

# Faith & Religion - Old

In the realms of the Nexus, there are essentially five distinct religious positions which a character can hold. Each of these positions represents a different aspect of society, and will be explained here.

## **1. Faithful**

The Faithful are by far the largest percentage of the population. The people known as the Faithful hold the religious belief that the gods exist, and that all of the gods love them, and will therefore help them in times of need. The Faithful respect all of the gods, giving them the due that they deserve. However, most of the Faithful tend to "actively" worship Aalynor or Tilnar, as the True Gods are above the Daer'lin.

As such, a common man may pray to each of the gods in turn in a single day, each time they have need. For example, if we were to look at a somewhat typical day of an "average" person, a pattern like this might arise.

He awakens, rises from his bed, and looks out the window. The sun is shining brightly, filling the man with joy, and so, he offers thanks to Aalynor for his life and the new day. The man dresses and walks down the hall, stopping in at his daughter's room. He looks down on her sleeping form, and thanks Andaras for gifting her with such beauty. He makes his way to work, and as he toils, he prays to Pandora, hoping that time speeds up, and that the festival come that much faster. He leaves work early, and ventures into the woods to find food. A soft prayer to Erisar is whispered, asking for the help of the Lord of the Hunt in finding game to feed his family. As he walks through the woods, he passes an old tree with initials carved into it, and thinks of his wife. He sighs a gentle prayer to Tilnar, asking the Lord of Death and Lost Love to watch over her soul, until they are again together. The man brings home a rabbit, which he shares with his child, and then they proceed to the Midwinter's Festival. The man partakes of Trista's liquor, offering thanks with every lift of the wrist. As the alcohol dims his mind, he notices a beautiful creature across the square. Thoughts run through his mind, and he offers a small prayer to Kyorl for his sudden lust, asking for help in his glibness, hoping that the Lord of Desire will help him gain what he wants, and that the Lord of Lies will help smooth over rougher points in conversation.

The Faithful are judged by Tilnar at their time of death, their lives examined. If they are found to have been true to their ideals and the gods then they are sent to the realms of the gods. If they are deemed to have been False in their lives, then they are treated like the False (see that section for details).

## **2. Follower**

Some people tend to gravitate towards the ethos of a single god or goddess. These people are generally considered by many to be more pious, for in dedicating one's self to one god, one distances him or herself from the others. Obviously, this sort of dedication is necessary to achieve the power of a paladin or a cleric. [You must have a piety of 10 or greater to become a Follower.]

A hard path, chosen by pious souls, at seventh level you may elect to be recognized as a Follower of a specific deity. It is up to the specific deity what is required from you to attain this status, but typically you will have to perform a Task (or quest); to demonstrate the level of dedication and devotion that you have. The Task is often completed by a group of prospective Followers.

You will gain in return, upon successful completion, an indication, or mark upon your being that you are a follower. You will also, in turn, be restricted in your actions by the Ethos of the deity you selected. Not all deities accept followers.

To become a follower, simply seek an audience with the High Priest of the Church of your chosen deity and ask to join the Followers. The High Priest will then consider your request, and either accept or deny it based on their observations of your actions in the past, and performance during the Task.

As a Follower it is expected that you shall go forward into the world and carry on the work of the deity in the realms, and any other task the deity may assign you. If summoned by your High Priest, you are to drop all matters and appear instantly before them. It may sometimes be necessary to die within the servitude of your Deity, although it is rare for Followers to be asked to perform tasks which result in certain death (see PLEDGING) it can, and does happen from time to time.

Like the Faithful, Followers are judged by Tilnar at their time of death, their lives examined. If they are found to have been true to the ideals of their god, then they are sent to that god's Realm. There, they are usually given positions and/or forms to reward their loyalty during their mortal lives. If they are deemed to have been False in their lives, then they are treated like the False (see that section for details).

## **3. Pledge**

A harder path, not often attempted, and rarely completed is that of pledging to a specific deity. This monumental task can only be attempted by 15th level or higher characters, and of those, only the most devout will ever be accepted. [You must have a piety of 20 or greater.] If a deity has accepted you as a follower, and you are ready to give up your mind, body and soul in servitude to that deity, then you may attempt to walk this most difficult path...

The first step to pledging yourself is the pledge. You will stand before the chosen Deity, having requested an audience with them (through your High Priest), and state your desire to give yourself

completely to them. The deity will then pass judgement on you, of your actions since becoming a follower, and either accept or refuse your Initial Pledge. The deity will either refuse you, or ask that you perform a Quest of Purification.

If you are refused, then so be it. Very few have the strength and soul to walk in the Light or Shadow of their gods, and apart from a lack of humility, you have shown the deity no offense, if you were a loyal follower.

If your request annoys the deity, they may take from you to reflect their displeasure and the waste of their time. If it does not, you may proceed, and ask again at a later time, when you have purified your soul.

If you are given a Quest of Purification, then it should consume you. This task will cleanse your soul, such that your chosen Deity may accept you as one of their Chosen. The Quest will cause you to face the things you have done that have displeased the deity, often things subtle, to ensure your devotion to the Ethos. If you fail the Quest, then you are refused, and it is to you to prove your worth to your Deity before requesting to walk this path again. If you succeed, you are accepted.

Characters accepted by their deities are given a Quest of Devotion. The Quest of Devotion is a major feat, often thought impossible by mortals. There are many who have been accepted, yet died of old age before completing this Quest. The Quests are different for each deity, and are sure to test every aspect of the Questor. (No Quest of Devotion ever recorded was completed in less than six months real-time, and some are expected to take at least a year.) Should you fail in your Quest, you lose the right to call yourself Questor, and are considered a normal follower forevermore.

Should you complete the Quest of Devotion, you gain the title of Chosen. A magic aura marks you, separating you from the other mere followers of your deity. In addition, you have been given a link to your Deity, unlike that of most mortals. Your faith allows you to hold a minute fraction of your Deity's power, and to use that power to further that Deity's cause.

In exchange for these benefits, you have completely given yourself to your deity. You are bound, body and soul, to perform any task that Deity requests of you, or die (multiple-times, if necessary) in the attempt. Should you fail, it is up to your Deity how to react. Should you displease your Deity, then that displeasure will mark you. It is not uncommon for Chosen to lose attributes, abilities, or die in the service of the Deity. And, should you betray your Deity, then may the Light itself save you. The pledge of the Chosen, once given, is not meant to be broken.

The Pledged, or the Chosen, are judged solely by the deity to which they have offered their soul. As any Chosen would be severely punished or even cast out should they have not lived up to the high and exacting standards of their god, when the Chosen die their mortal deaths, their souls are taken by the god to whom they are pledged. Most Chosen are given high positions in the hierarchy of the realm in which they arrive - for example, Chosen of Aalynor often become Astral Messengers or Archangels, while Tilnar's Chosen are reborn as Harbingers or Daemonspawn.

## **4. Faithless**

The Faithless are a small group, as it is most difficult to deny the existence of the gods around you. Those who are Faithless choose either to not believe in the gods, or in the powers of the gods. As such, most of the faithless are highly self-reliant, feeling that since there is no other power to help them, they will have to make do on their own.

It is unknown what happens to the Faithless at their moment of death. It is believed that the gods, in imparting Free Will into their creations, did not want to force them to worship. As such, it is commonly believed that the Faithless are judged, as are the others, however, most of the faithless are true to themselves if not the gods, and are therefore reincarnated until a proper judgment can be made.

## **5. The False**

The False are the smallest of all of the groups, as they are composed wholly of those who have been tested and found lacking by the gods. Most of the False were so declared when their souls were brought to judgement before Tilnar at the end of their mortal lives, but in extremely rare cases, someone (who was a Follower or a Chosen) falls from Grace, the failures of their souls becomes marked even on the mortal plane. Such a person is excommunicated from their church, and becomes marked by the God that they have upset as the False.

A mortal marked as False will have many difficulties in their day-to-day lives. For one, any loyal Follower or Chosen will be able to feel the mark upon the False, and the stain of the divine displeasure will cause them discomfort. Chosen have been known to become physically ill in the presence of one who is marked False by their own Deity. In one case, a Mortal Avatar of Rudestyle's Aura of Power actually struck down and slew one of the False marked by that God. This sense of discomfort causes the Chosen and Followers to tend to avoid the False. Second, the gods, by mutual agreement, all respect each other's marks. When marked False, the individual is forsaken by all of the gods, not even able to accept a simple prayer of the Faithful. As such, Faith Magics, when cast upon the False, operate at less efficiency, as the Godsmagic will not willingly touch one who is so marked. As such, the False must rely on potions and devices and other weaker magics. Obviously, a Cleric or Paladin marked as False is doomed, as their link to their god is shattered, and therefore, so are their powers. Some Paladins have the strength of will to survive as fighters, though this is rare.

Mortal death is something that the False dread more than anything. As their souls have already been judged by whichever god marked them, the False are sentenced to an eternity of pain and torment in the darkest areas of Kyorl's Realm. Here, where the hellfire burns, the daemons play with the False for all time, ensuring that every single moment of their existence brings to them a new, fresh agony. It is a job that the Daemons do well, and greatly enjoy.

Some legends bring hope to the Mortal False, however. There exists, in all the realms, but one

single tale of an Elf, marked False by a god, (Tilnar), who, through legendary effort, was able to first prove to Tilnar that her soul still had worth, and then, through an even more difficult process, atone for her misdeeds. The legend speaks of the elf spending over 200 years proving herself to Tilnar, however, it is said that when she died, she did so as one the Faithful. There is no proof of this legend, however. Also, there exists two tales of a person excommunicated not by the god, but by the god's mortal emissary, who were able to successfully atone for their misdeeds. One even died a follower to another god. Or so the legends say.

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