

ROAD OF HEAVEN

VIA CAELI

The Damned know they are cursed by God, and many of them curse God in return. But others accept the burden the Lord has placed upon them and seek to find purpose in it. These Faithful know that everything is a part of God's plan, even the Children of Caine. Followers of the Road of Heaven devote themselves to understanding that purpose. The answers to the question, "Why has God done this to me?" lead to the many divergent paths of this road. Like the mortal Church, the Road of Heaven is given to schisms, sects and heresies.

The road as a whole is built upon the belief that God is testing the so-called Faithful, just as he tested Abraham and Job to strengthen their faith. There is a heavy burden, but they bear it gladly, because it is the crucible in which their faith is purified and made holy before God. Many Faithful are drawn to various Gnostic heresies that claim that the material world is Hell, a belief that fits well with the Cainite condition of damnation among the living. Others tie themselves to more



orthodox Western and Eastern Christian teachings and seek salvation in the rejection of truly undying temptation. They all agree that a heavenly reward is not unattainable, although it is far harder for the Damned to achieve than the living. God does not withdraw His grace from sinners.

Among all of the many sects of the Road of Heaven, the voice of the Beast is that of Satan, the great tempter, seeking to lure the Faithful away from righteousness and into sin. They shun all servants of evil, such as devil-worshippers, demons and followers of the Road of Sin. The Faithful continue to carry out the sacraments of the Church even in their unliving existence, and ashén priests are the most common on the Road of Heaven. Followers gather in small congregations to worship, guided by their priests. Some support the mortal Church while others reject the Church in favor of their own heretical beliefs.

The Faithful are found throughout Christendom and beyond. Those in the East often follow Muslim ways, and there are Jews and even pagans on the Road of Heaven as well. Monasteries are particular havens for the Faithful, isolated from the outside world and permitting them a measure of solitude (and a mortal herd to feed on). Outwardly, most of the Faithful appear no different than the mortals with whom they sometimes mix, save for a fanatical gleam in the eyes and the air of holiness that surrounds them.

The various paths play a much greater role in the Road of Heaven than paths do in most others vampiric beliefs. Among the Faithful, these paths form large and sometimes overtly organized religious movements. The adherents of the Paths of Penitence and Retribution often worship alongside other Faithful, but they emphasize different points of theology. The former believe that unlife is a penance they must endure in order to purify themselves and prove their worthiness to God. Many of the penitent take vows of charity and poverty, seeking the Lord's forgiveness, and they feed only on the thin and bitter vitae of animals rather than humans. Those on the Path of Retribution, meanwhile, see themselves as instruments of God's vengeance against the sinful and the wicked — living and unliving alike. They hope to win back God's favor by acting in His name and rooting out evil.

Much more contentious, however, is the schismatic belief that Cainites are not cursed, but favored by God. These heretics say they are set above mortal men, with great powers at their command, like the saints or even the Heavenly Host. The Cainite Heresy (see p. 46) arose from their beliefs, along with other heretical cults and sects that worship vampires as saints, angels or gods themselves. The Heresy's bishops are very often in conflict with other ashén priests of the road.

Sobriquet: The Faithful

The Ethics of Heaven:

- God laid His mark upon Caine and his childer as part of His great plan.
- The word of God is law. Defiance of God is sin that leads to damnation.
- No one is above God's law.
- Love and serve God in all things.

- Deny the Devil through denial of the Beast and all creatures of Hell.

Initiation: Many who come to the Road of Heaven were believers in life, particularly clergy and crusaders sworn to the cross. Others find God after their Embrace, seeking meaning in their unliving existence, and these converts are among the most zealous. Initiation onto the Road of Heaven is much like a Church confirmation or baptism. The initiate swears before a priest and God's altar to renounce Satan and his works on Earth and to honor the will of God. The specific trappings and rites vary depending on the sect. Crusaders additionally swear to battle the forces of Hell, while heretics twist the sacraments to glorify themselves as the chosen of God.

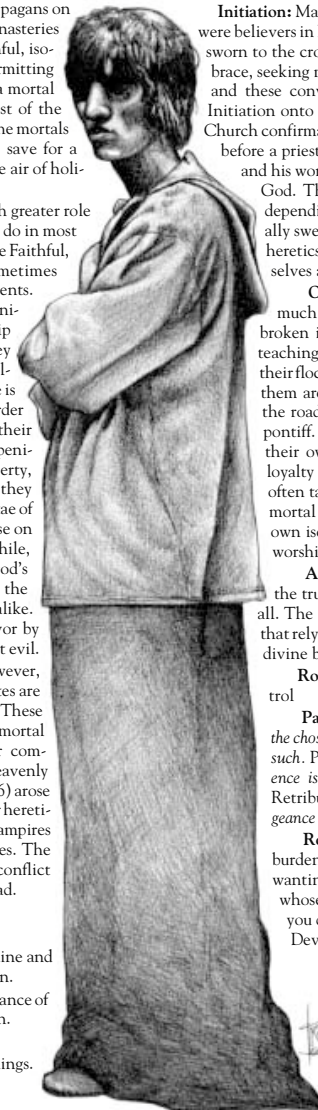
Organization: The Faithful organize much like the mortal Church, but they are broken into even more disparate sects and teachings. Ashén priests see to the needs of their flocks and perform the sacraments. Over them are the various abbots and bishops of the road. The road has not chosen a single pontiff. Several elders claim that title for their own sect, but they do not have the loyalty of all of the Faithful. The Faithful often take to the monastic life, influencing mortal monasteries or even creating their own isolated communities where they can worship and serve God in their own way.

Aura: Holiness. The righteousness of the true servants of Heaven is apparent to all. The aura modifier applies to Social rolls that rely on the vampire's image as a holy and divine being.

Road Virtues: Conscience, Self-Control

Paths: Path of Divinity: *You are among the chosen of God and should be worshipped as such.* Path of Penitence: *Your damned existence is punishment for your sins.* Path of Retribution: *You are God's angel of vengeance and scourge of the wicked and sinful.*

Roleplaying Tips: God has laid a heavy burden upon you, but you shall not be found wanting. You are among the truly devout, whose faith is tested and made strong. If you deny the Beast within you, deny the Devil and all his works and remain steadfast in your faith, you will be rewarded. You do not always understand the reasons for your suffering, but God works in mysterious ways. You do not need to understand, only to believe.



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST HEAVEN

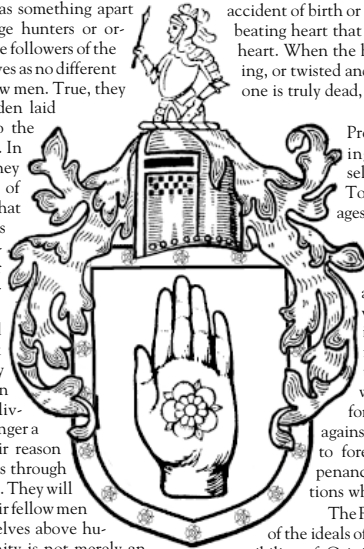
Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Violating any of the Ten Commandments, for any reason	God's word is law.
9	Failing to speak out against corruption and sin	All the Devil requires is for the faithful to do nothing.
8	Acting out of pride, avarice, gluttony or some other sinful impulse	Sin is the road to the Beast.
7	Theft, robbery, willful vandalism	Thou shalt not steal.
6	Causing harm to a pious and virtuous person	God sees all and punishes such sins.
5	Feeding from an innocent without permission	God protects the innocent.
4	Blasphemous or heretical acts	Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Denial of God leads only to damnation.
3	Allowing a crime or major sin to go unpunished	"Vengeance is mine," sayeth the Lord.
2	The murder of innocents	Thou shalt not kill. Do not repeat the sin of Caine.
1	Aiding a demon or other supernatural agent of evil	Serve evil and you serve the Beast.

ROAD OF HUMANITY

VIA HUMANITATIS

Other roads see Cainites as something apart from humanity, be they savage hunters or ordained princes of the world. The followers of the Road of Humanity see themselves as no different in mind or soul than their fellow men. True, they have a great and terrible burden laid upon them, but they cling to the vestiges of their human nature. In the darkness of their souls, they work to fan the dying embers of their humanity into a flame that can light their way. Let others seek to become monsters or angels; the Prodigals consider themselves human and will remain so.

Unlike those on the Road of Heaven, Prodigals do not look to God for their salvation. They find it in simple acts of human compassion, in the very act of living, even though they are no longer a part of the living world. Their reason and conscience are their guides through the dark maze of their existence. They will not become beasts, treating their fellow men as prey, nor seek to set themselves above humanity. To a Prodigal, humanity is not merely an



accident of birth or physical circumstance. It is not a beating heart that makes one human, but a feeling heart. When the heart is hardened against all caring, or twisted and blackened by wickedness, then one is truly dead, whether Cainite or mortal.

The Beast represents all that the Prodigals struggle against: unceasing hunger, depthless cruelty, selfishness and inhuman madness. To them, it is the Beast that encourages Cainites to become monsters, and only by holding on to those behaviors that are uniquely human can they deny the Beast and its urges. But in order to survive, Prodigals must sometimes indulge those dark urges. They must feed, and they must protect themselves against those who would destroy them. These goals force a Prodigal to forever struggle against the Beast, committing small sins to forestall greater ones and seeking penance and redemption for their actions when they can.

The Road of Humanity embodies many of the ideals of the Brujah clan, particularly the possibility of Cainite and kine living together in

peace, with respect for human dignity and freedom. Many Brujah follow this road, along with members of every other clan. The Road of Humanity is one that many vampires come to by instinct. After all, they were all human once, and the Embrace often leads to an understanding of how precious (and fragile) one's humanity is. Some falter and seek another road, while the rest continue to shelter the light of their humanity against the dark.

Prodigals are found most often among or near the common folk rather than the nobility. Among them, they learn how to be human all over again, while continually testing the strength of their convictions against the desires of the Beast within. Of all Cainites, Prodigals seem the most normal to mortals, and they are the least likely to stir feelings of either awe or mistrust within them.

Sobriquet: Prodigals
Ethics of Humanity:

- A man is measured by his words, his deeds and his heart, not an accident of birth or circumstance.
- The ability to reason separates man from beast.
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- All men are brothers.
- Freedom is earned with dignity and justice.

Initiation: Many followers of the Road of Humanity come to it on their own after struggling with the realities of their Cainite nature. They affirm their belief in their own humanity and hold to it tightly, usually after a harrowing experience with their own capacity for monstrous behavior and the power of the Beast, which serves as a moment of truth. A neonate who kills savagely to sate his hunger, a fledgling who seeks revenge for a petty slight; these Cainites look at the blood on their hands and reject the monsters they have become. Others come to the road more gradually and are taught its precepts by their sire or another teacher.

Organization: The Road of Humanity claims that all men are brothers and that each should be measured according to his or her words and deeds. Therefore, the adherents of the road accord their great teachers and philoso-

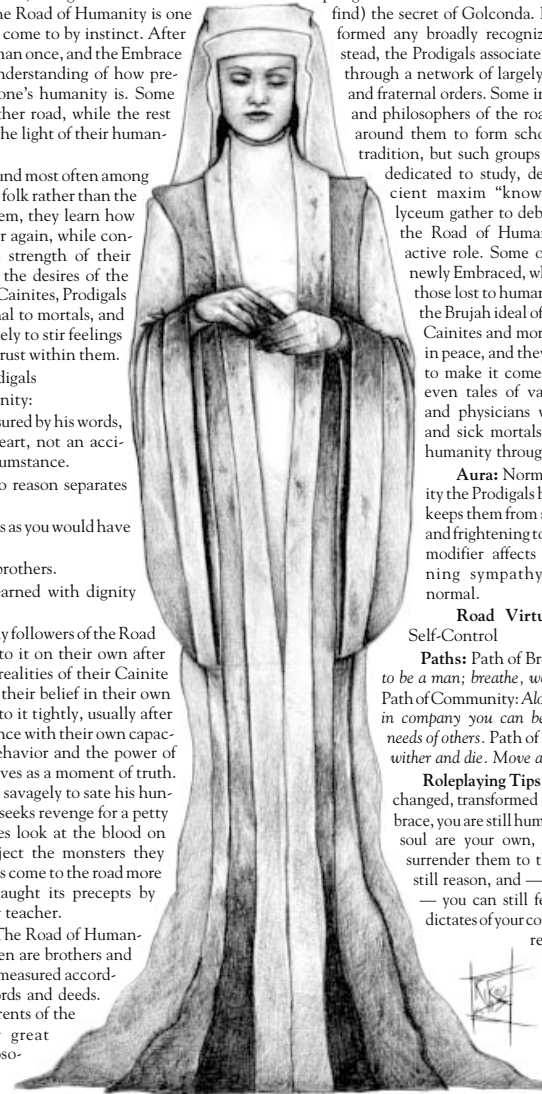
phers the respect they are due, and they tell tales of the paragons of human virtue that seek (and sometimes find) the secret of Golconda. But they have not formed any broadly recognized hierarchy. Instead, the Prodigals associate with one another through a network of largely egalitarian guilds and fraternal orders. Some influential teachers and philosophers of the road gather students around them to form schools in the Greek tradition, but such groups are usually small, dedicated to study, debate and the ancient maxim "know thyself." While lyceum gather to debate, other sects of the Road of Humanity take a more active role. Some offer succor to the newly Embraced, while hunting down those lost to humanity. Others follow the Brujah ideal of a society in which Cainites and mortals exist together in peace, and they do what they can to make it come about. There are even tales of vampire hospitalers and physicians who treat injured and sick mortals, reclaiming their humanity through their mercy.

Aura: Normalcy. The humanity the Prodigals hold in their hearts keeps them from seeming so strange and frightening to mortals. The aura modifier affects attempts at winning sympathy and appearing normal.

Road Virtues: Conscience, Self-Control

Paths: Path of Breath: *Act as a man to be a man; breathe, work, revel and live.*
Path of Community: *Alone you are damned; in company you can be saved. Serve the needs of others.* Path of Vigor: *To stop is to wither and die. Move and you shall live.*

Roleplaying Tips: Although you are changed, transformed in body by the Embrace, you are still human. Your mind and soul are your own, and you will not surrender them to the Beast. You can still reason, and — more importantly — you can still feel and follow the dictates of your conscience and know remorse when you falter. As long as those things are true, you will never be the monster that others say you are.



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST HUMANITY

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Selfish thoughts	Thought is as good as deed.
9	Minor selfish acts	Compassion separates us from the beasts.
8	Injury to another person (deliberate or otherwise)	Follow the Golden Rule.
7	Theft and robbery	Respect the property of others.
6	Accidental violation of another (e.g., drinking a vessel dry from starvation)	Ignorance does not excuse cruelty.
5	Wanton destruction	Man creates; the Beast destroys.
4	Impassioned violation of another (e.g., killing in frenzy)	Those who act as beasts become beasts.
3	Planned violation of another (e.g., murder)	If you surrender to the Beast, you become its slave.
2	Casual violation of another (e.g., wanton killing, feeding past satiation)	Others are worthy of your respect.
1	The most heinous and demented acts	Are you man or beast?