

WARPSTONE

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MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES: Saints

by Martin Oliver

Warpstone's article on St. Helena (issue 6) prompted a flurry of discussion recently. Saints are extremely new to WFRP: they feature in the forthcoming Marienburg supplement, but are rather rare apart from that. Why include them at all, though? Are they really necessary, when

there's already a pantheon of gods you can take your pick from?

Suggestions for how to use saints were many and various. Perhaps favoured servants of a god do have some sort of elevated status after death. This might well make sense to the poorly educated members of Old World society, as would prayers and offerings to them.

After all, if you can buy the ear of a guild member or city official to take care of your worldly concerns, why not hire a "friend in high places" to speak to his boss on matters of a spiritual nature?

Clerical groups might also find the idea of saints appealing. The founder of an order might be regarded as a saint, watching over the monks who follow his example and interceding on their behalf. These orders may well have a Rule or code of conduct even harsher than the

strictures observed by the rest of their cult. Some might see this as giving them the authority to challenge a church which has become 'misguided' or 'soft', possibly even leading to a schism. Worries over such problems might lead some cults to declare particular extreme

saints as heretics, and their followers outlawed. It could even prove necessary to hunt such cultists down in order to protect the reputation of other worshippers.

The idea of patron saints was also raised. These would act like 'specialisations' of a god, dealing with a limited area of a cult's interest. You might have a Shallyan patron saint of childbirth, for example, to whom midwives pray before a birth. These might do little more than give a more 'human' face to a religion, making it appear more comfortable to its followers.

Several political roles for saints were also suggested, the first of which looks at saints whose patronage covers a region rather than an interest. A cult looking to subsume a local deity might ease the process by arguing that the lesser 'god' is a saint, rather than a rival or a fake. This would provide a gradual (and more tactful) way of phasing out local faiths in favour of mainstream beliefs.

Such local saints might also be used as leverage in inter-cult rivalries. Consider a town torn between the worship of Sigmar and Ulric. What's to stop the Sigmarites saying that the town's founder was clearly a devout and splendid man, inspired by Sigmar's Empire-founding

activities, and that they'll make him a saint so that he can intercede with their god specifically on the town's behalf (he's clearly got the town's best interests at heart), and who wants to worship a mangy old wolf anyway?

There's also the possibility that saints could be used to 'poach' worshippers. St. Helena's influence clearly overlaps with that of Rhya and Shallya. Is she a sincere and divinely selected agent, or a Sigmarite plot to 'steal' worshippers from other cults? It probably

depends on which cult you're in...

Finally, there's the issue of blessings. Would saints be able to confer blessings on the faithful? Possibly, although such gifts would be less common, less powerful, and restricted in scope to their area of patronage. Obtaining such a blessing might involve a pilgrimage to a holy place, perhaps where they were born or they died. It might require prayers to be said over their bones. All sorts of colourful possibility open up, including opportunities to run adventures based around pilgrimages, holy relics, and rivalries between and within cults.

On balance, saints might make the religious map of the Old World more complicated, but they can also add a rich tapestry of detail and opportunity. Why not make the most of them?