

Ars Magica

The Church



by Love, Romer,
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The Church

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Richard Love is quite pleased that he managed to write a part of this book while staying in Rome in a monastery that Pope Gregory the Great founded in the sixth century. He would like to dedicate this book to his partner Paula, who found our accommodation, and who thinks Richard is a sad person for bringing his laptop on holiday.

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Sheila Thomas is old enough to remember when Latin was used in church most of the time. She has had close encounters over the years with nuns, monks, friars, priests, canons, and bishops but has yet to meet a cardinal or pope. She was brought up to understand and enjoy visits to a wide range of ecclesiastical buildings, old and modern, but prefers the ones that are relevant to the **Ars Magica** period. She dedicates her work in this book to her late father, John R. de Boer.

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Ars Magica players participate in a thriving fan community by subscribing to email discussion lists (like the Berkeley list), compiling archives of game material (such as Project Redcap), maintaining fan-created web sites, and running demos through Atlas Games' Special Ops program. To learn more, visit www.atlas-games.com/ArM5. You can also participate in discussions of **Ars Magica** at the official Atlas Games forums located at forum.atlas-games.com.

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The Church

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Chapter One

Introduction

Welcome to *The Church*. This book for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* describes the Western Christian Church as it exists in Mythic Europe in the year 1220 AD.

Christianity is without doubt the most widespread religion in Mythic Europe. However, the Church also holds

tremendous temporal power. If one man could claim to rule over all the multitudinous kingdoms, cities, and villages of Mythic Europe, that man would be the pope: the head of the Western Church. This claim is not without controversy, but it is the pope who crowns emper-

ors. It is also the Church that shows the people of Mythic Europe the route to eternal salvation.

This book is intended to help and to inspire your troupe to include the Church in your sagas. The covenant could have an ally in the nearby parish priest, or enemies amongst the cathedral canons who plot in the bishop's court. Pious covenfolk (and magi) may worship in the local parish church, or travel on pilgrimages. A nearby nunnery or monastery could be a source of spiritual and intellectual aid to the scholars of your covenant. Alternatively, a fallen monastery could be a sulfurous source of contagion, spewing corruption and despair into the lands about your covenant.



The Church and the Divine

The Church is first and foremost about the human institution that is the Western Christian Church. Of course, part of the Church's function is the organized worship of the Divine, and *Realms of Power: The Divine* contains information about the Divine. *The Church* extends the information in that book to provide more information about the organization of the Church and how it influences the day-to-day lives of the people of Mythic Europe.

Realms of Power: The Divine and *The Church* complement each other, but your troupe does not need to have access to *Realms of Power: The Divine* to use or make sense of most of the information in this book.

The Church and the Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes and the Church are both spread throughout all of Mythic Europe. The Order of Hermes certainly knows of the Church, and it is very likely that the Church has some inkling of the existence of the Order of Hermes. However, in this book we have left it to your troupe to decide exactly what the Church knows of the Order, and what the Church's attitude to the Order might be. Perhaps the Order of Hermes is a well-kept secret, in which case there may be little more than rumors circulating the papal curia. At the other extreme, maybe the existence of the Order is well known to the Church, with local bishops and the monastic and military orders regularly invited to send representatives to Tribunal meetings. Or maybe different segments of the Church have different ideas about what the Order of Hermes actually is.

Whatever is the case in your saga, thinking through the implications can (if you want) provide opportunity for stories. For example:

- How do the magi keep the Order of Hermes a secret from the Church?
- Does the Church consider the Order a menace or an ally?
- What does the Church think about pagan magi?
- Are the magi who keep in close contact with Church officials interfering with the mundanes?

The Western Church

It is important to note that this book is only about the Western or Latin Church, which is centered in Rome. It is only in the eastern peripheries of Mythic Europe that the Eastern or Greek Church (centered in Constantinople and Jerusalem) has any sway. The Greek Church is similar in some ways to the Latin Church, as they both derive from the religion of the late Roman Empire, but the Greek Church is also quite different in many ways.

The reader should also note that this book is not about heretical interpretations of the Church's teachings. This book describes the mainstream, dominant views of the Western Church.

The Church in 1220 AD

The Church is a large institution: it covers virtually all of Mythic Europe. In *The Church* we have attempted to describe what is true for the majority of Mythic Europe, and in fact (perhaps because of the central authority of Rome) many aspects of the Church are surprisingly uniform. Where there is room, we have also noted some regional differences in Church practices, but in other cases there has not been space to describe every local idiosyncrasy.

The Church is also not fixed in time, and over the centuries it changes. *The Church* describes the state of the Church in the year 1220, and if your saga follows history, there are dramatic changes in the Church throughout the 13th century. For example, there are ongoing struggles concerning the powers of the pope over the bishops and secular rulers of Mythic Europe, new orders of monks are founded, and in the early years of the 14th century the papacy even leaves Rome. Although we have provided some historical pointers, how (and if) the Church changes throughout the course of your saga is up to your troupe, and may even depend upon the actions of your characters!

The Mythic Church

The Church of Mythic Europe is based upon the real 13th-century Church, but they are not the same thing. This is not a history book; the Church of Mythic Europe is fictional and includes fictional, mythic elements that were not true of the real Church. No disrespect is intended to modern-day practitioners of any faith.