came much later than the true books discussed above. At their best, they are misguided attempts with only a sliver of truth contained within, and at their worst, they are hoaxes written to fool the blatantly stupid.

Key of Solomon

This work belongs to the sixteenth century. While proponents of this work claim it to be penned by the hand of Solomon himself, this is a ridiculous statement. More than likely, it was written by one who had only a passing knowledge of the workings of sorcery (perhaps an acolyte who was early on dismissed by his master).

Its true merit can be found by the influence it had on other later writing. Many of the grimoires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries take their lead from this work. As a result, it has become a central book for the uninitiated world (and those charlatans who pretend to be sorcerers), while those with true knowledge see it for the useless blather it truly is.

It has a tone both evil and frivolous. It speaks of dark pacts, which do not truly exist between sorcerers and the sons of darkness. Its rituals for

invisibly and the locating of stolen objects are ridiculous to all but the fool-hearty.

Lemegeton: Lesser Key of Solomon

The earliest uncorrupted examples of this book are written in French and date to the seventeenth century. It is interesting to note that this work has much greater merit than the elder book for which it is named.

Its primary focus is on the classification and explication of celestial spirits. To this end it does a wondrous job. It is divided into four sections: Goetia, Theurgia Goetia, "Pauline Art", and Almadel. Each section deals with a particular brand of celestial.

While there is much knowledge to be gleaned from this work, it cannot be relied upon to perform proper and accurate rituals. It is filled with inaccuracies and in many cases adds unnecessary steps to already drawn out procedures. For this reason, it is a good starting point, but those of extraordinary proficiency rely on other works for true insight.

The Grand Grimoire

It is the most fantastic of the grimoires produced. Its Italian editor touts it as the end all be all for magical knowledge. Quite the contrary is the case. Still, it holds a premier place among charlatans and fools alike.

The work is divided into two sections. The first concerns itself with the evocation of Sammael, and the second section, called Sanctum Regnum, deals with the rite of making pacts.

The tone of the work is dark and twisted, soaring to new lows even for diabolical grimoires. Its rituals, which even sink to the level of necromancy, are both horrific and totally ineffective. Nothing can be gleaned by true sorcerer from this book.

3.5 LIMITATIONS OF MAGIC

While ceremonial magic does allow the practitioner to do many wondrous things, it has its limits. In movies we see the sorcerer raising his hands and casting spells on the spot (invoking fireballs and lightning bolts), but these things are beyond the scope of a true sorcerer. Such displays of spontaneous magic are impossible. The practitioner of magic must always work through celestial beings bound to his service. He himself does not possess any great inner strength.

Additionally, the ceremonies themselves are fraught with difficulties and dangers. Not only does the practitioner have to worry about failure (which occurs in a majority of cases), but he must protect himself from the very creatures he is calling on for service. Many a sorcerer has been ripped to shreds because, in his zealousness to accomplish his goals, the words and symbols of protection were forgotten.

The sorcerer has only two outlets for his magic. One is to have his orders carried out by a celestial servant, while the other is to create mystical talismans, which when on his person will grant various powers and immunities. In either case an arduous ceremony is necessary, and much preparation goes into even the simplest act of sorcery.

The talisman, while it can be almost any cleansed item, usually takes the shape of an amulet or ring worn by the practitioner. Unfortunately, the powers of the talisman are not limited to the sorcerer who created it. Any mortal creature who adorns the item will receive its benefits. Many a sorcerer has been dispatched by and adversary that was able to get his hands on one of the sorcerer's own charms. Additionally, the moment the talisman is taken off or broken, the user immediately returns to his frail self.

Practitioners of magic are also limited by the limited body of authentic texts that exist in the world. They cannot wake up one day and decide to create a new ceremony. They are reliant on the work of other sorcerers before them, and in many cases these mystical tomes are fraught with error and ambiguity. While it is possible for a sorcerer to create his own ritual, the research of the needed material and the countless hours of experimentation involved would take years to complete.

Though a sorcerer can wear talismans to protect against all sorts of physical trauma or even to keep themselves young, they can never ascend to immortality. The moment the talisman is taken off, they return to their normal state. Hence, if a sorcerer were to wear a talisman that allowed him to retain his youth for the last 150 years, the moment he took it off, he would most likely instantly die (having been immediately returned to the age of a man well past the life span of the children of clay).

3.6 CEREMONIAL MAGIC (PREPARATIONS)

Before the incense is lit, before the circle is drawn, and before the prayers of invocation are uttered, the sorcerer must do much to prepare.

Those who think success or failure of the ritual is determined solely by the short time spent in the summoning circle are fools. The time spent researching and planning will determine if the sorcerer has even a remote chance of attaining his goals. While the preparation process varies from sorcerer to sorcerer, all acknowledge that it is necessary.

There is no consensus among even the most venerable practitioners as to what aspects of preparation are necessary and which ones are frivolous actions stemming only out of tradition. Additionally, while some agree on a concept (such as fasting) the duration of a practice may vary from opinion to opinion. What is offered below is simply a listing of the most common preparations taken by sorcerers.

The sorcerer must have a clear objective in mind, and to this end must pick the correct celestial player (either demon or angel) to accomplish it. The celestial target must be associated to a power that will help accomplish this end (this usually concerns an angel's providence or a demon's dominion). The sorcerer must know the name of the celestial to be summoned, along with the planet that governs him, and any offices the child of fire holds.

Choosing the right place to perform the ceremony is also another important aspect of preparation. Beyond the mere consideration of privacy (for sorcery can only be accomplished without disturbance), there is another important aspect to consider. The location should fit the nature of the celestial being summoned and the task for which it is being called. Hence, if a sorcerer was attempting to enlist the help of a demon to smash a boat with waves, the ceremony would be best performed near or on the ocean. Though the correct location can be a great help to a sorcerer, in and of itself it does not guarantee success or failure.

Before the ceremony, the sorcerer's body must be cleansed of impurity. He must fast and remain celibate for a predetermined time before the ritual begins. In some cases this cleansing extends to isolation from all human contact, and bloodletting is occasionally utilized to rid the body of impurities. The length of time sorcerers cleanse their bodies varies. Some espouse days of fasting and weeks of celibacy, while others limit these things to only a few hours prior to the ceremony.

As the body is cleansed, so to must the implements of sorcery. Those items used in the ritual must be forged from the right material (there is disagreement on what materials those are, though). Additionally the items must be kept

from impurities and wiped with special oils and perfumes. The cleansing of these instruments is usually done a day prior to the invocation.

3.7 CEREMONIAL MAGIC (THE RITUAL)

Many sorcerers disagree on the order in which events must occur during the ritual. Additionally, they even disagree on what steps and implements are necessary or merely extraneous. The one aspect they can all find common ground with is the fact that the ceremony must be performed on a specific day and hour corresponding to the celestial being invoked. To perform the ritual at any other time will mean sure failure.

In the case of simple summoning rituals the entire process takes no longer than an hour. When a talisman is created, however, the process lasts far longer. Usually starting at the correct hour and day of the celestial's power and continuing on until the cycle repeats itself (usually 42 hours). During this time, the sorcerer must remain in the summoning circle in a constant state of prayer and meditation.

Though the drawing of the summoning circle is of crucial importance to the ritual, sorcerers do not agree on the shape, size, and method of drawing used to create it. In spite of this dissension, there are a number of elements all sorcerers agree must be contained in the circle. The sigil and name of the celestial being summoned (even in the cases of creating talismans) must be drawn in the circle along with protective symbols, binding symbols, and Task symbols. The drawing of the circle and these symbols is a tedious process often taking an hour or more to complete.

During the ceremony itself peripherals are used to enhance the atmosphere, improve the state of the practitioner, and cleanse the summoning area. They include such things as lights (candles), perfumes, unguents, and medicines. While none conclude that failure will result from the lack of these things, they certainly appear to increase the chances of success.

In addition to these peripherals, a number of objects are often used to help with the ritual. These include: holy papers, pictures, pentacles, a sword, a dagger, a rod, a staff, and the proper clothing (which must be of specified color and material). Not all these items are used together by all sorcerers, but a combination of some are almost always employed. The rod, staff, and

sword seem to be the most crucial of these items, appearing in almost all rituals.

Contrary to mainstream views that see sorcerers as diabolists, a sacrifice is rarely used for the ritual. This usually only occurs among the darker paths of the arts. When a sacrifice is used, however, it is never a human one but rather takes the form of a kid (an immature goat).

In the case of creating a talisman, a triangle is affixed to the outside of the circle. The item to be enchanted is placed here at the beginning of the ritual and must not be removed until the completion of the ceremony. If it is removed, even for an instant, the sorcerer will be forced to start anew.

As the ceremony begins the sorcerer enters the summoning circle and offers an oration unto God. Next prayers, psalms, or gospels are professed to offer defense to the practitioner during the ritual process. At this point the innovation begins. Lasting between ten and twenty minutes, these prayers are fraught with semantic dangers and linguistically nuances. If the angel or demon does not appear, the invocation can be repeated twice. Each time, though, the practitioner becomes louder and more demanding.

Assuming the invocation works, the sorcerer will now greet the celestial creature by name. This is not merely a formality, but is instead used to bind the creature. The sorcerer gives explicit instructions (and many tasks have gone awry because of misinterpreted orders) to the bound creature. In the case of creating talismans, the celestial kneels before the object and begins to infuse it with his power (a process it will continue until the appropriate hour comes again), but in all other case, the celestial leaves to complete its task. This done, the practitioner must offer a final prayer of defense and praise to the Almighty before leaving the circle. If this is forgotten, it is possible for the bound celestial to return and do harm to the sorcerer.

3.8 THE SORCERER

To some extent sorcerers are outcasts in society. They must always conceal a part of themselves from the world — not just to shield themselves from the ridicule and persecution of other humans but also to protect against the celestial beings who would torment them if their true nature was revealed.

For the Charlatans, no such hiding is necessary. They brazenly proclaim to the world that they possess these mystical powers, when in

fact they are nothing more than frauds who seek to swindle people out of their hard earned money. They are not hunted by angels or demons, for these celestial emanations see them for what they are. Chances are that if a child of clay proclaims himself a wizard in public, he is a hoax.

For the real sorcerer, life can be a lonely existence. Many find themselves unable to cope with the everyday problems of mundane men. They are children of clay and yet somehow find themselves removed, distant, from their own kind. They seldom marry and almost never have children. Even friendships are hard to come by. They mistrust other sorcerers and must hide a part of their soul from the uninitiated. Besides, there is no time for such frivolous relationships. All their dreams and ambitions are funneled through the study of the art.

This is not to say, that all practitioners occupy the fringes of the society, shadowing figures lurking the grimy back alleys or far removed wilds. Indeed, some have great prominence in the world. They are politicians, bankers, and CEOs, and while their social skills may seem beyond reproach, it is all an act designed to hide their true nature.

Sorcerers are neither good nor evil inherently. They do, however, almost always have a selfish agenda to fulfill. Perhaps it is the magic itself or the personality type that is drawn to these endeavors, but the practitioners of Solomonic sorcery seem to always have a skewed perception of things. Their views are always slightly different from the norm. Some are merely eccentric, while others push the bounds of sanity to its very limit.

To progress past the stage of mere curiosity, a would-be sorcerer must find a mentor. Without guidance she would flail helpless at the art (accomplish nothing). But popular culture has led us to believe that sorcerers convene in large enclaves, but this couldn't be farther from the truth. They are too distrustful of each other to gather in groups of larger than three. Instead the master/pupil relationship is a one on one endeavor. Even here, though, the master sorcerer is unwilling to divulge too much information to his student at once. The disciple must prove his worthiness and loyalty over time. In the end, the greatest gift a master can bestow upon his pupil is to present him with the master's own grimoire. This is usually done near the end of the master's life.

Being a sorcerer does not automatically relegate a child of clay to Tartarus upon his death. If the life led was a good one, if no pact with Sammael is ever entered into, and if the sorcerer

firmly believe in the existence and power of the Almighty, he will still ascend to Eden. It is this divine authority that they call upon to bind celestial beings.

3.9 THE MECHANICS OF SORCERY

At first thought, it might seem sorcery would be a mechanical nightmare for the storyteller and players to employ. Quite the contrary is true. The mechanics of sorcery are, in fact, very simple. Only one roll is needed to determine the success or failure of a ritual.

Since every ritual is literally a struggle between the will of the sorcerer and the strength of the celestial entity being bound, a contested roll between the two is all that is really needed. The sorcerer uses his presence for the roll (in addition to whatever bonuses he gets for having sorcery as either an interest or a specialty), whereas the celestial uses the score for his highest aspect. If the sorcerer wins the roll he has successfully bound the creature, otherwise the creature fails to manifest. If the sorcerer dramatically fails the roll (snake eyes), the being manifests and has the option of instantly destroying the sorcerer (there is a price to be paid for meddling with celestial things).

Of course the preparation and the accuracy of the ritual itself will also affect the outcome. Each component of the ceremony is designated in one of three ways: essential, productive, or unnecessary.

Essential components are those things that must be done to have any chance of success. If any of these are forgotten, the ritual will fail no matter what the practitioner rolled. These components do not affect the roll made between sorcerer and celestial.

Productive components do have an effect on the contested roll, though. Before the ceremony is performed, the storyteller decides how many productive components are necessary for equilibrium. This number usually varies between four and eight (depending on how difficult a storyteller wants sorcery to be). For every component under this number the sorcerer fails to incorporate, his die roll is lessened by one. On the other hand, for every productive component over the equilibrium, the sorcerer's roll is increased by one.

Unnecessary components have no bearing on the outcome of the ceremony. They will neither help nor hinder the practitioner, but are usually added for one of two reasons. 1). These elements are incorporated for the sake of tradition alone.

2). The practitioner is not aware that they play no real useful purpose.

When a sorcerer learns a new ceremony, the storyteller should decide which components are essential, which are productive, and which are unnecessary. It should be noted that the list created by the storyteller need not be limited to what the sorcerer has in writing. There may be elements to the ritual that have not been written in the text the sorcerer possesses.

The creation of talismans is a slightly more complex endeavor, requiring one additional roll. The sorcerer begins the ritual on the appointed time and must remain in the summoning circle until the start of the next cycle (42 hours later), when the celestial's appointed hour once again returns. This is a test of will and endurance, for the sorcerer must remain vigilant during this time. The constant state of prayer and meditation is hard on the body. For this reason a fortitude roll is required. Failure of this roll (with the normal target of 20) means the sorcerer will be overcome by fatigue during the course of the ceremony. As a result the ceremony will be a failure, and the Talisman will possess no special powers.

If successful, the strength of the talisman is determined by the amount the sorcerer won the ritual roll by. If he exceeded the celestial's roll by fewer than five, the talisman contains a weak rendition of the chosen power. If the number is less than ten, the effects are of a moderate nature, and a roll that exceeds the opponents by ten or more possess the full version of the celestial's ability.

3.10 PLAYING A SORCERER

Players may wish to create sorcerer's to play in a children of fire campaign. While this is a relatively simple task, the players should check with the storytellers first. Some storytellers would prefer to limit the scope of sorcery to the supporting cast only. Keep in mind, though, sorcerer created as PCs start the game with very little power or knowledge. It is up to them to role-play through the acquisition of mastery.

The only requirement for being a sorcerer is that the character must have ceremonial magic as either an interest or specialty (explained further in the character creation section of this work). As with other specialties and interest, the sorcerer is afforded the normal bonuses for these skills.

The storyteller should make certain that this aspect of a character is kept under control. It should not define the entire concept a player has for her character, but should rather be a part that

completes the whole. Additionally, storytellers should make an effort to keep the powers of the initiate (as all PCs should start) under control. The sorcerer should have no greater roll in the game than any other PC.

To accomplish this, the author offers this suggestion. Characters who choose ceremonial magic as an interest should begin the game with only a couple of rituals under their belt. These rituals, while certainly valid, should not be perfect. The sorcerer who performs them will be doing some things that are right and some things that are wrong. Only time and practice will allow him to improve the ceremony. Players who choose ceremonial magic as their specialty should be allowed four or five rituals. Of these only one should be of a truly pure (uncorrupted) nature. The rest should be flawed to some extent.

3.11 CELESTIALS AND SORCERY

As should be expected, there is great enmity between celestials and sorcerers. For the sorcerers seek to enslave these mighty creatures at every turn, binding them to their own selfish wills. Both angels and demons alike are forced to perform tasks that are sometime meaningless, sometimes demeaning, and often counter to their very nature. Once bound, they are helpless to resist the invoker. They must follow his orders exactly, but will find a way to thwart his plans if the instructions are even the merest bit vague.

Many angels have witnessed themselves committing unthinkable acts while in this bound state. They are aware of all that is going on around them, but can do nothing to resist the will of the sorcerer. Luckily, though, this sense of helplessness pertains only to the task they were directly charged to do. All other matters remain under their control during the binding duration.

For demons things are simple. If the sorcerer lets his guard down for even a moment (leaving the summoning circle before completing all the elements that will protect him) the demon will lash out at him, killing the magical practitioner without a second thought. Angels, on the other hand, have a much deeper moral bind. Even if given the chance, they will resist against killing the sorcerer. For killing any child of clay is against the laws of the Almighty and will incur a loss of grace. Still, angels forced to commit horrible affronts to God while under a sorcerer's grasp are sometimes unable to restrain themselves from lashing out at their enslavers.

Any acts an angel commits while bound to a sorcerer are not subject to the normal rules for losing grace. Therefore, an angel ordered to kill a

child of clay while in this state will not lose grace for this action. This has no bearing on demons, for whom grace is irrelevant.

Celestials are quite perplexed when it comes to the Almighty's stance on the wretched practice of Sorcery. Though the sorcerers use these mystical rights to perpetrate heinous acts on their own kind, He affords them the same protection as any other child of clay. In fact, the Almighty has ensured that the art of ceremonial magic has continued through the ages (and there were a number of times when it was on the verge of being snuffed out). No angel in Heaven has yet come up with a reasonable answer for this.

IV. ISSUES OF FAITH

"For us, dear brethren, nothing is unseen, nothing is unknowable. The whole course of universal events lies before us. But for the children of clay, there is only mystery."

- Promises XXX:III

4.1 OVERVIEW

Man is not just flesh. There are as many intangible elements to children of clay as there are tangible ones. As the body is fed, so to must the spirit be satiated. If not it will grow weak and wither. To strengthen the spirit one must believe. This section seeks to explore the issues of faith and enlightenment that nourish the soul. Without them nothing can be gained by the souls short time on Earth. The author will attempt to answer questions concerning where faith and enlightenment come from and how they can be utilized in a COF game.

4.2 THE FAITHFUL FEW

Of all human endeavors and ambitions, faith is perhaps the most difficult to comprehend. It is easy to understand how we can believe in the concrete. We see the inner workings of the mechanism, we follow the process to its natural solution. But faith, by definition, is belief in the unknowable — excepting a point of view without the benefit of proof. The strength of a child of clay's convictions and the inner force he possess is measured by his faith. It represents a strength that comes not from outside, but rather from within.

Faith is an element completely foreign to angels, and as such is a strength they can never tap into. For them, they must rely on their Grace (the favor of God) to carry them through difficult times. But they know for sure that God exists and of the nature of the universe and so cannot call on that inner strength of faith to see them through. It must be understood that faith does not represent truth. No connotation of good or evil comes with the concept either. In fact, those who have led lives of great evil are capable of having very high faith scores. Indeed high priests within the Satanic Church often possess very high faith scores. Still, faith does denote the belief in the metaphysical (those things beyond the material world). Belief in science or atheism will not garner a character a high faith score. The truly devout (those with faith scores above 12) must rigidly adhere to the tenets and traditions of their belief system. The Jew or Christian must obey all the Ten Commandments and not simply pay lip service. Like wise, the Muslim must show loyalty and love to Ala by fulfilling the five pillars of Islam, and the Buddhist must follow the eightfold path. So how does faith play into a Children of Fire game? Faith does many things. Places that are sacred to one with a high faith score can give benefits to him while confronting his enemies. The mechanics of this will be explained more fully in the next section. In addition, the higher a child of clays faith score, the more difficult she is to possess. The healing ability of faith can also come

into play. There are many instances of the truly devout having been cured from disease or disability by their faith alone. Even modern medicine is unable to explain these occurrences. Faith can be a contagious thing. Those who adhere to the same belief system as a child of clay with extraordinary faith (13 or higher) will find their own faith bolstered when in the presence of this person. Likewise, those who are constantly bombarded by those of a contradicting belief may find themselves less able to call upon their faith for support. But the truly faithful cannot be swayed.

As with most things in life, there is a price to be paid for an extremely high faith. These children of clay seem to be unyielding in their ways. This rigidity can come across in many ways. They do not necessarily persecute those who do not believe as they do (something that is often done by those with lower faith scores), but they remain closed off from new ideas and alternate ways of approaching an issue. Additionally, these "saints" are all too willing to martyr themselves for their faith. There is a natural ebb and flow of faith within the children of clay. They are not simply born with faith and maintain that same level of belief until the instant of their death. Instead, faith can increase and decrease depending on the experiences of life. The game mechanics of this topic will be further explored in the next section.

4.3 THE MECHANICS OF FAITH

Faith is an abstract concept best relegated to role-playing and the subjective decisions of the storyteller. Still, there are times when a storyteller may deem a roll necessary to resolve an issue of faith. The following guidelines are meant to help players and storytellers in these situations.

1. Faith manifests itself most when in the presence of shrines. Characters who have faith scores in excess of 12 and are in the presence of a holy place precious to their belief will receive a bonus to all roll equal to the level of the shrine. Keep in mind that holy laces may not only be those sites sanctified by and angel or desecrated by a demon, but can also appear as natural phenomena. The bonus kicks in so long as the character remains within fifteen feet of the site. A more detailed description of how shrines work is available in the source book under the Forces of Protection.
2. A storyteller can demand a faith roll whenever he feels a player is not acting within the dictates of his belief system. As with normal rolls, the target is twenty. If

successful, his faith will win out over his disobedience. With that said, the storyteller should use such roles sparingly. They should only be applied when the player is doing a particularly bad job of playing his character.

3. Characters use their faith score to resist the possession attempts of demons. If, however, they are a willing host of the infernal creature (as might be the case with a Satanist), they need not resist the attempt. Instead, the demon is let in without a fight. Faith is not a stagnant thing and can ebb and flow according to what happens in a game. With the storyteller's permission, a player can lower or raise her character's faith at the end of a session where something profound has happened to her. Likewise, the storyteller can elect to adjust a character's faith according to her actions or behavior in the game. This is most often done when a character behavior directly opposed to her beliefs. In most cases, faith should not alter more than two points plus or minus in the course of one gaming session.
4. Experiencing the supernatural, such as seeing a celestial force being used or catching a glimpse of one of the dreadful Nephilim, can be an unnerving experience for a child of clay. Only faith can allow one to adequately cope with these events without being driven insane. A storyteller may ask a player to make a faith roll when a character has witnessed something not of the material world. Failure of this standard roll can result in temporary paralysis, fainting, or all manner of irrational behavior. Success indicates the character is able function normally, though they may still be shocked by the occurrence. The most common cause of such rolls is when an angel appears to a child of clay in divine form.

4.4 THE ENLIGHTENED ONES

In its time the world has seen a handful of truly enlightened beings: Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Mohamed to name a few. These beings caught a glimpse of the true nature of the universe and were able to convey its beauty and mystery to others. Those these are extreme examples of enlightenment, many mortals possess a small glimmer of this insight.

In children of Fire, enlightenment represents that part of the soul that is able to see individual threads of the universal web. They can

begin to see angels and demons when they are in an ethereal state. They can sense celestial forces just as angels or demons can. The enlightenment may even take the form of far sight (being able to see events distant in either space or time).

But no explanation comes with these revelations. No angels stand by the mortals to say, "What you saw means this." The mortals see what they see and then their finite minds must interpret its meaning. As a result, enlightened souls may see these mysteries in many different ways. A child of clay who sees a ghostly apparition might correctly see it for an angel, while another might see a visitor from outer space. Faith and Enlightenment do not directly equate. The most faithful adherent may spend her whole life without a hint of enlightenment, and the atheist may be shown a glimpse into the celestial realm. In some cases, an increase in one's enlightenment may occur at the cost of faith if what they are seeing directly contradicts their beliefs. The question then is what brings enlightenment? What causes a person to transcend his mortal bounds? In some cases it is divinely inspired, the Almighty reaches down to touch one of His beloved children. In other cases, the enlightenment is brought on by a traumatic event (such as a near death experience). In some cases, a child is simply born with the gift. Whatever the cause, once a child of clay has received a sliver of enlightenment, he has one of two choices. He can ignore it (trying to suppress what is often a terrifying experience) or he can embrace it. Those who embrace their gift often go out of their way to comprehend it. This process often, though not always, causes the mortal's enlightenment to gradually increase. Those who have reached the highest level of enlightenment (20) feel no need to remain in the mortal world any longer. There is nothing the material plane can offer them anymore.

Those with high enlightenment tend to be leaders. They cannot sit back and watch while the world gets it wrong. They must interject themselves and show the misguided the path of truth. Ironically, many cult leaders (whose minds have been shattered by the things they've seen) have very high enlightenment scores.

4.5 THE MECHANICS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Readers who have skipped ahead to read the section, Creating Children of Clay PCs, have no doubt noticed that enlightenment is not mentioned anywhere in the character creation process. The reason is simple. All starting characters begin the game with no enlightenment.

It is something that can only be achieved while role-playing

Enlightenment is a score that can range from one to twenty. A one represents only a hint of the celestial realm while a twenty is equivalent to the sight and understanding of an angel. There are tens-of-thousands who possess a touch of enlightenment (1-5). Perhaps only a few hundred at a time hold the middle range of enlightenment (6-12), and those with enlightenment scores of 13+ usually come along only once in a generation.

The storyteller starts a character down the path of enlightenment by awarding a character a single point. With this receipt, the player now adds enlightenment to his character sheet. Once a point is given to a PC it can never be taken away. Hence, while it is possible for an enlightenment score to increase, it can never decrease.

A character's enlightenment score can increase in a number of different ways. Firstly, the character can attempt to practice and research his new found abilities. Second, the character can undergo another traumatic incident that grants him greater sight. Last, a character can enlist the help of one with a greater enlightenment score to increase his own score.

In any case, a storyteller should usually not reward more than one point of enlightenment each gaming session. As the score increases, the requirements for gaining the next point become exponentially harder. The storyteller should be wary to not hand out enlightenment points like candy. For once given, they cannot be taken away.

So how is enlightenment used?

For one, enlightenment can be used to detect angels in divine (ethereal) form. To do this the player adds the enlightenment score to a standard roll. A twenty or higher means the celestial is visible to the child of clay. As is the case with angels, celestials cannot be seen if they are in the subtle form. Enlightenment can also be utilized to sense the use of celestial and infernal forces. The greater the number by which a celestial exceeded his target on the force roll, the more detectable it is (in essence the louder the noise). The number by which the celestial exceeded his roll is added to the enlightenment score. The child of clay rolls adding this combined number. If he exceeds twenty, the use of the force was detected. A character with no enlightenment score cannot roll to detect these things

Additionally, the storyteller can elect to have enlightenment represent all forms of extra sensory

perception. The details of these elements are left up to the storyteller and the demands of his story.

4.6 TRADITION

Though there is much common ground, faith and tradition are not necessarily correlated. Faith is the conviction one has in his beliefs, while tradition is the outward representation of these beliefs. Those who follow the traditions of a religion do not necessarily have great faith. On the other hand, those of great spiritual faith almost always adhere to the traditions.

Though not the heart of belief, tradition does represent an important aspect of religion. It serves to connect the adherents to the past (reminding them of the roots and stability of their beliefs) as well as uniting the believers through communality. Most belief systems contain an assortment of traditions that are briefly discussed below.

Many belief systems have a service of some kind to remind the adherents of the joys and obligations present in the path they have chosen. These services are usually held at regular intervals — the most common of which is a weekly service. These services often included speeches meant to inspire, prayers or meditation meant to bring the followers closer to the divine. Additionally there is often some ceremonial gesture made to rededicate the adherents to the faith. In many religions a collection is taken up to support the continuation of the faith.

The passing from childhood to adulthood is often commemorated by religious tradition. These events center around a child's openly accepting the correctness of the religion's beliefs. Only as adults are they able to make this conscious decision for themselves. It is a welcoming of this new soul into the religious community and as a result is a time of great celebration.

Marriage is another area that falls under the auspices of religious tradition. Here, a man and woman dedicate themselves to each other. While it can often be overlooked, at the heart of the ceremony is the confirmation that both man and woman will continue along their life as one entity devoted to the religious beliefs they ascribe to.

Crucial to a religious belief are the traditions that surround death. These rituals help to ease the pain of loss and speed the soul onto its proper place in the afterlife. Ironically, since psychopomps exclusively handle the process of freeing the soul from the flesh, these ceremonies are more for the living than for the dead.

All religions must address in some form or other these three life-cycle events: acceptance, union, and death. Beyond that, religious services and celebration vary greatly.

Justice cannot adequately be served by the meager representation we offer below. Surely whole volumes can and have been written on each of these religions. What is offered is merely a taste of the true depth of each of these beliefs. The author recommends that if a storyteller wishes to incorporate one of these faiths heavily into her game, she either research the topic more thoroughly or have intimate personal experience with the faith.

There simply was not enough time or space to include every religion. The author has done his best to include the major religions, but apologies are made for those who do not find information on the religion they are seeking to incorporate.

5.2 BUDDHISM

Buddhism is in many respects a unique religion. Its leaps of logic and faith often take much study and contemplation to even begin to comprehend. At the center is the belief in the teachings Buddha — namely the four noble truths and the eightfold path of enlightenment. Though there are differing opinions among the various schools of Buddhism, all adhere to at least these two ideals. In short the four noble truths are:

1. There is suffering in the world.
2. Suffering is caused by desire (this is represents longing of any kind not just of a physical nature).
3. To alleviate suffering one must reach a state of nirvana, which is in essence an absence of desire.
4. Nirvana can only be reached by the eightfold path of enlightenment.

The eightfold path of enlightenment consists of the following ideas: right action, right composure, right effort, right knowledge, right livelihood, right mindfulness, right speech, and right thought.

Unlike many religions, the Buddha is not seen as a prophet spouting revelations directly from the Almighty. Though well loved and cherished, he is not of divine origins but is an enlightened soul that has migrated through many lifetimes. His revelations came not from the outside, but rather from introspection.

There are two major schools of Buddhism. They are Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada is closer in nature to the original sense of the religion, its devotees do not believe in idolizing the Buddha and scoff at rituals

V. THE MAJOR RELIGIONS

"In the end times, man shall be divided in his belief. Divergent faiths will battle over the name the Almighty...never realizing they are in complete harmony."

- Resolutions II:V

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The author has been accused on more than one occasion of having a Judeo/Christian bias in the game. Indeed this is the case. The cosmology of the game relies heavily on these principles. This was done both as a result of the texts consulted and in effort to maintain consistency throughout the game. This is not to say, however, that alternate concepts and belief systems cannot be incorporated into the game. This section seeks to look at the major religions of the world and how they can be fit into a children of fire campaign. Each of us comes from a slightly different perspective, and the ability to express these differences is crucial to the storytelling process

of any sort. There is a strict and difficult path to follow. Mahayana, while it diverges slightly from the Buddha's teachings, is far more liberal in its approach. Incorporating the original belief systems of the converted, it is a simpler path to follow and so is more prolific throughout the world.

There is also a third school that is worth mentioning here. That is the school of Mantrayana. While it shares many aspects of Mahayana Buddhism it is consumed with the idea of rituals and the occult. It is said some of these practitioners can perform great magic.

There is not much difficulty in incorporating Buddhism into the Children of Fire world. The Mahayana Buddhists believe in Bodhisattva (spirits). These can easily be transformed into the idea of angels and demons. Additionally, the magic inherent in Mantrayan Buddhism can be seen as an offshoot of Solomonic Sorcery using the same mechanical style as this discipline.

Where one comes across a bit of difficulty is in the perception of the afterlife. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, but it differs greatly from the Hindu concept. Buddhists believe all things are a sum of their parts, and upon death these parts are returned to the universe to be recombined and reformed. That which makes up a human being cannot be destroyed, but never again will that same unique combination of parts exist. There is no conscious soul that remembers all the previous permutations of its parts.

5.3 HINDUISM

This religion has its foundation in the Indus Valley around 1500 BCE. Its holy scriptures are a collection of works known as the Vedas. At the heart of this belief system is the idea of Samsara (the wheel of life). Its adherents seek Moksha (liberation from Samsara). The clergy of this faith are known as Brahmins.

There are three principle tenets of this faith:

1. Everything in existence is an expression of God.
2. Man's purpose is to come close to, realize, or merge with God
3. Worldly delights are temptations (hence they break the second tenet)

For the adherent of this religion there are four paths to moksha. Bhakti is the path of devotion. Here the adherent undergoes prayer and devotion to a personal deity (a representation of Brahman, the supreme spirit). The second path is that of Karma. The adherent tries to attain

moksha through good works and by using his/her talents for the betterment of mankind. Inana is the third path and involves intensive study of the scripture. This "path of knowledge" requires the assistance of a teacher. The final path is Yoga. This is a development of mind and body, overcoming the limitations of the earthly form. Hindus rarely follow just one of these paths, but rather follow a combination of them.

Over the years, many outside observers have believed Hinduism to be a polytheistic faith, but this is not the case. Hindus believe in one supreme being (the Absolute) named Brahman. Unfortunately, Brahman is unknowable in His true state and so is divided into aspects that can be perceived. There are 33 major aspects and of these three hold the most importance in Hinduism

- Brahma - the Creator
- Vishnu - the Preserver
- Shiva - the Destroyer

Fitting children of Fire into this belief system is not too difficult. In the mind of a Hindu an angel could simply be seen as an aspect of Brahman. The monotheistic nature of the religious fits in well with what has already been described in the game. The three major aspects (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) can be seen as being equal in power to the four angels in the choir of Seraphim. In the end, the goal for salvation is the living of a good and pure life (the same criteria that has already been set out in the game).

5.4 ISLAM

Islam finds its roots in the year 622. It stems from the prophecies of Mohammed, which were written down in the Qur'an, the Islamic Holy Scripture. Islam grew out of Judaism and Christianity and so has much in common with these faiths. Islam contends that while the Torah and Bible are true revelations from Allah (the Almighty), they are misinterpretations of His words. Mohammed is seen as the final prophet, whose message is uncorrupted.

At the center of a Muslim's life are the five pillars of Islam. They are:

- **Shahada** - This is the Muslim's proclamation of faith embodied in the statement, "There is no other God but God and Muhammad is His messenger."
- **Salat** - This is the prayer ritual that Muslims must be performed five times a day.

- **Zakat** - Alms giving is a very important part of the Islamic faith. It is the process of giving to others who are in need. It represents more than the sharing of wealth, but also embodies the willingness to spend time and share skills with the less fortunate.
- **Sawm** - Fasting is another crucial part of Islam. It is believed that fasting helps to purify the mind and body. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sunset.
- **Hajj** - This is the pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims must make at least once in their life, if at all able.

There should be no difficulty whatsoever with fitting Islam into a Children of Fire game. Muslims believe in angels, a single divine force (Allah), and an afterlife. Indeed it was Gabriel who communicated the Almighty's teachings to Mohammed. Only minor differences in names and natures occur. For instance, Gabriel is always portrayed as male in Islamic culture, and Samael is known as Iblis.

5.5 SHINTO

Shinto is the traditional religion of Japan. Its main text is the Nihon Shokai, which provides the creation stories for this belief system. The god Izanagi and goddess Izanami are featured prominently in these stories. It is said that these two gave birth to the Japanese Islands.

The religion centers around the worship of kami (spirits). The kami are inherent in all things both physical (rivers, mountains, trees, creatures) and non-physical (ideas, beliefs, and ancestors). Though all things in the universe have these kami, the nature spirits are seen to be most important.

Shrines for local kami abound throughout Japan. Here worshippers pray and often leave offerings of food. In many cases, adherents must wash before entering the shrine, and a branch is used to sweep away all the impurities as enter the shrine.

The Japanese have an eclectic rather than exclusive view on religion, and it is for this reason that the incorporation of Shinto into Children of Fire is quite simple. The existence of angels, demons, and all the other elements of the Children of Fire world are not contradictory to this belief system. The storyteller need only introduce the idea of kami into the game. These spirits are of varying strength and only of the celestial world.

5.6 TAOISM

Taoism is less of a religion than it is a philosophy. The Tao te Ching, the central book of Taoist beliefs, was attributed to Lao Tzu around the sixth century BCE. It is really simply a set of poetic tracks that are meant to inspire the contemplation of existence.

At the very heart, Taoism is represented by the symbolic yin yang. It represents the opposites that exist through out the universe. For every idea or thing there is always an opposite that keeps it in balance. Sadness counters happiness. Ugliness counters beauty. Male counters female, and existence counters non-existence. It is the interaction of these opposites that dictates the flow of the universe.

From the interaction of the yin yang, the five elements are extrapolated. They are: wood, fire, water, metal, and earth.

The goals of Taoism are simple. The Tao or "the Way" teaches one to be in harmony with nature and live by its rules. It teaches the adherent to live in the moment, not concerning himself with what is to come. In the end, one is to merge with the universe. This is an impersonal state that has nothing to do with consciousness.

Though little in Taoism hints at a truly religious nature, demanding its adherents subscribe to specific a set of dogmas, it is still quite difficult to reconcile it with the Children of Fire world. The Taoist concept of afterlife shares nothing with the Judeo/Christian one described in this game. In addition, the Taoist emphasis on the here and now does not jive well with one being judged for the over all goodness or inherent evil of their life. To the Taoist, one's past deeds are irrelevant when considering their actions in the present. For these reason, the storyteller will need to work long and hard if he wishes to make Taoism the central focus of a Children of Fire campaign.

VI. THE DARK SIDE OF HUMANITY

"You have forsaken me, oh Lord. And so I will lash out in the only way possible. The children of clay will pay for the injustice wrought upon me. Their misery hangs on Your head. "

- Sammael

6.1 OVERVIEW

The foes of the righteous children of clay are not merely angels and demons. The threats do not only come from the celestial world and its inhabitants. Sometimes the forces that seek to destroy the good men and women of the world are very human indeed.

With the gift of free will, the children of clay were allowed to choose their own path in life. While many have chosen the route of salvation (living a good and caring life), there are those who have traveled down darker paths.

Some have forsaken the Almighty, denied His existence and rejected His love. Others have sought to align themselves with Sammael, the accursed one. Still others have sentenced their souls to damnation in order to achieve mystical powers here on Earth. And then there are those who simply wallow in their own depravity, catering to the selfishness and greed that lies within us all.

This section seeks to explore these dark facets of mankind.

6.2 SATANISM

Before beginning it should be noted that there are two sides to Satanism. One is the old

way, steeped in the tradition of the dark lord Sammael. The other is the reinvention of Satanism that occurred in the twentieth century. The author has made an effort to keep these two manifestations separate, but in the end the results are the same. Those children of clay who follow either path are certain to spend the afterlife tormented in Tartarus.

When Sammael first fell and a third of heaven's host with him, he sought allies among men. He quickly learned that in order to turn the children of clay against their Creator their own kind would have to play an important roll. He sent his demons unto the world to recruit followers. With false promises and lies, children of clay were deceived into worshiping the accursed one. They called themselves Satanist, borrowed from the term Satan the term most commonly used by the children of clay to refer to Sammael.

It is ironic that Sammael has no particular need to be worshipped. He cares not whether mortals prostrate themselves before him. He needs no prayers to boost his celestial ego. His only goal is to draw souls away from God. He hates his followers as much as any other children of clay.

The dark rituals of early Satanist were meant to mock the Almighty and the worship of Him. They were also meant to cater favor with their dark Lord (though no such thing is possible). Though it was widely believed that these rituals involved human sacrifices, it is clear that such occurrences were a rarity at best. It does no good for Sammael to order his subjects to kill the innocent. Their death would simply ensure their place in Eden. Animal sacrifices, on the other hand, were a common occurrence.

But life was not easy for the followers of Sammael. On one hand, the promises he made to them never came to fruition, and the righteous ones began to hunt them down. During the period of the Inquisition many followers of Sammael were revealed and executed (a number of innocent souls were put to death as well).

The twentieth century brought a change to Satanism. After years of hiding and near extinction, it reemerged with a new look. The emphasis on unhidden evil was replaced by something far more insidious — self-empowerment. The term self-empowerment is used by modern Satanist often, but it is nothing more than a gentle way to say selfishness and a desire to destroy all those who stand in their way.

There are many factions of modern Satanism. All with their own philosophies and own take on the figure of Satan. Some, like the Church of Satan, represent Satan as more of a metaphor than

an actual celestial being. To them the goal is indulgence and succumbing to the animal desires in us all. For others like the First Church of Satan, Satan is indeed seen as a true being. They espouse a belief in what they call the pre-Christian Satan. Here they claim to take on the roll of the adversary. Indeed Satan (from ha-satan) literally means the adversary. This church has taken its meaning and used to assume an adversarial position against mainstream organized religion. Unfortunately, their logic is flawed. Even the pre-Christian notion of Satan (while not having a distinctly evil character) has a distinctly evil outcome. The point here was to challenge the belief of the children of clay, to see if they indeed possessed great faith in the Almighty. To fail this challenge was never seen as a good thing, but rather another step down the wrong path. To ascribe to this interpretation of Satanism is to admit that your way is wrong-- something they do not do.

It makes no difference to Sammael. These new views seem far more alluring to the children of clay, and no doubt he will stick with them for some time to come. In the end, all factions of Satanism, whether they know it or not, have been influenced by the hand of this dark angel.

Angels have a special loathing for these damnable mortals. For they have not just abandon God, but taken a position against him. Ironically, Sammael has no special love for them either. He will forsake them at the drop of a hat.

Satanists possess no special powers. They cannot command their demon lords. Their rituals are only meant to bolster their faith and are meant in no way to increase their power.

6.3 WITCHCRAFT

Let us talk of the wretched beings who sell their souls to Sammael for the taste of supernatural powers. These witches seek to have a glimpse of the celestial world and are willing to risk damnation to do it.

One must wonder who would ever pick this lot in life. For the which, upon making his/her pact with Sammael is ensured a place in Tartarus. What's more, they know they are damned and still make the choice anyway.

Upon the slicing of the palm or wrist and recitation of the pact with Sammael, the witch is given a familiar. This animal, usually of diabolic nature, is there link to the demonic.

Though some of their powers come from within, many of the effects a witch can cause are

done at the behest of a demon. Unlike the sorcerer, however, demons need not heed the words of the witch. They can choose to fulfill or ignore these requests.

Witches have the power to see into the future, to divine things to come. They do this through various methods. Whether it be through the reading of cards, tea leaves, or tracing the lines on ones palms, they often do not understand from where this knowledge comes. It is not a skill to be learned, but rather a talent to be unleashed.

Witches tend to group together in bundles of thirteen known as covens. While this may be done for the purpose of sharing ideas, the heart of the matter is that witches fear for their existence. Even the most powerful witch, with all her curses and fortune telling, is helpless against a mob of angry people. Together they can fend off the threats from the outside world.

6.4 WITCHCRAFT vs. SORCERY

Though the goal of both is to garner supernatural abilities from the celestial world, witchcraft and sorcery have almost nothing in common. The followers of witchcraft gain their power by making a pact with the accursed one, while the practitioners of ceremonial magic make no such pledge. Instead they seek to bind both demons and angels not ask favors of them.

In general the sorcerer is of greater sophistication and ability. His rituals are more practiced and scientific then the curses thrown around by witches. Additionally he can bind both angel as well as demons, whereas those who follow witchcraft only gain access to the dark side of the celestial world.

There is some overlap in terms of what both can accomplish, but not much. Sorcerers have no ability to see into the future nor can they cast generic curses on their enemies. The sorcerer's goal must be well thought out, well researched, and executed perfectly. They do not have familiars to guide them in the dark ways as witches do (though the are sometimes mistakenly believed to possess these creatures). Additionally, witches tend to possess a greater knowledge of herbs and poisons than do the practitioners of the magical arts.

Another important distinction between them is that sorcerers are not automatically condemned to damnation in the afterlife. Witches, upon making their pact with Sammael, lose any claim on reaching Eden upon their death. Sorcerers on the other hand are still judged by the merits of their life.

These two groups vehemently despise and oppose each other. In recorded history there is no example of these two disciplines ever uniting in a common cause. Sorcerers see those who dabble in witchcraft to be cretins selling out to the celestial world rather than controlling it. Witches, on the other hand, see the practitioners of the Solomonic art as self obsessed bigots who think themselves so much better than the rest of the world. If meeting one of the other path, these two groups will most likely seek to destroy each other.

6.5 OTHER DARK PATHS

But man need not be corrupted by Sammael. There are other dark paths he can follow. While the accursed one may not be the guide down these evil roads, the destination is still the same — damnation.

There is the path of science. Though technological advances have the promise of making the world a better place, these advances can be used to fulfill all manner of nefarious ambitions. Medical experiments and genetic tampering are the hallmarks of the scientist gone mad.

There is the path of power and greed. For some the allure of salvation in the afterlife is not enough. For them they must make a mark on the world of the living, force their way upon the helpless. They are dictators and ruthless corporate CEOs. This is not to say that all children of clay who hold positions of leadership are following this path. Those that follow this path, however, seek to mold the world to their liking, and often their tastes run to the depraved and cruel.

There is the path of fame. There are those out there will do anything to be recognized, to stand out in a crowd. They will sacrifice all the morals they use to hold true to accomplish even the briefest hint of stardom. And if they must destroy people on their rise to the top then so be it.

There is the path of addiction. Drowned in booze or high as a kite, the followers of this path have lost control. Their slide into oblivion grows ever steeper day by day. What semblance of a life they once had (all their accomplishments and possession) are lost to the man made demon of addiction. Near the end of this road they will do anything to get their fix, to satisfy the urge, to attain just one more high. And the acts they perform at this stage will damn them to Tartarus for all eternity.

There is the path of zealotry. These children of clay claim the Almighty is their guide, but this

is not so. They take the teachings of well meaning faiths and warp them to the extreme. They manipulate and corrupt these beliefs to justify their own personal vendettas. They wage war in the name of God, and slaughter those who oppose them and say they are doing good. The angels of torment have a special place in Tartarus for them, and their suffering will go on ceaselessly until the end of time.

Once set down these dark paths, most children of clay never look back. If they did, however, they would find there is still hope for them. For once the journey to damnation begins, they can always turn around. It is unfortunate, however, that few do.

VII. CREATING A CHILD OF CLAY

"The children of clay are wondrous creatures. Even in their frailty there is strength. Even when the material world is hard on them, they still find a glimmer of hope to latch on to"

- I Metatron XI:X

7.1 THE PROCESS

To this point in children of fire it was only possible to create celestial PCs. Mortal life was left to the realm of supporting cast members. Now we introduce the possibility of creating humans as PCs to play in the setting. There are both advantages and disadvantage to playing children of clay. These issue will be addressed later in this work.

The process itself is much the same as it would be for creating a child of fire. Players will be given points to distribute among various aspects and virtues. While there is great diversity available with this system, one point is worth note. On average beginning children of clay will be statistically weaker than their celestial counterparts.

Most games begin character generation by assigning stats (or rolling them) before giving motivation and emotional qualities to the character. This is not the case when developing a child of clay for game play. The non-numeric elements are determined first, and only after goals, strengths, and weaknesses are determined, does the player begin to assign numbers.

Keep in mind that the heart of the character is in the details, not the statistics. Two characters can have identical statistics and yet come from vastly different points of few. These characters will react to situations differently, and will have distinct emotional strengths and weaknesses. Never let numbers replace a good character concept.

With that said, let us begin the process...

7.2 GOAL

As human beings, we are never complete. We always strive for that which will make us whole. This should also be the case with characters we create for role-playing games. They should not be static creations, complete in their evolution.

Rather we should start their story at the beginning of their development.

To this end, all children of clay PCs must come up with a goal. This is something they need to accomplish to become whole. It is something that gives a semblance of meaning and order to their lives. It may be something very concrete that can be achieved with hard work and perseverance, or it may be an esoteric idea that can never be truly realized. Player's should be able to sum up this goal in one sentence, and this statement should be written of their character sheet.

Have no fear players. Your character is not locked into this goal until the end of time. If the goal is realized another will pop up. Additionally, it is possible for a character to change goals before the previous goal is realized. Such changes need to be okayed with the storyteller, and must be represented in role-playing. One thing is definite, though. Each character must have a goal. This portion of the character sheet cannot be left blank.

Below are some sample goals. They are not meant to run the complete gamut of possibilities, but rather to spur on you own creative ideas.

- She strived to do everything to the best of the her ability and never gives up on a project.
- He has a desire to really make a difference in at least one person's life.
- He wants to open a woodworking shop as soon as he gets out of the navy.
- She wants to prove herself to the world.
- He wants to be a millionaire by the time he's twenty eight.
- He desires to find the courage to quit his computer programming job and set out on an around the world adventure.
- She needs to find her real parents.

7.3 STRENGTH and WEAKNESS

Each soul has something it soars at and something for which it is inept. This is reflected in the game through the use of strength and weakness. All players must come up with a single strength and a single weakness for the character they are creating.

Don't think of these strength and weakness as reflecting a specific skill (i.e. my character is the

best fighter in the world), for they are not. Rather, weakness represents a flaw in the character of a child of clay, and a strength represent character trait the character possesses the gives him edge in certain situations.

Though there is no way to quantify them, storytellers will often use a character's strength or weakness to help arbitrate a situation. In some cases he may assign a modifier based on them, but there is no hard and fast rule for this. Primarily, a character's strength and weakness are role-playing guides more than anything else.

7.4 ASPECTS

All children of clay, regardless of their uniqueness, can be described in terms of aspects. These quantified attributes give us a base way to compare one human to another. There are five aspects that describe a character. Each player starts with a 4 in each of these, and then he has 20 point to divide among them however he sees fit. There is only one limitation to keep in mind. No child of clay can have an aspect exceeding 12.

Those players use to creating celestial characters will no doubt notice the aspect used to describe mortals are different from their divine counterparts. Mortal aspects are firmly planted in the physical world, whereas celestial ones often deal with connections that being has to the universe. Celestial aspects are broader in scope and so could not be used to describe children of clay. Each has it's counterpart, though: knowledge = intelligence, understanding = perception, power = athleticism, vigor = health, and glory = presence. In situations where one aspect is mention (for rolling purposes) it's counterpart can usually be substituted.

Intelligence

Intelligence does not simply denote the body of knowledge one possesses. High intelligence does not simply mean the character does well on tests. Rather it represents an amalgamation of cognitive abilities. These include memory, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, logic, creativity, and, to some degree, education. These elements combine to form a basis for how characters deal with different situations.

Perception

This aspect simply represents ones ability to pay attention both consciously and unconsciously to what's going on around them. It represents both and ability to actively search for things as well as innate intuition that allows one to sense when something is wrong.

Athleticism

Here all physical ability is rolled into one. It represents the combination of strength, agility, speed, endurance, and coordination. Most physical exertion uses all of these factors to some degree. If a character is relatively week in one areas but excelled in the others, the overall conditioning will usually carry the day.

Health

Health represents a character's ability to resist those things that seek to destroy him. It encompasses an ability to sustain overall damage, to withstand pain, and to resist disease. Health is not always a physical thing, but can sometimes deal with mental attitudes as well.

Presence

This aspect represents a character's impact on others. A high presence might denote a natural aura that surround the child of clay and attracts others to him. Likewise, a high score could mean the character has excellent speaking skills and can woo a crowd with impassioned oration. Lastly, it could simply represent a physical appearance people take notice of. Keep in mind, though it does not inherently denote instilling a sense of confidence in those around you. Both an supermodels, and 6'10" Neanderthal with a missing eye might have very high presence scores

7.5 VIRTUES

Virtues represent the moral make-up of a character. They are not personality traits, physical attributes, or mental attributes. The virtues for children of fire and children of clay are exactly the same. Unlike angels, however, there is no limit placed on how high each virtue can be.

Character's start with a base of four in each of these virtues. The player has 16 point to divide up among these virtues how ever he sees fit.

For details about each of the virtues, see the virtues section in the original sourcebook.

7.6 SPECIALTIES and INTERESTS

During a lifetime, a child of clay becomes proficient at only a handful of things. There is simply not enough time between birth and death to learn it all. But the skills they possess through their occupation, as hobbies, or simply as God given talents, are the areas they have spent considerable time perfecting. It is these niches that give humans a unique place in their society

and the world in general. And in some cases it is these special qualities that allow these husks of flesh to sometimes soar in greatness beyond the angels.

The acquiring of such talent is embodied in the idea of specialties and interest. Specialties are those talents that are the main focus of a character's life. They often, but not always, revolve around a person's profession. Interests, on the other hand, are hobbies the character has taken up over the course of life. Both Specialties and Interest are not defined as single skills. Rather they are a host of skills bundled up into one common theme. Most can be described in one or two words. If the concept seems vague or if the storyteller needs some clarification, sample skills can be included in parentheses after the interest or specialty.

Specialties represent those aspects of existence a mortal creature truly excels at. As a result, anytime a character makes a roll involving this area, he receives a +3 bonus. Interests, while not representing the same level of proficiency, still offer characters and advantage. Rolls made within these realms of interest are given a +1 bonus.

Beginning characters may choose one specialty and up to three interests. The storyteller may increase or decrease these numbers depending upon the demands of his story.

What follows are some sample specialties and interests:

- Crossword Puzzles
- Medicine (surgery, pharmacology, diagnosis, medical instrumentation, some degree of medical history, and medical contacts)
- Ocean (marine life, oceanography, history of the sea, and some sailing)
- Football (both playing and statistical knowledge)
- Boxing
- Religion (Christian ceremony, world religions, biblical studies, and a smattering of Latin)

7.7 FAITH

We now come to perhaps the most difficult concepts in creating a child of clay, faith. Faith represents an inner strength of one's beliefs and convictions. Faith is not something handed down

from God, but instead comes from within the human soul. It is a number ranging from 0 – 20, and may fluctuate greatly during the course of role-playing.

It must be understood that faith does not denote the truth of one's beliefs. Rather it is a measure of the character's conviction. Buddhists monks, Catholic priests, and high priestesses of dark cults, may all have exceedingly high faith scores.

Faith concerns itself with three major questions. 1) How did it all begin (creation of the universe)? 2) What is the meaning of life? 3) What happens after we die? The answers to these questions form the core of a character's belief system. The more he or she believes those answers, the greater the faith score.

At the start of character generation each character has a faith score of 5. The player must decide on a belief system to follow. This can be an established religion (Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, etc). The faith score represents the character's conviction in this belief system and his devotion to its sacred rituals (since that is often how one demonstrates faith).

Players can choose to raise or lower this score. Extra faith points can be attained by reducing any aspect or virtue by one point, or by acquiring one less interest. The opposite is true as well. Character wishing to have a lower faith score may add these unwanted points to aspects, virtues, or to attain a new interest. Obviously faith cannot drop below 0. Likewise, no starting character can have a faith score greater than 12 unless the storyteller permits it.

The effects of faith on game play will be discussed in the section, Issues of Faith

7.8 FINISHING TOUCHES

We've come to the end of the formalized steps for character creation, but there is still a long way to go. What lies before you is merely an outline of what your character is. What's missing are the details. For each person, the process of fleshing out the character is a unique experience. You must find and complete those steps that will give you a connection to the character — to make him or her exciting to play.

For some people this entails writing a detailed history, while for other it might consist of drawing a player sketch. The author suggestion asking questions of your character that are not already answered on the character sheet. What was his/her childhood like? Is he/she married?

Does he/she have any children? What was the best day of his/her life (so far)? What was the scariest thing that ever happened to him/her?

Alternately, character creation can be done as a group. Other players can ask question about your character to help flesh them out. Additionally, this technique can be used to engender connections between the characters that might help enhance game play. It's always nice to have characters who are together for specific reason rather than thrown together by random chance (or badly implemented plot contrivances).

There are no hard and fast rules here. Find what works with you and stick with it. Without this detailing process, the character will remain lifeless and the game will suffer as a result.

VIII. CHILDREN OF CLAY PCs

"For every act of goodness an act of evil is perpetrated. Every moment of kindness breeds and equal act of selfishness. In all things there is this balance. Nothing comes without a price."

- Retributions

8.1 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Before a player decided to create a child of clay or a storyteller allows them in the game, careful consideration should be paid to gains and losses that can occur because of this decision. In

some cases this choice opens a number of different doors of exploration that were not available before, but on the other hand there are a number of limitations which are not placed upon the scope and nature of the games that can be run.

Humans are mortal creatures, with relatively short life spans when considered against celestial creatures. Depending on the period of time chosen for the game, the average life expectancy will range from as little as thirty-five years to as much as eighty. Children of clay, who have existed on the Earth for a century or longer, are not common. This limited life span can result in the diminished scope of the game. No longer can the storyteller weave a tale that crosses centuries and still hope to have the same central characters through out. There are ways around these obstacles, but the storyteller must be very creative to accomplish it.

A number of aspects of the game are difficult to explore with a group of material creatures. The seven heavens and the issues of celestial politics are not likely to arise in these games (though with effort anything is possible).

Mortals are frail creatures when compared to celestials. As will be discussed in the following sections, humans can succumb to all forms of disabilities that angels and demons cannot. Angels never get ill, never age, and are never crippled for the rest of their lives. These are situations any child of clay PC can face. Though these often provide great role-playing opportunities, the storyteller must be aware of these limitations when deciding to include them in a story.

Players who choose to create children of clay, may in the end feel helpless in this world. Most of the creatures described in the original work would have little difficulty dispatching a mere mortal.

With all this said, there are some great advantages in playing children of clay in the COF world. In many respects the children of clay have a much fresher view of the universe. Whereas angels come from a point of knowing the exact nature of the universe, the mysteries of the universe are not readily available to mortals. This can foster a sense of discovery that can create a magical atmosphere in the game.

Players who have difficulty grasping the concepts and themes in the game, or for those who are new to role-playing, may find their first campaigns easier if they play children of clay. The children of clay are much more like characters in other role-playing games than angels are. In playing them, the players need not worry about

the mechanics or details of celestial forces, which can be a rather taxing subject.

8.2 MIXING ANGELS WITH HUMANS

It really is not too difficult to run a group of all angels or all humans. The difficulty comes in trying to run a mixed group of characters. Below are a list of considerations the storyteller and players should be aware of before attempting this.

1. The children of fire and the children of clay are not equal. Players who take on the role of humans may begin to feel inferior to the other players. They may feel like they can not accomplish as much and do not have the same abilities as the angels. Storytellers should constantly be on the look for this pitfall and try to give the mortal character a chance to shine (give them something to do that can not be accomplished by the celestial members).

2. Angels can contend with creatures much more powerful than mortals can handle. For this, it is difficult to balance the level of the group's opposition. If the enemies are too powerful, the children of clay PC will feel overwhelmed and in constant danger of instant death. On the other hand, if the level of opposition is too lax, children of fire PCs may feel bored.

3. Pacing can often be an issue with mixed groups. Since angels exist far longer than the children of clay, large leaps of time to accomplish plot points are nothing to them. For humans, however, it is a big deal. Stories that take place over too long a period of time may see the mortal PCs grow weak and old while their celestial counterparts remain as vibrant as ever.

4. There is always a danger that a mixed group will too rapidly reveal the truths of the celestial world. Part of the fun of playing humans is the mystery surrounding the universe. Giving mortal characters all the answers too quickly will defeat one of the primary reasons for playing them in the first place. Storytellers may consider hiding the identity of the celestials in the party and making it part of their goal to somewhat shelter the minds of their human companions.

8.3 COMBAT AND DEATH

The rules for combat are virtually the same for children of clay as they are for the children of fire. The child of clay involved in combat rolls using his athleticism score and compares that to his opponent's roll with the same aspect (power if the adversary is a celestial). The higher roll wins the conflict, and the greater the number by which

the winner exceeded his roll, the greater the victory.

As explained in the original source book, only one roll is made at the beginning of combat. This roll dictates the entire flow of the combat scene. The actual occurrence of each event is role-played through, with the die roll giving the storyteller a general guideline for the outcome. As always, excellent role-playing or innovative ideas can offset the results of the die roll. The next section will give a combat example.

The children of clay are far frailer than the children of fire. If the opponent's roll beats theirs by a score equal to their health aspect, they are on the verge of death. When the conflict ends, the character is so battered that death is imminent. If medical attention is not received immediately (within 10 minutes or less) the character will certainly die. Even if brought to a hospital, there is still a good chance of death. The final decision is left in the hands of the storyteller. The storyteller may also decide that if a combat roll exceeds the loser's roll by a substantial amount over the victims health score death is instantaneous and there is no chance to be saved.

As should be obvious, children of clay can only physically contest children of fire if they are in a material state. While celestial and mortal are in different states, neither can affect the other except for the use of forces.

8.4 A COMBAT EXAMPLE

Since combat in Children of Fire is much different from the traditional round-by-round systems employed in many other role-playing games, we've decided to include an sample combat scene to help clarify it.

Jack Higgins has been convinced by a demon that his wife was murdered by his own brother, William. In actuality it was the demon who dispatched Jack's wife, but this insidious creature has made jack believe it is his brother. In a rage he confronts his brother in the kitchen with the intent of beating him to death.

Since the storyteller senses a combat scene is imminent he asked for a roll as Jack (a player character) enters the kitchen. The player rolls 2d10 for Jack and receives a 9 (a slightly lower than average roll). This number is added to Jack's athleticism score of 8 to come up with a final result of 17. The storyteller, who is playing the character of William, also rolls using his athleticism score of 7. He rolls a 15 making his final score of 22. He has beaten Jack by five. While not enough to kill Jack (Jack's health score

is 9) it is still a decisive advantage for William. All things equal, William will come out on top of this situation.

Keep in mind, just because a combat roll is made does not mean combat must take place. It is possible for William to convince his brother that he had nothing to do with Jack's wife's murder, though this is not the case in our example.

The scene begins:

Storyteller: "The kitchen door swings open and Jack is standing there. There's a crazy look in his eyes, a mixture of both profound sadness and rage. At the kitchen table, William looks up from the steak he was about to cut into. Sensing that something's wrong, he rises from the table. "Jack...What's..."

Player: "Without a word I charge at him."

Storyteller: "William's look of concern turns to shock as you barrel, shoulder first, into him. The air is violent expelled from his lungs and he is sent cascading across the floor knocking his head against the side of the refrigerator. He lies there struggling to get his breath."

Player: "I jump on top of him and start pummeling him in the face and driving his head into the floor over and over again."

Storyteller: (still using the combat roll as a guide), "As you leap, William grabs for the refrigerator and pulls it open. Your forehead connects with the corner of the door, opening up a large gash over your right eye. The blow stuns you as you drop to one knee over your brother. Reaching up to the counter, William grabs for a bottle resting on the counter, and flipping open the cap throws a mysterious liquid in your eyes. The pain is unimaginable. Pushing you off him, he rolls to his feet as you struggle to get to yours as well "Jack, what the hell are you..."

Player: "I'm not listening to him. I pick up a chair and swing it."

Storyteller: "Your eyes are burning, the pain getting more intense with every second, your vision is blurry, but still you're able to lash out with the chair. William, still trying to catch his breath is able to get a hand up in time to slightly deflect the chair. The blow doesn't land solidly, but still William shrieks."

Player: "I swing again."

Storyteller: "William is ready for this second swing, He lunges forward on your back swing and drives you into the sink. Then, pulling you

forward he throws you into the table spilling its contents all over the floor."

Player: "I grab the knife my brother was using to cut his steak and swing backwards with it."

(The storyteller likes this move. It's an innovative move that shows the player was paying attention to the scene. He was about to have Jack get knocked out in a second or two, but he changes his mind. This nice piece of role-playing deserves some credit).

Storyteller: "The world is nothing more than a blur as your hand fumbles around the table and feels the handle of a steak knife. Blindly you swing your arm backward, hoping in vain to strike your brother. William sees the blade coming, but it's too late. The knife rips through his cheek, the point scraping against his teeth. He jumps backward spitting blood and runs for the kitchen door. You can't see him anymore. The world is almost totally black now, and the pain is unbearable. You drop to the floor clutching your eyes and pass out."

The storyteller was also set to let William really thrash Jack, but the player's nice move at the end was enough to convince the storyteller that Jack should at least do some major damage to William. William still came out on top of the situation, but at least Jack got his licks in.

8.5 ADVANCING YOUR CHARACTER

As humans we change and grow. Over the course of our lifetime we acquire new skills and forgot hobbies long since left by the way side. During the early years we might developed our bodies, while later our minds might take precedence. Even ambitions and beliefs, for which we have great conviction at the time, can be altered or even reversed over the course of years. This human ability to adapt and change must be reflected in the game.

Too many games focus on the ever improving character (his stats getting closer and closer to perfection with each passing gaming session). The truth, though, is that for every step forward there is a step back. When we emphasize one thing it is almost always at the expense of another aspect of our being. For this reason, *Children of Fire* does not use the experience point system found in so many other games.

The question then remains, how can a player develop his character and how do these developments take place?

No part of a child of clay character sheet is set in stone. Aspects, virtues, faith, strength, weakness, goals, specialties, and interests, all these things are flexible. Nonnumeric characteristics such as goals may alter to whatever suits the character. Numeric statistics like aspects are only confined to the limitations of humans. Hence, no aspect can exceed 12 or fall below 4. Virtues and faith can range anywhere between 0 and 20.

Changes occur solely as a result of role-playing and are awarded by the storyteller at his own discretion. Players who wish to improve an aspect of a character, acquire a new interest, or establish a new goal in life, should apprise the storyteller of their intentions. It is up to him to then decide when and if this change will occur.

But change does not happen instantly. Rather it is a gradual process where the character's new ability comes out slowly. No one suddenly wakes up to find they are twice as strong as they were yesterday. As a result, the following guidelines are offered to assist the storyteller. First, no aspect or virtue can rise or fall by more than one point each gaming session. Second, newly acquired talents must start as interests. Only after a character has had an interest for a while and has done substantial role-playing to support it, can this ability be raised to the level of a specialty. Lastly, It is unlikely that a child of clay can acquire more than three specialties. There just simply isn't enough time in the day to keep up with so many expertises. Usually gaining a new specialty under these circumstances means dropping an existing specialty down to the level of an interest. Once again, this is all at the discretion of the storyteller.

To promote this process, the author recommends the following strategy. At the end (or perhaps even the beginning) of a gaming session the storyteller should spend some time talking to the players. Ask them what they've learned from previous session and what direction they see their character going. If you ask in what ways they see their character improving, don't forget to ask them what is suffering as a result of this change. The answers to these question will help you interpret how they're role-playing.

8.6 HARSHIP, ILLNESS, and AGE

Life can be cruel for the living. As we age all sorts of maladies befall us. From car accidents to bouts with influenza and even the steady progression of age, it all takes its toll upon the mortal shell. By the time we die we've probably needed serious medical attention half a dozen times or more.

Serious injuries can have devastating effect on a character. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to quantify these effects in the game. Whenever a character loses a battle severely (by his health score or one less), the storyteller should seriously consider causing some lasting damage to the character. While there are no hard and fast rules as to how these disabilities will effect the character and his rolls, common sense should prevail. A character with a bum leg might have considerable trouble running, but should have no problem picking up a gun and firing it. The storyteller can apply a negative penalty to all rolls that are influenced by this disability.

Illness is another factor the children of clay must worry about. Since there are a plethora of diseases out there it is difficult to make hard and fast rules for them all. What can be said is this. At the height of the disease, when the character is feeling its greatest effects, the disease will in some manner affect all physical and mental tasks. This is reflected in a negative modifier to all rolls. In general (though not always) physical rolls will be affected to a greater degree than mental rolls. These modifiers range from -1 (a very minor illness) to -5 (a major and even life threatening illness).

Of course the state of medical advancement in the genre in which you are playing can make a fantastic difference. Medicines can help alleviate the symptoms if not cure the patient all together. Characters who are taking medicine to alleviate the symptoms of a disease may not suffer as great a penalty (or perhaps not suffer a penalty at all) for the duration of the medicines effect. Once the medicine wears off, however, they will quickly return to their previous level of misery.

Age is perhaps the most frustrating of all hardships the human body can endure. There is no cure for getting old, and in the end the ravages of time take a heavy toll on the flesh. The bones become weaker, the senses dulled, the memory more vague, and the reflexes a mere shadow of their former glory. A character's aspects should reflect this decreased capacity.

The age at which aspects start to decrease will depend on the life expectancy and technological level of the setting the characters are playing in. For the most part, those above the age of fifty will begin to feel the effects. Every few years (anywhere from 2 to 5) of in game time that passes should result in the diminishing of one of the characters aspects by one point. The physical skills of health and athleticism should probably be the first to go, but this is not always a certainty.

Additionally, the maximum limit for aspects is reduced as the character gets older. Those who

are over sixty can not have aspect scores greater than eleven. Those who have reached the age of seventy cannot exceed ten, and those who are eighty or older cannot exceed scores of nine. Once again, this may vary according to the genre you are playing in.

8.7 AN EVER CHANGING PERSONALITY

Though it has already been stated, it bears repeating. Humans are not stagnant creatures. They are ever changing and evolving, learning from their experiences and refining their views of the world.

This process of discovery should always be fostered in the game. The moment your character achieves a goal, there should be another on the horizon. Always be on the lookout for how your character's outlook might be altered by the events that are occurring to him.

Too many times in role-playing games we get frustrated when the storyteller throws something at our character that we didn't expect. We rebel against these new challenges, proclaiming them unjust. Sometimes it is the death of a loved one, or the incurring of some great hardship. Sometime the storyteller decided to take away from us an element we felt was so central to our character's concept. Indeed, cardboard personalities cannot endure these tests of character. If you are flexible, and your willing to let your character develop, you will find these changes a wonderful opportunity to do some astonishing role-playing.

IX. THE CATALOG OF MORTAL SOULS

"In the course of human history, there are those special souls that stand out beyond the rest. They find insight in world that does not inspire it."
- The Musings of Raphael

9.1 FATHER LOUIS GAUFRIDI

Born in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Gaufridi was part of the diocese of Marsailles. His position as a priest was a sham though, designed to hide the fact that he was a sorcerer. Though he would later be referred to as "The Prince of The Sorcerers", he was an accomplished though not renowned practitioner. It is believed he possessed one of the seven books of Honorius. Most likely he passed this onto to one of his pupils before his death.

When discovered by the church, he was subjected to interrogation and torture. Most of his ramblings were incoherent and nonsensical, but he did reveal some elements of ceremonial magic to his persecutors. In 1611 he was executed. Had he been allowed to live, no doubt sorcerers would have hunted him down for the secrets (how ever minor they were) he had revealed.

The Inquisitors made an attempt to locate Gaufridi's pupils, but none were ever captured.

9.2 ULRICH MOLITAR

Ulrich was a pioneer in the study of sorcery and witchcraft. He was a professor at the University of Constance. In 1489 he published, *De Lamiis et Pythonicis Mulieribus*, one of the

first scholarly books on the subject. Within it is contained the first picture depicting a witch riding atop a broomstick (a myth that would be come exceedingly popular in time).

Though the work is well meant, and provides as much insight as can be expected from a work of that time period, Ulrich's text is fraught with errors and false conclusions. He has a tendency to link sorcery and witchcraft, considering them two sides of the same coin. This opinion could not be farther from the truth.

9.3 BISHOP ORESEME

A skeptic until his death in 1382, Nicole Oreseme the bishop of Lisieux was convince that his superstitious congregation was being duped by charlatans that professed powers of sorcery and divination. He was fond of saying that it was ridiculous that an astrologer could not predict the sex of child, but, upon the child's birth, could suddenly predict all the events of his life. He is noteworthy, because in a time when everyone was trying to prove the existence of sorcery and witchcraft, he was doing the opposite.

He did much to expose frauds who preyed on ignorance to make money. Unfortunately, it was this aggressive attempt to disprove all supernatural occurrences that lead to some rather nefarious elements flourishing under his rule.

9.4 EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

By all accounts one of the most learned and remarkable men of his time, Emanuel Swedenborg was a scientist and philosopher who lived from 1688 – 1772. For the first part of his life he was a rather unreligious man. His secular accomplishment were staggering. He was well learned, having been educated in London and Amsterdam. For a time he was a pupil of Isaac Newton. At 26 he returned to his native Sweden with a plethora of ideas and sketches for all manner of inventions. Among these were plans for mining machinery, a submarine, and even an airplane, which was successfully flown for a few miles.

But when Swedenborg was fifty-six he had a life changing vision. He communed with angels and was given visions of the true nature of the universe. He was show Heaven, Hell, and introduced to many of the celestial inhabitants. He devoted the remainder of his life writing about angels and their unseen world. He did much to further mankind's understanding of the divine.

Unfortunately, as is the case with many visions, some of the interpretations Swedenborg

drew from them were faulty. He was convinced angels were merely children of clay who had died and, as he put it, "returned to the original source". In spite of this misconceptions, he was one of the first people to truly believe angels were flawed creatures and not beings of perfect goodness.

It is a shame that his works remain unknown by all but the most learned angelologists.

9.5 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Thomas Aquinas was born in Roccasecca, Italy in 1224 and became one of the preeminent philosophers and catholic theologians of his time.

Before entering the order of Dominicans at age twenty, Aquinas had received a master of arts degree from the University of Naples. He was sent to the University of Paris in 1252 to pursue advanced studies in theology. He remained in Paris to teach for seven years. The latter years of his life were spent back in Italy. He succumbed to a long illness and died in 1274.

Aquinas was a prolific writer and his works showed a rather eclectic approach to theology. Among his other interest was a fascination with angel. One of his most famous works is entitled, Summa Theologica. The work consists of three parts. In the first section, Aquinas concerns himself with the topics of creation, angels, and humanity. The second section is devoted to a study of virtue, vice, and grace. In the final section, Aquinas addresses the issue of Christ and the sacrament.

9.6 DIONYSIUS the AREOPAGITE

Often referred to as the Pseudo-Dionysius so as not to be confused with the philosopher of the same name who appears in the New Testament, this sixth century writer had one of the greatest impacts on angelogy. In his treatise, The Celestial Hierarchy, he describes the nine choirs of angels and how they relate to one another.

Though his revelations about the angelic world are downright astounding in their accuracy (and so must have been inspired by one of the divine creatures), Dionysius is not totally accurate in what he writes. It is his opinion that only the choirs of angels and archangels travel to Earth to help the children of clay. According to him the higher choirs spend all their time in Heaven. This is an erroneous statement. While angels and archangel (having the greatest numbers) are the most prolific in the material world, the other choirs often complete mission to help mortals.

9.7 JANNES and JAMBRES

These two Egyptians are often considered the two most powerful sorcerers to have ever existed. Near the end of their days, they decided to test their skills in the magical arts. With years of preparation and research, they adorned dozens of protective talismans and were able to transport themselves to the First Heaven.

Here they were greeted by a dozen angels anxious to expel them from the celestial world. The angels were not powerful enough to even slow down these two mighty Sorcerers. Their minor celestial forces proved useless against the two Egyptians.

Next they traveled through the corridor of the Second Heaven, and entered the realm of the Third Heaven where they drew the attention of greater celestials. Domination and Virtues confronted them. They demanded that the two intruders leave or face the wrath of the Almighty. Undaunted, the two children of clay continued on their journey not heeding these warnings. So the angels of the second triad called up all the forces they possessed and tried to eject them. But even the forces of this triad did little to cause the two intruders pause.

When they reached the fourth heaven, Michael and Gabriel were waiting. These two, among the strongest in all of Heaven, were determined to stop the sorcerers from reaching the Seventh Heaven and the throne of the Almighty. The battle was not easy. Both sides fought hard, but in the end it was the celestials that were forced to withdraw.

Upon entering the fifth heaven, the seraph Metatron, highest of all angels, greeted them. He did not approach them with hatred or aggression. Rather, he welcomed them and engaged them in conversation. No one is quite sure what Metatron's words were, and he has not revealed them to his brethren, but over the course of time he was able to get the two sorcerers to remove their talismans one at a time. When they were left sufficiently vulnerable, he ejected them from heaven with but a wave of his hand.

They fell to Earth, where their memories were wiped clean of the experience and of all knowledge for that matter. Jannes is known to have died shortly after this adventure, but the outcome of Jambres is uncertain. Undoubtedly he died, but history has no record of this event.

Milton was born in 1608. He was a well-learned man who had a flare for writing. Though his body of work is substantial, he is most remembered for his work *Paradise Lost*. In it he addresses all manner of celestial topics and concentrates heavily on the fall of Sammael.

Milton perceived many things about angels that turned out to be truths of the universe. Perhaps he was inspired by a ministering angel, or perhaps it was mere creativity that only accidentally stumbled upon the real order of things. In this piece, Milton saw the Seven Angels of Divine Grace, who he claimed were closest to God. He also wrote that angels were created before the existence of the world, an idea that diverged from the common religious thinking of the time. He was also keenly aware that angels were, though very intelligent, not omniscient. He also gave character to these angels, not making them mindless servants of God, but rather infusing them with a opinions and interpretations on the events that went on around them.

9.8 JOHN MILTON

