



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #2C:
Kindred Religions –
The Church of Caine

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Kindred Religions

“Every methuselah is capable of shepherding a flock of devotees, convincing them of miracles of the Blood, and forcing them to supplicate before an almighty leader. Every methuselah is a god just waiting to take on the title.”

— Shrug, Nosferatu Mistress of Cardiff

Undeath causes many a crisis of faith. The devout Christian might cease to believe in the sanctity of life and the forgiveness of God Almighty. The Muslim might fail to reconcile their own experience with the Qur’an’s teachings on death as a long night of sleep, where upon dying, the individual immediately discovers their destiny in heaven or hell. The Hindu waits for their atman to be reborn in a new body, only to find themselves locked in their own damned, unliving shell.

It is enough to drive one away from faith entirely, and yet, vampires discover new beliefs. There will always be great mysteries in the world, and faith has provided millions, perhaps billions of humans with answers, and comfort where there are no answers to be found.

Vampirism is a terrifying state in which to find oneself. It’s only natural that Kindred flock together to find meaning, purpose, and sometimes, salvation in communal struggle. Sometimes it comes in service to a higher power, other times it comes through examining the Beast within, and rarely, it leads to transcendence beyond a vampire’s base instincts.

The religions presented in this chapter all exist within the World of Darkness, with some as prominent vehicles of vampire faith, and others merely existing on the fringes of Kindred society. In your chronicle, these might act as backgrounds, support networks, the sources of powerful Mawlas, or the font from which to draw horrifying antagonists.

The Church of Caine

“It is time to revel in the truth of our condition. All Cainites must be taught. They must know their truth. For as they know themselves, you will know the Dark Father.”

— Arch Verger Alexi Farmer, Defender of the Immaculate Church of the Dark Father, Detroit

[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]

SoSL undead religions study. So-called “Church of Caine,” believed gnostic group. Meeting between undead titled “Cardinal” (name unknown), undead named “Pygram” sometimes titled “Deacon,” and undead named “Jehoshebah” (no title listed), no dialogue recorded, as her voice came through as static. Recorded with directional microphone by Father Glas in Miami, FL. Father Glas apologizes for interruptions to transcript based on moving vehicles and Jehoshebah static interference.

<1.22.19.24.32.51.63 RECORDING BEGINS>

Cardinal: —group will never amount to more than a heresy. It was purged once before.

Pygram: We won’t be purged again. The Cainites need faith now more than ever, and the old ways of your sect have failed them.

Cardinal: Is it arrogance that compels you to believe they would flock to your temple? Why would anyone so recently alive believe in Caine. Why would they believe themselves as angels? It’s a folly. Pygram, my friend, you can still join us in our crusade. There’s still time.

Pygram: I thought on it, your Eminence. I prayed on it.

Cardinal: And?

Pygram: Caine answered me. The Dark Father spoke in my daytime dreams and said the true heresy was within your church of cannibalism. That now was the time to accept our divinity and allow you to destroy yourselves as the Amalekites and Canaanites were judged and—

[Sounds of traffic eliminate nearly a minute of discussion at this point.]

Cardinal: —never seize the hearts and minds of Kindred, no matter whether you call yourself “Deacon.” Your prophecies hold no more weight than those of a preacher on a box, on the side of the road. You give yourself and your followers over to a lie, and for what? What’s your angle?

Pygram: Your use of the word “Kindred” shows me how far you’ve fallen. There is no angle but for salvation. Golconda. Recognition from Caine himself and elevation to his level. Caine was ordained with the rite of bloodshed because God wanted it that way. He is an angel and we are his cherubs.

[Pause lasting 25 seconds. Car pulls over.]

Cardinal: You will see yourself killed if you speak this way in any but the weakest Anarch domains.

[Car door opens and closes.]

Cardinal: Jehoshebah, I’m pleased you could join us. Please tell me Pygram does not speak for all of you.

Jehoshebah: [White noise for 11 seconds.]

Pygram: Your time is up. Go join your legions. Fight in your Battle of Ramoth-Gilead. When only the wounded remain, they will find our church waiting for them with open arms.

Jehoshebah: [White noise for 24 seconds.]

Cardinal: No. No, I will not join you. Vampires are not divine. We are not angels. I agree we are the dominant predator, but you use faith to justify your monstrosity, and I remember what happened the last time you tried to do so. Good luck in surviving this Inquisition.

[Car door opens and closes.]

Pygram: Remember doubting Thomas. We will show the Cardinal the truth of our faith and he will respond to direct personal experience. Or, he will never find his way to the cargo ship designated to take him to Morocco.

Jehoshebah: [White noise for 35 seconds.]

Pygram: Yes, a fine example.

[Car pulls away and outdistances our recording hardware.]

<RECORDING ENDS>

[/LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT ENDS]

The Heresy Falls

For over a thousand years, a vampire subsect of Gnostic Christianity operated within Cainite society. This group, known to some as the Crimson Curia, to others as the Church of Caine, and to their enemies as the Cainite Heresy, posited that Caine was God’s divine angel of

murder who had absorbed the soul of Christ, and that all vampires were his children and just as blessed. It was their divine mission to cull the weak, turn the living hell of the world into a heaven, dominate the Catholic Church, and usher in the Time of Caine, or third resurrection of Caine and Jesus, prophesized to arrive in the year 1239 CE.

The Cainite Heresy subverted the faith of mortals and vampires alike, its adherents believing themselves to be God's chosen predators. Most importantly for other vampires, their actions inside and outside the mortal Church drew the attention of the Catholic Inquisition as well as hunters from the ranks of the Muslims of Iberia. In a rare show of unity, imams sided with churchmen and put the torch to the Cainite Heresy before their Time of Caine could arrive. The parent clan of most of these "Gnostics" was the Lasombra, and along with vampires of the Banu Haqim and Clan Brujah they hunted down the remaining stragglers.

The Church of Caine reached its end close to the time when mortal Gnosticism was declared a heresy punishable by death. Just as the Catholic Church had no more patience for rival faiths within its own sphere, the Lasombra ran out of tolerance for the Church of Caine's increasingly aberrant views of Earth as hell, vampires as angels, and mortals as soulless cattle. Vampires who knew of the cult's denouement celebrated its fall, and those who campaigned against it worked hard to scrub the cult's name from the scant Cainite history books that recorded it.

The Heresy Rises

The idea of a Demiurge on high, responsible for all the evil in the world, alleviating of that responsibility the perpetrators of criminal acts, is a reassuring one to some. Vampires have a tendency to find excuses for their terrible acts, and when one can point elsewhere and say "He made me that way," it — at least in the mind of the vampire — helps absolve them of their sins. Not that the modern Church of Caine are truly looking for absolution.

The re-emergence of the Gnostics in the modern nights is a subject of great mystery and conjecture. Few Kindred recall the original Cainite Heresy, most being Beckoned, succumbing to the sleep of ages, or destroyed in the last eight centuries. While some believe the rising Gnostic tide must be at the beck and call of methuselahs who wisely slept instead of facing the torches of the Inquisition 800 years ago, the modern Church of Caine shows few of the hallmarks of a methuselah-led cult. They don't have a hierarchy based on age, they care little for lineage and clan, and their centralized power comes in the form of the renewed Crimson Curia — a council of priests — rather than a single, ancient figurehead.

Of course, the other conclusion is that Caine brought the Church back into being, though there's no evidence to show he was ever around to see the Church in its original form, let alone approve of its purpose or methods. The idea that this cult may exist in direct service to Caine is a thought that undoubtedly troubles many Kindred, however, and leads a surprising number to join its ranks just to err on the side of caution. If the Dark Father *is* real, awake, and leading a sizable cult, better to be on his side.

What is known, is the Church of Caine has leaked out of the darkness again, with its words, beliefs, and practices becoming visible for the first time in centuries following the Beckoning's commencement. The Church claims Caine himself calls his errant childer to fill his long-empty veins, and only the Church will be saved. Caine is the face, voice, and mind of the Demiurge in this hell on Earth, and he will not be denied. His angels will ascend with him once the rest of the world accepts their place as the meek and the fallen. Until then, his will be done.

Hell on Earth

The Church of Caine has long held the view that the world is divided into many planes of existence, with the Demiurge above all, and his angels governing the ranks of the unknowing. At each level of awareness, an individual grows closer to becoming an angel themselves, but these levels go down as well as up, and the farther down one descends, the closer they come to being damned forever.

This view may seem incompatible in a modern world, but to vampires of the Church, and mortals who believe themselves more enlightened — through intellect, influence, money, or even charm — it's a rational view. It's a class society imposed by a supreme power, and it makes sense to an amoral mindset. The Church of Caine for instance believes that while the Demiurge is all-seeing and all-knowing, he sends a representative (sometimes more than one) to Earth to mete out his will. Specifically, the Church posits, this representative is Caine, though infamous vampires such as Sutekh and Mithras may have been his angels as well, and Lilith certainly fits the mold of an angel who couldn't help but abuse her power and fall. The Antediluvians were likewise angels, but fought Caine's children and therefore fell from grace. They still deserve punishment for this. Likewise, humans with proficiency in angelic arts — whom the Tremere call mages — are of greater importance and value than the sleeping kine.

Earth is not a median point in this cosmic theory. Earth is hell, and receiving the Embrace is a step toward escaping that hell. All worlds layer on top of each other, so it is possible to exist in heaven and hell at the same time, but divine right grants one resilience against hell's slings and arrows. At least, that's the Church of Caine's theory behind Disciplines such as Fortitude, and their reasoning for why all their powers are symbolic of the type a god might use against a mere mortal.

Sublimating Divinity into Society

Gnostics have forged never-before-seen paths into the Ivory Tower and the rekindled Anarch Movement. Their gospel celebrating the vampiric condition has seldom been heard within these sects. This message is surprisingly accepted, if not enjoyed, by the "Kindred," who wish to come to some deeper sense of understanding of their damnation. Some Camarilla domains have received word from one Justicar — Juliet Parr of Clan Malkavian — that they are not to oppose this new missionary work. The running theory among some Kindred is that Parr belongs to the Heresy, or one of her ancestors did and now speaks with her through the Blood, but equally likely is that Parr wants no internal conflict while the Inquisition is watching. The absence of the Sabbat helps the Camarilla and Anarch Movements greatly, so why start a new war when these priests aren't striking out with anything but words?

The Church of Caine's belief system is unlike most widespread mortal religions of these nights, so their dogma is one rarely delivered in full to vampires of any sect, at least not until vampires have shown willingness and acceptance of the Gnostic reality. To start, most Gnostics introduce their belief that Caine was chosen by God and all vampires are likewise blessed children, uplifted to the role of divine predators. This is a belief many vampires can understand, as most know the story of Caine and Abel and most realize they possess more power than when they were mortal. Tales of layered planes of reality, vampires as angels of murder, all beings as spirits trapped in a liminal state, and Earth being equivalent to hell tend to follow much later.

The Gnostics find themselves occupying an unexpected role within Cainite society. While they themselves rarely use the term "Golconda," Kindred who know of the legendary state of being see the way Gnostics believe in ascension and divinity, and the peace with which they

hold their faith, and wonder if this cult is the key to Golconda. For its part, the Church of Caine makes no promises that a follower will achieve a state where they “lose their curse,” as its doctrine is adamant vampires aren’t cursed, but blessed. That blessing may grow as a vampire acquires wisdom and strength, and that may be what others call Golconda, but to tell a Gnostic they’re cursed by God is a good way to earn an adversary.

Ad Limina

Despite its recent appearance, the Church of Caine draws vampires as old as ancillae, with at least one elder serving as a member of the modern Crimson Curia. Something of the cult draws vampires in, whether through talk of Caine, reassurance that their state as vampires is not unclean or damned, or because of the hope for ascendancy from hell once the Time of Caine arrives again. According to the Crimson Curia’s prophecies, that time will come soon, having been forestalled from the previous appointed time in 1239 CE. They claim Caine arose and found his church absent, and so in great sorrow destroyed the boundary between worlds and fell into a deep slumber. Kindred scholars wonder at what boundary this story relates to, whether geographical — as the appointed time was close to that of the Mongol Invasion into Europe — or spiritual, annihilating a layer between hell and heaven, or bringing the deepest level of hell closer to the surface. The tale is likely apocryphal, but vampires in cults make for dedicated theologians.

The Church’s outward confidence aside, many new converts to the faith exist in constant fear of the Sabbath bringing forth all its fury down upon them. They worry the sect will return from its crusade stronger, having devoured a flock of angels, and will visit the same wrath on the Gnostics that the Inquisition and traitor clans did eight centuries ago. The Church amasses lore to defend itself and reaches out for allies within the Cainite populace. Their current catechism is of unity, “compassion,” and conversion, reaching out to those less fortunate and providing what help they can give. This religious instruction coincides with Gnostic teachings and revealing of the truth, wherein all vampires are Cainites, those of Caine, and his blessed children.

The Lasombra defection to the Camarilla poses an interesting conundrum for the Church, as while the Cainite Heresy of old mostly consisted of Lasombra, it was other Lasombra who directed the faith’s purge. For now, the few vampires who recall these details — most of whom are Lasombra anyway, or were told the stories of the Cainite Heresy by older Magisters — prepare for the Night Clan to once again visit destruction or manipulation on their order. Old habits die hard and they expect many Lasombra will assume the church is theirs to wield or crush as it once was before. The Church is content to provide guidance to most Kindred, but treads warily around the Night Clan at this time.

The reconstructed Church of Caine aims to rebuild an official magisterium, a codified scripture, review and revise their holy sacraments, and write canon law that will be both easily disseminated and protect the congregations. Then there is the defense of the new Holy Cainite Empire in Heaven, which may not exist in any meaningful way as yet, but will soon if the Crimson Curia’s plans come to fruition. With the Second Inquisition’s control over most forms of travel, the Church struggles to find a way to build all the answers needed to finish these tasks. The faith’s parishes have been content with building their own local traditions and denominations, all with a different dogma, creating a tapestry of faith much more diverse than previously expected.

This is a time of new freedoms, an age of enlightenment constructing a marketplace of ideas for Cainites to partake in and defend. Some Gnostics appreciate this freedom, others fear the heresies that will inevitably spring up to challenge the new order. Some churches have

already begun venerating the Second Generation as saints or bodhisattvas of the higher Cainite pantheon. These parishes are rare though, as above all things, Caine is mighty and glorious. There are even rumors of parishes who venerate both Caine and Lilith, though the Bahari are still perceived as vile enemies to most Cainites and burned out as the heresy they are.

Church Hierarchy

The Church of Caine upholds a hierarchy resembling a blend of the Medieval Catholic Church, modern Gnostic churches, and even the Eastern Orthodox Church. To the cynical vampire, the church hierarchy structure is just a means to exert control and has little bearing on the spiritual significance of the vampire holding the rank of “deacon” or “bishop,” but curiously, the modern Church of Caine eschews the idea that only the eldest may hold the most important roles. This vampire religion rewards merit, which may come to fracture the organization when elders refuse to shift from their long-held roles.

Congregation / The Flock

The bulk of vampires who consider themselves faithful Gnostics, Cainites, or simply believers, are referred to as “the congregation” or “the flock.” Individual vampires at this level believe in Caine as the progenitor and uphold the belief that they are divinely mandated as predators. Despite the latter belief, the congregation are far from uncontrollable monsters. Their superiors in the Church teach Gnostics how to unleash their Beast, how to satisfy the urge to frenzy, and how best to retain one’s Humanity while accepting the nature of an undead blood-drinker. Members of the flock are permitted to hear the cult’s liturgy but cannot witness the sacraments.

Doorkeepers

The ancient role of doorkeeper was assigned to churches to prevent their persecution by other faiths, opposing societies and governments, and sabotage from unhappy citizens. This guard role exists to this night, with those vampires more disposed to violence (whether doling it out or preventing it) more likely assigned this title than one responsible for administering the faith. Doorkeepers are more than hired muscle, as they’re expected to still attend services and participate in the sacraments, but they are also the first vampires opponents of the Church will see, if threats or delivery of violence is required.

Doorkeepers tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•).

Acolytes

Acolytes of the Church of Caine are responsible for several duties, including arranging safe venues for Gnostics to meet, ensuring priests are equipped with the tools and apparel needed to perform their ministerial duties, and hunting down artifacts important to the Church. This varied role is commonly the first title a vampire earns upon formally joining the Church of Caine, with each acolyte having performed at least one firewalk (see p. XX). Acolytes often act as audiences to encourage or cajole others participating in the sacraments.

Acolytes tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•).

Vergers

The verger is a vampire who wanders from domain to domain teaching others of the liturgy, the Demiurge, and Caine, in the most non-controversial terms. These roving preachers vary in importance from nominal Gnostic mouthpieces to cult leaders building larger and larger followings. The most notorious vergers are known as arch vergers. They hold no influence over the Church of Caine’s formal hierarchy, but in this era when the Second Inquisition

scrutinize cult-like behavior and strange reports of priests administering blood to their congregations, the merits of being a traveling holy person sometimes outweigh those of being a leader with a static flock.

Vergers tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•) and at least one dot of Streetwise.

Lectors

Lectors act as readers during church services. The role is largely honorific, as when not performing for the flock, they occupy the same standing as acolytes. The major difference is in the confidence given to a lector, as a priest or deacon speaks with them on matters of faith and expects the lector to read from the texts important to the Church of Caine with earnest belief and understanding.

Lectors tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (••) and rarely have fewer than two dots in Occult, with a Specialty in Gnosticism.

Deacons

Deacons hold administrative power in the Church of Caine. While they might stand in for a priest to perform services, it's more likely the deacons busy themselves with upholding the financial, bureaucratic, and personnel end of the Church. This sounds mundane, but the power deacons wield over the channeling of wealth in and out of the Church, and the prestige awarded to members of the flock and the acolytes beneath them, is impressive. Deacons are effectively the Harpies of the Church of Caine. In terms of reporting, deacons bypass priests and report to the bishops and Crimson Curia itself. Gnostics cannot become priests of Caine before they have held the title of deacon.

Deacons generally hold Status: Church of Caine (••) and rarely have fewer than two dots in Politics or Finance.

Priests / Church Leaders

Responsible for overseeing the sacraments, administering Church doctrine, and keeping the faithful community whole and growing, there are few roles within the Church of Caine so visible and so immediately influential as that of the priest. Priests might read from ancient religious texts verbatim, schooling their flock on the word of Caine, or they might lead a congregation with their own interpretation of Caine's will. Priests carry enough power in their words and actions to form schisms without knowing it, and for that reason their actions remain closely observed by deacons who report priest behavior to the bishops, while priests report on flock behavior to those same bishops. Every city with a contingent from the Church of Caine must have a priest, even if that requires bringing a priest in from a separate domain. Without a vampire who knows the rites and dogma, there is no Church.

Priests hold Status: Church of Caine (•••) or higher, and each has at least three dots in Occult, with a Specialty in Gnosticism, or sometimes, Catholicism. Most have some proficiency in the Presence Discipline.

Bishops

The Church of Caine's bishops — of which a select few form the Crimson Curia — are responsible for keeping the entire order together, furthering the Dark Father's agenda (such as they interpret it), creating new sacraments, interpreting ancient texts and myths, and acting as spiritual centers when domains run the risk of falling due to priestly absence or failures (though they often delegate this role to powerful deacons). Bishops possess the ability to order sweeping changes across the faith, though before any major decisions are made they

must form a conclave of at least nine vampires from the Church of Caine, five or more of whom must be at the bishop or deacon rank.

Bishops tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (••••) and possess at least four dots in Occult and three in Politics. Most hold proficiency in Auspex, so they can glean deep insights into the priests and deacons beneath them.

The Metropolitan

There is no metropolitan in the Church of Caine, though if there were one, it would be Caine or a vampire who could believably channel his will and direction. The Church of Caine is growing swiftly enough to warrant the appointment of a proxy metropolitan in the next few years, just due to the benefit of having a strong autocrat in charge of such an organization, though the Crimson Curia may overrule any such appointment. Most bishops agree a metropolitan is a necessity for some night in the future, but few are prepared to nominate an untested vampire. They wish to avoid electing a metropolitan, only to see them suffer the Beckoning or suddenly become a target for the Second Inquisition, and so the bishops for now have agreed the Crimson Curia is sufficient, until a suitable candidate reveals himself.

The theoretical metropolitan of the Church of Caine holds Status: Church of Caine (•••••).

Church Dogma

At its core, the Church of Caine believes it is a vampire's destiny for the Demiurge to select them, make them as holy as Caine, and take them to his right side. To achieve this requires controlling one's Beast, not to become a pacifist or vegan, but to gain the ability to let it off the leash in a measured manner. The most successful predators in the world are not those that mindlessly savage in a whirlwind, but those who stalk, hunt, kill, and devour, leaving just enough bones to make their presence known.

The Church preaches the words of Caine as recorded by experts and seers of the Crimson Curia, and their belief in Kindred as blessed. Their faith is one of trial and victory, in which vampires must prove they're worthy of the love of the Demiurge and of Caine, and when the time comes — and it will come soon, the Crimson Curia says — they must be there to see and assist in the third rising of angels, sometimes called “the resurrection,” otherwise known as the “Time of Caine.”

The belief that the world is a layered hell with strata of deserving and undeserving individuals, some of whom are being punished for sins they committed eons ago, before they came to possess their current forms, is one all the Church priests come to understand and believe in. As soon as a Gnostic accepts this reality, it makes feeding and killing a lot easier. The moral damage can be severe, but the detachment from the basic human perception of Earth brings one to a new state of enlightenment.

To ascend toward heaven, the cult maintains a vampire must be capable of overcoming their fear of hell's weapons. The Church of Caine do not believe the Demiurge made vampires vulnerable to fire, but rather, this burden is a holdover from their time among hell's denizens. After all, are mortals not harmed by fire too? They reason Caine must be immune to this element by now, so they must attempt to be the same way, and so the Church preaches that Gnostics must defeat the fire by staring at it, handling it, and walking through it. The same will apply to sunlight, when a Gnostic is powerful enough.

Arguably the most controversial of the cult's beliefs is in diablerie as a necessary sacrament. If the Crimson Curia deem a vampire unworthy of their layer in the hierarchy between heaven and hell — usually due to some grievous crime committed against the Church, in the name of Caine, or because they're a vocal, influential proponent of another faith — the Curia

advocates for their diablerie. The Gnostics believe all spirits exist in a cycle and just reform on a lower level when their flesh vessel is destroyed. The only way to prevent this is through the divine act of devouring the soul. While practiced rarely, it is not forbidden, nor is it withheld for any reason other than appearances. The Church of Caine has not yet gained sufficient allies to make diablerie an acceptable ritual in Camarilla and Anarch domains, but they're biding their time.

Gnostic Convictions

Gnostics often adopt the following Convictions to help them maintain their sense of self while pursuing their faithful existence:

- **Never unwillingly allow the Beast to take over**

Exercising restraint by never succumbing to the extremes of behavior is vital to becoming a renowned vampire in the Church of Caine. Wild, uncontrollable animals find the entire jungle working against them, whereas cool, calculating predators find their stomachs full and their presence unnoticed.

- **Never succumb to fear**

Willpower is all-important to these vampires, who believe that in order to emulate (or even surpass) Caine, one must harden one's mind against hell's weaponry. Gnostics are expected to sample a snatch of sunlight, walk through fire, and adorn themselves with holy symbols, just to show their defiance and power.

- **Let nobody prevent you from growing closer to Caine**

This Conviction can be interpreted in multiple ways, but generally refers to the cult's desire to build its knowledge of Caine and of the Church's predecessors from the first millennium. Other Gnostics with this Conviction believe any attempt to interfere with cult sacraments is to be punished, and frenzy if someone tries to stop their actions.

- **Feed only from hell's denizens**

All Gnostics agree some mortals are more worthy than others, and depending on the domain, may have selected some strata of mortal society to exempt from hunting. They believe all others are beings in hell, and there to sate the hungers and whims of angels above them. Some Gnostics might use this as justification to commit diablerie, if a vampire has fallen far enough from Caine's grace.

- **Do not consort with the lowest beings of hell**

The Church of Caine believes strongly that all vampires are angels or blessed, and spending time in the company of devils is a fine way to make oneself fall. Many Gnostics cut away unnecessary mortal ties that might inhibit them from progression within the Church.

- **Never brook an insult to Caine's divinity**

This Conviction leads to more conflicts than probably any other, but is fundamental to the Church of Caine's beliefs: Caine is divine, he is the Dark Father of all vampires, and he is to be revered. Any who doubt that should receive correction and education. Any who insult that should receive punishment. Caine is the angel of murder and hunting, and the Church will not hear him be referred to as some common murderer.

Sacraments

While it is true the parish structure of the cult allows for disparities in the way liturgy is delivered and how Caine's role in the world is described, there are certain defined sacraments universal to all members. While many of these are being revised and blended together currently, these sacraments are propagated as universal gifts of the Dark Father.

Those Cainites who hold the titles of priest or verger generally teach these rites to the flock. These vampires are protectors and defenders of the gospel of the Dark Father. Part preacher and part templar, these vampires act as a communiqué between the parishes, delivering letters and artifacts between church leaders, and helping to develop sacraments and canon law.

The Sacrament of Valediction

When initiated into the Church of Caine, a Cainite focuses upon leaving one's previous life and accepting the state of being of a vampire. In modern nights, the Church of Caine performs this rite as a symbolic act, but one filled with terror nonetheless.

A dedicant of the Church must openly name and describe one fear they held within their mortal lives or recent vampire existence and explain how they plan to go about ridding themselves of it. Only by witnessing their lack of fear can they be fully initiated into the Church by sacrament, usually with a drop of blood or vitae upon the new member's forehead. Every member of a parish must take part in this rite, and even older members routinely rededicate themselves to Caine by participating in this sacrament, to show to the congregation their deeper ecclesiastical understanding of the Gnostic mysteries.

System: The vampire must name one of their fears and allow other members of the cult to expose them to it. The vampire's player must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 5) or succumb to a terror frenzy the other members of the congregation will allow. Once the frenzy is overcome or the fear withstood, the vampire regains a point of Willpower (if any have been lost) and when facing this fear the next time, may reduce the Difficulty by 1. Vampires may attempt to lie about their fear to complete the sacrament, but doing so conveys no benefit and requires a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll against the church leader's Wits + Insight.

The Sacrament of Exculpation

Once referred to as a "Sermon of Caine," this rite sees members of the congregation invoking the flaws of their bloodline while quoting stories or passages from the *Book of Nod*. The participants need to present how their quotations can help Cainites in their present situation. The sacrament invites vigorous discourse and the possibility of social conflicts and resolutions, as the practicing theologians debate the modern merits of the *Book of Nod*. The debates are often used to show the folly of vampires closer to hell or to highlight wisdom found in angelic Caine's words.

Demonstrating a clan bane differs from vampire to vampire, but for a Nosferatu it might mean participating in sacrament rite with no disguise in place, or for a Hecata they would need to feed from a vessel in front of the other practitioners, despite the anguish caused. Some vampires find their banes harder to invoke than others, but for those who have truly situational curses, they are free to just discuss the problems and fears they possess surrounding their weaknesses, and how these weaknesses keep them locked in hell.

Enlightenment gleaned from this sacrament comes through self-awareness, as when the participants discuss and demonstrate their respective clan banes and Caine's verses, they accept themselves for what they are and find hope in their ancestor's words. Vampires who participate openly in this sacrament always feel refreshed and reinvigorated upon its conclusion.

System: The test involving the clan bane differs depending on the participants' clans. When demonstrating a clan bane or confessing to a way in which the bane has severely impeded them, the vampire's player makes a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 3), with a successful roll granting the vampire a temporary dot of Humanity (providing they don't exceed a rating of 10) that disappears at the end of the chapter. Failing at this roll results in 1 Superficial Willpower damage.

The Sacrament of Firewalking

One of the most emblematic sacrament of the Church of Caine sees them walking through fires of varying size and ferocity to demonstrate how they have risen above the weaknesses of hell's creatures. Different branches of the Church argue the ultimate purpose of such a potentially destructive sacrament, and whether it's in fact an insult to Caine and the Demiurge to test one's curses in such a way, but as a measure of a vampire's will few sacraments compete.

The Church of Caine typically makes its newest adherents walk down a narrow corridor of lit candles or lamps, surrounding them with several minor sources of fire. The fires increase with the prestige of the vampire. When attempting to achieve title in the Church, or following another great act for which the vampire desires acclaim, a firewalk takes place as a way of punctuating the vampire's worthiness. The fires in such tests are often long pathways of burning coals or recently broken up burning bonfires or haybales. To become a verger or other church leader a vampire must successfully pass through a roaring fire without succumbing to fear, maybe in the form of walking through a standing bonfire, or perhaps having to traverse an obstacle course of burning tires and rooms — the sacraments depend as much on the sadism of the priest in charge as they do the beliefs of the congregation.

In all cases, physical injury is expected. Vampires with Fortitude resist harm more easily than other participants, but the physical scars are less important than the vampire's ability to withstand the fear. If they are able to pass through the fire without hesitating or frenzying, the vampire feels completely in control of their Beast.

System: To pass through any of the trials of flame requires a roll to resist terror frenzy (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 220) and exposure to fire damage (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 221). Successfully completing a firewalk heals all Superficial Willpower damage, and if the walk was through particularly dangerous fire, between 1 and 3 points of Aggravated Willpower damage. The harder the trial, the more likely the Storyteller will reward the character with a dot of Status: Church of Caine, which can then be purchased with experience, or disappears at the end of the chapter.

Cainite Dominion: St. Louis

St. Louis has always been a contentious domain, swinging from one sect to the next as wars raged between Kindred interests. These nights, the battlefield has changed. Street crime is down, reports of supernatural activity have dried up — at least as far as FIRSTLIGHT are concerned — and the Sabbat have, as with most American cities, moved on. The war for St. Louis now is for its soul, and the souls of the vampires within it. Presently, the warring cults are evenly contested, but rumor holds that influential vampires from within the Camarilla support the Church of Caine in the Gateway to the West.

The Gnostics in St. Louis have adopted a stance of aggressive Caine reverence, leaning into the evangelical. They display the results of their faith in secret ceremonies and displays for other Kindred, manipulating flame and showing no fear of fire like carnival freaks looking to impress a crowd. They show reverence for the city's elders, its remaining Primogen, and the fallen Prince, just due to these vampires' age. They claim that proximity to Caine brings a

vampire closer to heaven and thus, farther from the hell fledglings inhabit, making the Gnostics ready servants of the Camarilla's hierarchy. The cult routinely meets with notable Camarilla vampires in Busch Stadium or Six Flags St. Louis, in the belief that ostentatious displays of mortal hubris and wealth at once humble the undead while simultaneously reminding them of the arrogant hell in which they reside.

Crucially, St. Louis' Gnostics turned the tide of Kindred opinion in favor of the controversially brutal Chief Inspector (the Lou's version of a Sheriff, who has weathered the sectarian storms) further to his diablerie of three Masquerade-breakers. Though Chief Inspector Oubier's punishment of these three vampires was unorthodox and inhumane, tantamount to cannibalism in most domains, the Gnostics acted as bodyguards to the vicious Malkavian and extolled his actions as the will of Caine and in the best interests of the domain. They successfully persuaded the city's Anarchs that without Oubier's brutality, the city would have been the next target on the Second Inquisition's list, thereby slumping even farther into hell. What the Church of Caine actually wants with a deranged killer like Oubier is unknown outside the cult. The Gnostics know, however, that he is of significant blood potency and generation, and will make for an adequate figure of worship, before becoming a martyr, a saint, and an icon for the Church and city. The cult is adept at spinning horrifying acts into gripping parables, and intends to do the same with the "passions" of Oubier.

St. Louis' Church of Caine are far from unassailable. The city contains plentiful rival cultists from among the Bahari, Mithraists, and even a couple of Nephilim. Each wants a chance to steer the city through its period of conflict and come out as the primary power player. Where the Gnostics differ, is in their lack of desire to rule. The cult genuinely wants to pull the city from hell and into heaven, even if that requires the sacrifice of every vampire who opposes their view of Caine and codified laws for hunting and herding the kine, to remind them of their place at the bottom of the food chain. They're not going to appoint a Prince to rule the domain, nor are they going to try running a theocracy, instead believing that spiritual dominion over St. Louis is more than sufficient.

The Gnostics in the Gateway City have adopted a formal structure around Bishop Jehoshebah, who makes her haven in the abandoned Eastern State Penitentiary with several of her Gnostic kin. A Lasombra who claims to be a member of the original Church of Caine, Jehoshebah says she voluntarily adopted a torpid state in the 13th century CE. Though few know if her words are true, she carries a body of impressive, believable tales, and regularly demonstrates her command over the Blood to cow Gnostics and unbelievers alike. She claims the Beckoning has no effect on her because she communes directly with Caine. Supposedly, he intervenes in the summons while she has work to do in the Americas. In truth, her Cainite generation is far from what one might expect of a near-900 year old vampire, but she speaks with enough conviction to convince others of her power.

Around Bishop Jehoshebah and the upcoming martyr Oubier, the cult commands six vampires — a mixture of priests and deacons — to handle different aspects of the city, each acting as a go-between for the Church and the Camarilla, Anarchs, kine, and other cults, respectively. Some take a militant stance and employ coterie of doorkeepers to protect them as they spread the Gnostic word, while others tread softly, such as with the city's Camarilla Kindred, offering spiritual advice and "evidence" of their progress on the journey to Golconda, all to win converts and turn the Gateway to the West into a heavenly domain, at least by Gnostic standards.

Perspectives

Anarchs: *A surprising fertile ground to till for worship, though the Ministry have their hooks in with talk of spiritual liberty. I believe we could do wonders with this sect, however, if we could convince prominent Barons to accept their roles as Caine's appointed descendants and leaders of Cainites.*

Bahari: *At least they don't have the temerity to refer to Lilith as an angel. She was, but no longer. She fell just like the Antediluvians fell, and just like all of hell's creatures fell. They are misguided, and I feel they should be the last cult we attempt to save. They need to learn to suffer.*

Camarilla: *Just two decades ago I would have balked at the idea of working within the Camarilla, but just as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (among countless other religions) have undergone spates of persecution (some longer than others), we are in a period of quiet worship and the Camarilla is the best-placed sect for such. We offer them our support and influence within mortal religious bodies, they offer us their protection.*

Church of Set: *Are they a clan or a religious order? How can one be Embraced into a belief system? While I understand the idea of baptism and indoctrination from birth (or the Embrace, in our case), their entire structure seems more based on brainwashing than actual faith. That, and so many other reasons, puts us at odds with this cult.*

Servitors of Irad: *We would know more of this fellowship. Few cults rise to worship Caine's first childer, so it begs the question whether they know more of the Demiurge's chosen than most other, non-Gnostic Kindred..*

New Rituals

The Lure of Flames is the thaumaturgical embodiment of victory over fear. Pioneered by vampires of Clan Tremere, the Church of Caine heavily utilizes these powers as part of their sacraments and their arsenal against enemies of the faith. It is both a way to protect oneself from the bane of fire and a weapon used to instill both injury and terror in the enemy.

This form of Blood Sorcery exists in the form of Rituals, with the rolls required detailed on p. 275 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, unless noted otherwise.

Level 1

Dampen the Fear

This Ritual allows the caster to briefly douse their natural vampiric fear of fire.

- **Ingredients:** A holy object, such as a crucifix, bible, or Qur'an.
- **Process:** The vampire must burn the holy symbol before walking into, past, or otherwise interacting with fire. The object does not need to be destroyed, just exposed to the fire.
- **System:** A successful Ritual roll following the burning of the holy object grants the character +2 dice on all rolls relating to resisting Rötschreck. A critical win results in the character needing to make no terror frenzy rolls at all. The power wears off once the scene ends.

Level 3

Fire in the Blood

This Ritual allows a vampire to invoke the anguish of fire in a victim's blood. Blistering heat emerges from the target's veins and causes intense pain. The power from this Ritual differs

from Cauldron of Blood (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 274) in that it is usable from a distance and an efficient way to incapacitate rather than kill the victim.

- **Ingredients:** A sample of the target's blood, a visual depiction of the target such as a photo, painting, or video recording, a candle made from red wax or a lighter made of iron.
- **Process:** The vampire concentrates on the visual depiction of their target (which can be the individual in person) and burns the target's blood sample, usually held in a petri dish, glass bottle, or vial, over the flame. The effect occurs almost immediately, as the victim's blood heats up in their veins.
- **System:** The player makes a Ritual roll following the incantation versus the target's Resolve + Occult (adding Fortitude, if the target is a creature with this Discipline). The number of successes achieved are converted into Superficial Health damage that also inflict wracking pain upon the victim, forcing them to incur a -2 dice penalty to all actions taken for the remainder of the scene. On a critical win, the dice penalty increases to -3. A Kindred target must make a Rouse Check due to the damage to their vitae.

Level 4

Creatio Ignis

The caster of this Ritual engulfs their own limbs in flames born from vitae and can set items and people alight using the fire. This Ritual is a phenomenal breach of the Masquerade as the power is entirely visible and can cause intense environmental feedback.

- **Ingredients:** Sufficient vitae (from any vampire) to coat the caster's arms up to the elbows.
- **Process:** The vampire immerses their arms in the blood and withholds the urge to feed or frenzy. After extracting their arms, the caster concentrates and the vitae on their arms bursts into flame. The vampire can then go on to set targets alight using the fire on their skin.
- **System:** If the user is at Hunger 4 or more, make a hunger frenzy test at Difficulty 3 when they attempt to immerse their arms in vitae. Following that, they make a Ritual roll and two Rouse Checks instead of the usual single check for a Ritual. Success creates flames on the vampire's hands and arms (technically it can cover more of the vampire if the vampire used more vitae for the Ritual). Touching a victim with these burning hands inflicts one Aggravated Health damage per turn, and if their clothing ignites, the damage grows on subsequent turns. If the vampire grapples a victim, the damage increases to two Aggravated Health damage per turn, or more if more of the vampire's body is engulfed as part of this Ritual setup. A critical win on this Ritual roll allows the vampire to flick fire from their fingertips, allowing them to start fires a short distance away. The burning stops when the caster wills it or when the scene ends.