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DM Pandect III: Devotions to Deities

A guide to replace or enhance clerics in fantasy games

CAMPBELL

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CLERICS ARE BROKEN.

CLERICS ARE ALL MESSED UP.

classic style (basic/expert and 1st edition) games may find clerics difficult to integrate into the campaign. Problems include people feeling like they need to take a cleric, a complete dissociation with how polytheistic religions actually worked, and questions about how society looks if it can eradicate disease and raise the dead.

Cleric use has good advice located in Men and Magic.

“The number in each column opposite each applicable character indicates the number of spells of each level that can be used (remembered during any single adventure) by that character.”

The cleric gains her spells because she is seeking out danger for her deity. If she stays home, she is granted no spells. Only when she leaves home to defeat evil does she have access to her magic.

Devotions

Devotions are a replacement or addition to clerics. Any person may devote themselves to any deity. Each level of devotion takes 5% of the characters total experience. Devotions run from levels 2-12. After each adventure, roll 2d6, on a roll equal to or higher than the devotion the character can gain levels in their devotion. Each new level grants a new power.

The roll after each adventure is not entirely random—Gods come with a variety of observances and taboos. Following the observances of your deity will put you in their favor and allow you to become a more powerful servant. They also have forbidden activities known as taboos. Breaking a taboo immediately causes your devotion to be reduced by 1. If your Devotion is reduced, you lose access to the powers you gained as you fall out of favor. 2d6 is a bell curve roll meaning that devoted worshipers will rise in the god’s esteem faster.

This directly engages the character into performing appropriate behaviors for mechanical benefit, and allows any class to add devotion to a god in exchange for experience.This drives emergent play. This also dovetails with the ability to create congregations, which provide monthly value in xp/gp, allowing those who maintain a flock to subsidize the devotion expense with the value of their worship.

Example

Boccob, the Greyhawk Deity of Magic, the uncaring, the lord of all magics, and the archmage of the deities.

Taboos:

- Destroying books, magic items.

Observances:

- Acquiring new arcane knowledge (+1)
- Engaging in magical research or experimentation (+2)
- Burning Incense (+1)
- Creation of a magic item or spell (+4)
- Utilizing florid and elaborate language (+1)

Devotion level 2: Detect magic at will

Devotion level 3: Gain the ability to cast comprehend languages or command 3 times a day

Devotion level 4: Gain your devotion level as a % bonus on all magic/spell research/creation rolls.

Devotion level 5: Gain +4 on any saving throws versus spells

Devotion level 6: If you cannot cast spells, gain a spellbook and the ability to cast spells as a 1st level wizard. If you can cast spells, treat your character as one level higher in regards to spells slots available.

Devotion level 7: Once a day you can reflect any spell targeting you on a successful saving throw versus spell.

Devotion level 8: For the purposes of crafting magical items, golems, scribing scrolls and brewing potions, your class level is considered 5 levels higher. (For campaigns that require a minimum level to craft—for a more modern game, I would grant a cost reduction or crafting time bonus).

Devotion level 9: You can cause your nails to secrete a magical ink that can be used to scribe spells and scrolls for free.

Devotion level 10: You are considered blessed by Boccob and your intelligence increases by 2.

Devotion level 11: You can overcome the resistance of bindings and metal better than normal arcane wielders, Armor up to chain can be worn without affecting spellcasting.

Devotion level 12: If you can only cast spells because of your devotion to Boccob, you are now considered a 5th level caster. If you can cast spells from another class, treat your character level as two higher in regards to spell slots available.

This makes worshipers of deities in a realm where the gods are real into real worshipers, and creates impactful issues in the day to day lives of the player's characters. Now any character can follow as many gods as they want, as long as they are willing to spend the experience points to do so. The scope of work is limited, needing only to cover any deities you consider important and any the players select.

A guideline for creating Devotions from deities.

Consider taboos—any of which will cause the characters to drop a devotion level immediately

Consider observances—These should be material, actionable acts within the game that will come up during the course of play. Consider activities pre/post camp/battle, behaviors and traits of the deity and the ways those can be propagated by the players.

Designing the Devotion levels.

Devotion level 2: should be a minor constant bonus or other baseline cantrip level ability relevant to the deity.

Devotion level 3: should be a limited use signature ability, that will characterize the worshipers in society.

Devotion level 4: look to a non-combat/non-adventure ability relevant to the gods. It should have some utility.

Devotion level 5: Should be an appropriate defensive bonus or ability

Devotion level 6: Should be a spell or power that can be used at will. You should take the ability and integrate it into a ritual or effect. A enchantment spell might include coating a tongue in quicksilver, a firebolt should require a flaming pellet, a divination spell might require a sacrifice or anything

Devotion level 7: This level should contain a thematic deific ability. A storm god could cast a lightning bolt, an animal god might allow shapeshifting, or some other key ability related to the gods domain. At this point, the character is giving over one third his earned experience to the deity and this power should be for that exchange. Devotions higher than this level are more difficult to get due to the bell curve on 2d6, progress beyond this point will be less quick.

Devotion level 8: This should be a unique, chance based ability, or one that has utility that isn't directly related to combat or power. It should be active, but a constant bonus, such as increased hit die to undead raised, a bonus to some skill or class ability, and something that brings the deity into the fabric of the world.

Devotion level 9: This level represents the deity expressing their glory through the character. It provides some utility and a visible transformation.

Devotion level 10: This level should be a passive blessing or bonus that indicates the grace of the possessor. It may or may not also have a visual component.

Devotion level 11: This level should provide a major power or benefit of the deity.

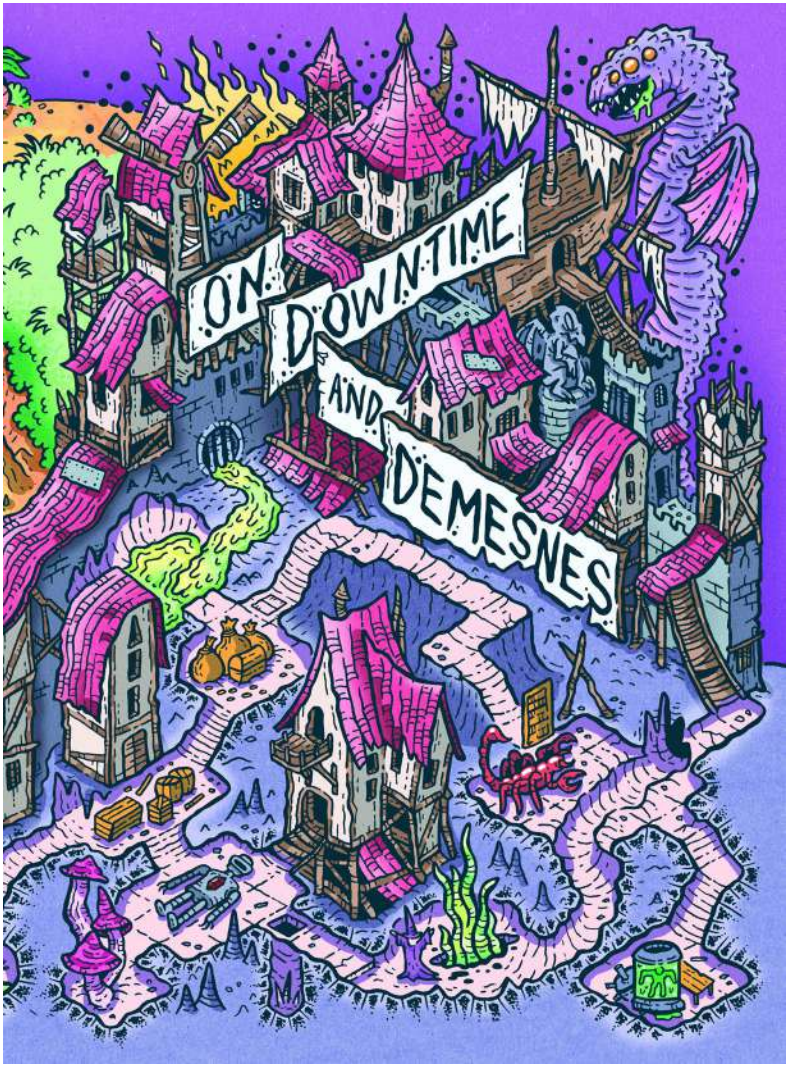
Devotion level 12: It should be noted that level 12 is fairly difficult to achieve. It requires a roll where the total is higher than 12. Even with a bonus of +2 from observances, there is still only an ~9% chance. It is unlikely in all but the longest campaigns that characters will realistically reach this level, therefore it is ok to provide an appropriate capstone ability for the deity.

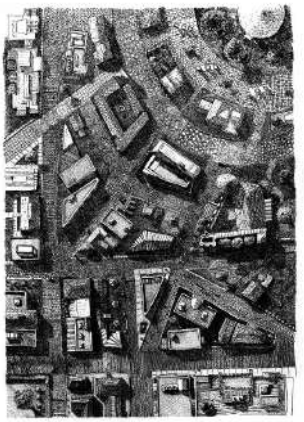
Characters should advance fairly quickly to the median of the bell curve (level 7 or 8) and then will progress more slowly as it becomes more difficult to score the higher rolls.



Do you run a classic style game or a 5th edition game? Were you interested in the idea of congregations?

Check out On Downtime and Demesnes for costs, prices, time, and more ideas per page than you can count! OD&D is available for both old school systems and fifth edition for complete compatibility and easy use! Check it out at DTRPG:
Basic Version or 5th Edition Version! It's also available in print and on Kindle from Amazon!





Activities & Labor

Strange Pet Stores

Roll	Store
1	Floating Piranha Shop
2	Glow Worm Emporium
3	The Ant Farm
4	Small but Vicious Chickens
5	The Gallery of Goo
6	The Creature Curio Shop
7	It's "Fin"tastic
8	Grizzled Unwanted Pets
9	Not Quite Dead Yet
10	Abigail's Balloon Animal Extravaganza



1 Floating Piranha Shop

Description: A rickety house constructed of splintered boards and rusted nails. The door is an eye-watering bright orange and, aside from the giant air balloon, is the newest most intact thing about the place. Atop the roof is an impossibly strong-looking chimney that spews hot flames into the air. Tied to the chimney are thick cables that lead to a huge hot air balloon in the shape of a green smiling piranha which allows the house to float lazily through the skies.

Proprietor: Abbigard Dole—A strange-looking man, almost more goblin than man with a large hook for a right hand (his favorite piranha, Malcom, was super hungry you see), square, yellowed buck teeth, and tatty curly, orange hair that forms a halo around his head. Abbigard is obsessed with piranhas and travels the world in his strange store looking for new species. He will never sell a piranha if he only has one and always seeks mating pairs. Abbigard is a shrewd baddie and cannot be coerced or intimidated to lessening the prices for his beloved fish.

Plot Hook/Rumor: Abbigard has heard rumors of fire-jewel piranhas spawning in the fiery lake of Gabalgaba and is very keen on acquiring them. He will pay 200 gp for each adult and 50 gp for each juvenile. The lake contains 1d8+2 adults and 2d10+10 juveniles. There are other terrible creatures in the craggy fissures leading to the lake the group must contend with.

Unique Trinket: Murphy the Piranha Mascot (bobblehead edition). This wacky cute bobblehead is a highly sought-after collectible (people LOVE THEM!). Once per day this little baubble will allow the holder to talk to a single piranha so long as the head is wobbling.

CRIME

If someone is caught for a crime, consider the judgment. The judge could be swayed to reduce the punishment by spending money on an attorney or a bribe. The character's Charisma also influences the crime roll. However, strong evidence, previous criminal behavior, and character witnesses will provide penalties for the opposing sides. The Dungeon Master will set the total bonus considering all applicable factors. The crime roll is a Charisma roll (2d6), and is modified by the following factors:

- -6 to +3 for evidence (1d10-7)
- +1 to +3 for bribes (10 gp, 100 gp, or 1,000 gp)
- There is a penalty of -1 for every previous crime committed
- The severity of the crime provides a penalty of -1 to -6
- For every board of influence the player controls, the roll is modified by +1 (q.v. p.177)
- Hiring legal representation provides a bonus of -1 (unskilled) to +3 (Master skill level); cost should be proportionate to the skill level

Fantasy worlds can have drastic differences in morality. The Dungeon Master will have to design which categories of crime are minor, major, and severe. Reference the following list of crimes and determine the severity of them for the local society: minor, major, or severe.

Roll for the result

2-	Severe Punishment
3-5	Punishment
6-8	Mild Punishment
9-12+	Freed

1 **Assault & Battery**
2 **Civil Crimes**
3 **Homicide**
- I. Arson
- II. Murder
- III. Manslaughter

4 **Larceny**
- I. Burglary
- II. Banditry/Piracy
- III. Counterfeiting/ Forgery
- IV. Embezzlement
- V. Extortion
- VI. Kidnapping
- VII. Fraud
- VIII. Theft

5 **Political Crimes**
- I. Bribery
- II. Destruction of Property
- III. Impersonation
- IV. Incitement to Riot/Rioting
- V. Perjury
- VI. Sedition

6 **Religious Crimes**
- I. Blasphemy
- II. Heresy
- III. Magic Use

7 **Sexual Crimes**
- I. Adultery
- II. Bestiality
- III. Incest
- IV. Polygamy
- V. Rape
- VI. Sodomy

