

## Religion in Dominion

### *Background*

Religion is one of the most fascinating aspects of *Dominion*, given the fact that the people on Earth—and viewers—are given to know that certain elements of certain religions are *fact*, yet a plethora of questions remain. This document aims to give some background on the religions that exist in *Dominion*, and some recommendations about potential directions that could be taken with the religions.

### *Saviorism*

Churches have always been organizations centered around man's response to the divine. If Saviorism (a placeholder name; see suggestions below) is to have a founder (also a placeholder, I'll call him Founder Brian here, as the writers have been doing, but in this document the name remains a placeholder), then it likely will be an institution built up around a prophetic vision—Founder Brian's human response to the supernatural chaos of the first attack. The documentation of his vision (either by himself or perhaps by someone else who recorded what Founder Brian was saying) will shape the character of the religion to come. For example, the crucifixion is such an iconic event in Christianity, it's no wonder that the cross plays such a huge role in the iconography of Christianity. The upturned hands holding the child is a great symbol for Saviorism, and I think we should continue with that.

Because the Christian mythos turned out to be the correct one, Christianity should certainly play an important role in shaping Saviorism—and since it's America, Protestant faiths more so than Catholicism. That said, when it comes to the internal structure of the church, I think the same pressures that caused Riesen to create the V-System will lead to a more Catholic-like structure in the Saviorist church. If you like the term "princiate" for the leader (though I should note this is a word for an epoch rather than an individual), then here's one possible structure:

- ❖ Princiate: The leader of the Saviorist church, akin to a pope. It's the Princiate's job to interpret the texts and figure out what role the Chosen One plays in the future. (*Alternate Names*: Principio, Principus, Lector)
- ❖ Secundariate: Those directly under the Princiate who serve as his council and who oversee the various churches in Vega. (*Alternate Names*: Auxiliarius/Auxilarii, Auxiliariate)

- ❖ Loquate: A preacher or minister for a local church. Under the direct supervision of a particular Secundariate. (*Alternate Names*: Narrator, Dicant, Deacon)
- ❖ Docent: Someone like Claire who teaches young children. Basically a Sunday school teacher, but a part of the official structure of the church. It would have been an important part of the foundation of the church to ensure that children learn what's happened, why it's happened, and what they can do.

As a note on the above (and this goes for Principate, too), it's not actually crucial that the Latin be correct. Considering that these are Americans, their knowledge of Latin is going to be minimal, so terms that they'll come up with will be *close*, but need not be actually correct.

Given how small Vega is, I can't imagine that a structure larger than this would be needed (aside from needing volunteers, paid or otherwise, to do the actual maintenance for the physical buildings, collect offerings during a service, etc.). I imagine that it would also retain the illusion of independence, even if William is going to be following orders from his father quite a bit.

Back to Founder Brian, as I said, the content of his vision is going to guide a lot of the choices here. I love the idea that everyone seems to have the notion that Alex has the *potential* to be their savior, but is also free to fall. In effect, this is another test case for mankind, which was Milton's idea behind the creation of man in *Paradise Lost*. If you were looking for a guiding metaphor to describe the potential savior, I *really* like the word you used to describe Alex: the seed. You can use the vocabulary of plant growth to describe the process of finding the Chosen One and turning him into the savior. In other words, God plants the Seed, but it's up to man to water it and help it grow. This could be a part of the content of Founder Brian's vision. If you wanted to do restructure the church titles based on this extended metaphor, you could do the following:

- ❖ Principate > Light
- ❖ Secundariate > Hydrant
- ❖ Loquate > Tiller
- ❖ Docent > Gardener

William, then, would be referred to as the Light. For a title, rather than saying "Father", people could say "Bright William", or "Luminous William", or "Your Luminousness"—or "Your Brilliance".

Of course, it's *not necessary* to change the names of the church officials to fall in line with the growth metaphor. It's perfectly fine to use the growth metaphor simply in discussing the prophecy of the Seed while retaining the more Latinate official names.

Below are some more names for both Alex and the religion. These are ideas that can be mixed and matched or modified, as you see fit:

❖ Alex Lannon

- ▶ The Seed (per above)
- ▶ The Promise *or* The Promised One
- ▶ The Prophecy
- ▶ The Child (this name would prove particularly irritating and patronizing to Alex since he's a man)
- ▶ The Sapling
- ▶ The Sprout
- ▶ The Egg (an entirely different metaphor, where the Chosen One is a chick hatching from an egg)
- ▶ The Standard *or* The Standard Bearer (the one who will carry the flag of humanity. As in an army, the one who carries the flag is generally defenseless, so it's up to the army [in this case mankind] to keep him safe)
- ▶ The Crest (two different metaphors. For one, Alex would be the insignia or shield of humanity: its symbol. For the other, he's the top of the wave of humanity gaining momentum as it rushes towards the oncoming wave of angels)
- ▶ The Test *or* The Trial
- ▶ The Litmus
- ▶ The Hope
- ▶ The Instrument (the one used to ensure man's salvation)
- ▶ The Sword
- ▶ The Chance (as in this is humanity's last chance)
- ▶ The Failsafe
- ▶ The Answer *or* The Response
- ▶ The Exception
- ▶ The Key

❖ Saviorism

- ▶ The Watch (followers are Watchers. They watch and wait for the Chosen One to appear)
- ▶ The Penitent (those who wait. The name of the religion could be the Order of the Penitent or the Church of the Penitent)

- ▶ Esperanza (followers are Esperandos or Esperados. It comes from the Spanish for "hope")
- ▶ The Faith (one way to go is for Saviorists to treat their religion as the *only* religion. Consequently, referring to the Faith could only refer to one thing. Followers would be the Faithful)
- ▶ The Planters (this has the ring of something like "Mormons" or "Quakers"—perhaps something that others use, not those of the faith. The church could call itself something related, like the Church of the Fertile Future or the Covenant of the Fruiting Tree)
- ▶ Exceptionalism (followers would be Exceptionalists. It'd have a dual meaning—both that humans are exceptional and are deserving of preservation, and that the Chosen One is the exception to their extinction who will lead them to a greater future)
- ▶ The Church of the Bright Dawn *or* the Church of the Second Dawn *or* The Church of the New Dawn (focusing on how humanity will have another day. They could be called Dawners, and the religion could be referred to as Dawnerism)
- ▶ The Great Family (if Alex Lannon is the child that's going to save them, then he's going to save his family: the Great Family. Members could be called family members, brothers and sisters, or cousins. Thus, when members greet each other, they'd say, "Cousin Bethany", "Cousin David", etc.)
- ▶ Second Sons (if the angels were created first by God, then man was created second. Unfortunately this is a term used in *Game of Thrones*, but I wanted to include it for the idea. Maybe Second Race? Second Kind?)
- ▶ Survivalism (based on the notion that those who remained were the ones who survived. Followers would be survivors)
- ▶ The Faith of the Chosen (if 90% of Earth's population is wiped out and you're alive, how could you *not* be chosen?)
- ▶ The Faith of the Keepers (those who keep hold of the rope, who keep the world ready as it waits for the Chosen One, who keep on living, etc.)

Regarding the faith itself, the appearance of Alex Lannon *must* have caused a schism. William evidently takes Alex for the Chosen One, but not everyone does or will—especially since Alex doesn't believe it himself. There will be those that follow William and take Alex for their savior. There will be those who are unsure and hesitant about Alex. Then there will be those who reject it outright, and who believe they will still need to wait. The first and third groups will fight to sway the second. The third group would also be potential candidates for the Church of Gabriel. I imagine that divisions amongst followers would lead to disruptions in the church, defections, and splinter groups

emerging. As a member of the Church of Gabriel, William can make use of the schism strategically to try to find more followers for Gabriel.

### *Church of Gabriel*

The Church of Gabriel would never work unless Gabriel was able to fill a void in humanity. He has to be able to offer something attractive to followers—something that would cause them to join one who is actively seeking their destruction. I love the idea that there will be a chosen few who survive the coming apocalypse. There's plenty of precedent for this (e.g. the Flood). I also like the idea that Alex is instrumental in ensuring that some humans remain, as opposed to all getting wiped out. Additionally, I'm a *huge* fan of the suffering metaphor (humanity must suffer in order to survive, and so Gabriel's followers must suffer if they're to be among the chosen few to survive the apocalypse). The one thing that's missing is why anyone would believe Gabriel.

As I see it, humans know, for the most part, that the angels don't know everything—or at least the humans in Vega who have some access to Michael. How will Gabriel convince them that he actually knows God's will? If he were just another prophet, sure, he could build a following, but as an angel—and not just an angel, but an angel who's led his armies against Vega—there has to be something there he can use to turn humans. Anything he says is liable to be a lie, so his story, while based in scripture, isn't very compelling. There must be *some way* for Gabriel to convince someone like William Whele that his version of events—that God intends to spare those who side with Gabriel—is true, and that he has it on God's authority, or the appeal to reason will fail.

For myself, the only argument I can think of is the might and fear he has on his side. That is, Gabriel attacked Vega and did *serious* damage. If he can convince humans that that was just a drop in the bucket, "Join me or die!" may be a pretty convincing argument. After that, the mythos above can be used by his followers to rationalize their choice—to convince themselves that Gabriel's mythos is indeed the truth as handed down by God. How he convinced William, though, is still a bit of a mystery, since that will have to have happened before the attack—before the pilot. He'll have a couple of cards to play, though. As I see it, here are some argument he could rely on to convince someone like William:

- ❖ *Michael can't be trusted.* The people of Vega have depended *crucially* on Michael in the setup of their society, and on interpreting the will of God. He has a lot of power and seems to know more than he's letting on. Gabriel *seems* wicked, but Michael is more than he seems. It shouldn't be too hard to convince a human that

Michael is actually working against them. (This could be useful in trying to sway Alex, too, since his first tattoo told him to distrust those closest to him.)

- ❖ *The world is a terrible place.* This is something Gabriel believes anyway—that humans have squandered the gift of life given them by God. William already feels like he's a bit of an outsider—like he isn't "exciting" enough to woo Claire—so suggesting that the rest of the world is actually an abomination to God might prove fairly convincing.
- ❖ *Only Gabriel can get him Claire.* Claire is in love with Alex. Even if William didn't know this, he knows it after the pilot. Gabriel can promise not only to save his followers, but to save Claire specifically for him, so that she will become his wife.
- ❖ *Gabriel can get rid of Alex.* Alex is a threat to Claire and William's relationship, so Gabriel should be able to convince William that he will *use* Alex—the Chosen One—to bring about the sinners' downfall, and kill Alex in the process. He may even be able to convince William that Alex *is* the antichrist.

These are just some suggestions. I'm sure the writers have got a million ideas, but there should be a satisfactory answer to the question, "Why does William believe Gabriel?"

Regarding the structure of this "underchurch", I see it working as follows:

- ❖ Gabriel: The leader simply by being the angel with the knowledge of what's to come. I can see his followers calling him "father" or "master". In effect, he *is* their new master, as he's going to bring about the destruction of all but his followers (as he claims), and lead them into a new era. Other possibilities are "king", "liege", "prince" or "overlord".
- ❖ Harold: This is William Whele, who occupies the highest role any human can occupy in Gabriel's church. (*Alternate Names*: Lex [though *not* if you go with Lector; too similar], Duke, Prince [if you go with "king"], Vox, Manibus [means "hand"])
- ❖ Acolyte: If there are people under William but above the basic members of the church, acolyte is a good title. The structure here isn't clear, since it seems like there won't actually be physical *churches* within Vega, so it seems like the acolytes would serve as a brain trust or council who can sit in on planning sessions with William and, perhaps, Gabriel.
- ❖ Servitor: Any member of the church. The servitors would be charged with performing menial tasks required by acolytes, the Harold or Gabriel. They may be used as spies, so Gabriel can ensure that his acolytes are performing faithfully.

As I mentioned already, I love the ideas behind the Church of Gabriel that have been spun so far. If Vega seems like a paradise built from human ingenuity, Gabriel will

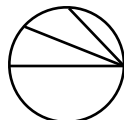
argue that it came too easily. Noah suffered. Job suffered. Christ suffered. Furthermore, all of them did things God told them to do that their neighbors ridiculed them for. Noah's neighbors thought he was crazy, and felt they had no need to fear God's wrath. The same can be said of Vega. For them, the events of *Legion* were the test. If that was just the appetizer, though, Gabriel will argue that the main course is yet to come. In order to earn God's favor, humans who wish to be save must prove their loyalty through suffering. The broken rib is a beautiful symbol of this, as the pain will be a physical reminder forever. Betraying—and losing—loved ones is the ultimate form of suffering, so it makes sense that they would have to suffer the loss of their loved ones in order to earn the reward of survival.

Suffering works so well as a motivating factor for humans because of the guilt humans feel over everything. Gabriel offers them tangible forms of suffering, thereby absolving them of guilt, and allowing them to do whatever they want to do—mandated by God, even, according to Gabriel. That can be quite attractive. Furthermore, enduring the physical pain is a rite of passage—proof that you've passed the test and become your own person, ready to inherit a new Earth. It's a release, like in *Fight Club*.

Finally, the church is an appeal to pride—to the notion that there are supermen amongst the masses. The followers of Gabriel are the chosen few amongst the already human race who survived the attacks in *Legion*. By being chosen by Gabriel and through their own suffering they've earned the right to elevate themselves above all other humans, and retire to the new Earth version of Galt's Gulch.

A remaining question is what Gabriel intends to do with Alex. It seems like all he really needs to do is kill or corrupt him, since Alex *may* be a savior, but won't be if he fails to succeed. Claire should prove useful for both drawing Alex out and keeping William from turning against him.

Regarding symbology, it seems vitally important that this cult remain secretive, so they'll need ways to identify themselves to other members. A code phrase is good (e.g. one asks, "Does it hurt?", and the correct response is, "I've been made stronger in my broken places"). For a hand gesture, I was thinking of raising the left fist and then cover it with the right hand. It would be great to have an emblem or logo that looked relatively innocuous, but appears sinister if you know what it stands for. I was thinking of a circle with a line dividing it in half. Above that line are two other lines dividing those spaces in half, producing something that looks like a wing inside of a circle. Something like this:



Below are some suggestions for how Gabriel's cult will refer to both Alex and their own order:

- ❖ Alex Lannon
  - ▶ The Catalyst
  - ▶ The Instrument (the one used to ensure man's destruction)
  - ▶ The Sword
  - ▶ The Weapon
  - ▶ The Key
  - ▶ The Resolution (a bit vaguer than the others, but intentionally so)
  
- ❖ The Church of Gabriel
  - ▶ The Brotherhood (members are brothers)
  - ▶ The Righteous
  - ▶ The Inheritors
  - ▶ The Heirs
  - ▶ The Founders *or* The New Founders *or* The New Fathers (as in the new fathers of humankind)
  - ▶ The Flood *or* The Deluge
  - ▶ The Brave
  - ▶ Men of Mercy (they're merciful in cleansing the world, rather than leaving them to God's wrath)
  - ▶ Rationalism (members would be referred to as the Rational)
  - ▶ The Cult of Gabriel (a name used by outsiders)
  - ▶ Wing Worshipers (a derisive term used by outsiders)

### *Other Responses to the Cataclysm*

Aside from the two main religion, here is a summary of other responses to the cataclysm:

- ❖ *God is dead.* There is nothing on Earth or anywhere else aside from what can be seen and touched. There is no savior, there is no God: there are just angels hell-bent on destroying mankind. Consequently, angels are the enemy, as are all humans that try to get in the way. People of this persuasion will, by and large, try and stay away from civilization and try to survive on their own.
- ❖ *Angels are the enemy.* God is real, but all these angels—Michael included—or agents of Satan. God is testing the faith of humanity, and it's up to mankind to eradicate all these "angels" and continue to live a godly life. People like this will belong to Saviorism, but they will be intensely distrustful of Michael, and will be



treating him much the way the Americans treated the Russians during WWII: allies until the shooting stops.

- ❖ *Angels are the new messiahs.* Humans still haven't seen God, but they have taken a good look at these angels. They have the power to destroy life on a mass scale, so every moment that a human being remains alive is a moment that the angels have *allowed* them to live. A number of humans may worship them the way they would worship a vengeful god, and try to appease and placate them with offerings.
- ❖ *Angels are aliens.* Again, they've never seen God, but they've seen these angels. Since it would be mighty convenient to have one religion be the true religion, what if the angels are actually just beings from another planet who have come to invade? Perhaps they've taken on the forms of angels to try to trick humanity into accepting them as they prepare the world for terraforming and colonization. This is a true tinfoil-hat conspiracy theory, but one I'd expect to crop up.
- ❖ *Ostrich heads.* It doesn't matter who says what or what person has wings and is flying where: All that matters is that there's food on the table. These folk will stay away from every church and every angel and everyone saying anything about any of it. They're just trying to get by and treat this whole period like a bad presidency.
- ❖ *Real Christians.* Just because these angels *say* they're angels from God doesn't mean they are. Some Christians will hold on to the belief that their eyes are deceiving them, and that nothing has actually changed since before the cataclysm. There's still one true God, and this is just another test.
- ❖ *Anarchy.* God has forsaken everyone and angels are going to wipe us out, so there are no rules anymore. There is no code of morality and no divine punishment, so anything goes. These new anarchists will say or do absolutely anything, because they believe they have proof that there's no morality—or at least that God won't enforce it.
- ❖ *Satan worshipers.* The angels themselves are pretty terrifying and say openly that they can't communicate with God, so perhaps there's another power that's effecting a New World Order. In order to get on the good side of the 8-balls and other marauding angels, some will start actively worshiping Satan, believing that he's behind the cataclysm and is the new authority.
- ❖ *God of gods.* The angels talk about an actual God that created them and man and then left them behind. Some may believe that this actually means there's a power that's even *higher* than capital-G God. This is the the God that *created* God, and this Overgod is actually *testing* God. Believing that worshiping God is basically the same as worshiping angels or idols, these worshipers begin to pray to the Overgod which is above all things.

- ❖ *Idol worship.* Kind of in line with the angel worshipers, this group worships graven images of angels or artifacts dropped by angels (wing feathers, clothing, hair, etc.). These totems keep them safe from angel attack, and if they worship them will help to keep their friends and family safe, as well.

These are just a handful of ideas to get things started.

### *Open Questions*

In no particular order, here are some questions that I have which *may* have been answered, but in case they haven't, they're listed here:

- ❖ How do the angels not know more about what's going on? How can they not talk to God anymore?
- ❖ How would members of various faiths respond to the cataclysm? I can see Protestants easing right into Saviorism, but Jews? Muslims? Sikhs?
- ❖ Where are all these new angels coming from, and why don't they have more news from God?
- ❖ Does Gabriel want to do anything with Alex other than kill him? Is there some use that Gabriel has for him beyond trying to stop him?