



Help from on High

A Monotheistic Power System for *GURPS*

by Reverend P. Kitty

RPGs have traditionally featured priests and clerics who wield the powers of one God among a pantheon of many. A follower of Ignit, the God of Fire, may be able to summon a pillar of fire from the heavens, while one who worships Brooke, the Goddess of Rivers, can quell storms and guarantee safe passage.

For many gaming groups, this approach seems sensible for a polytheistic setting, but isn't right for settings in which there is only one true God. In settings with the Abrahamic God (of the Jews, Muslims, and Christians), this is sometimes out of a wish not to offend. However, the holy texts of these religions clearly support the existence of pious men who can call upon their god for miracles. A more pragmatic concern is one of power and balance -- with the gods in a polytheistic setting having clearly defined spheres of influence, it can seem unfair to let a priest in a monotheistic setting have access to a deity who covers *all* spheres of influence.

The key is to maintain balance. A god with far-reaching influence will cost more as a Patron than a more narrowly defined one. In addition, while the gods of a polytheistic universe are often very active and interventionist, it is more traditional for the god of a monotheistic universe to take more of a "hands off" approach, preferring to let us stand or fall on our own merits. Miracles will thus tend to be subtle or on a small scale, which prevents them from unbalancing the game.

The following system is influenced equally by the Good Power in *GURPS Powers*, Divine Favor from *GURPS Third Edition*, and the system for *Blessed* characters in *Deadlands*. Divine Favor is based on *Patron (True God; Highly Accessible; Special Abilities; Minimal Intervention; Pact)*, with the new Frequency values interpolated and the cost rounded off. The Learned Prayers are, of course, Alternative Abilities to Divine Favor, with the prerequisite level set to ensure the prayer is always the less expensive ability.

Power and Prayer

Only the pious and faithful can hope to successfully call upon a monotheistic god for miracles on a regular basis. In game terms, the character must have Vows or Disciplines of Faith worth at least -10 points, after which he can purchase the Divine Favor advantage. A character with both traits is known as a *paragon*, a person deeply connected with his faith. Clerical Investment and Religious Rank are optional in most settings -- one does not have to be a priest to be a paragon. (The GM may change this, of course, and may also set additional prerequisites or an Unusual Background for being a paragon.)

Divine Favor: Variable

You can reliably get God's attention to ask for miracles. Only a truly holy person (-10 points or more in appropriate disadvantages) may take this advantage. The cost depends on your attention roll; see the table below. It requires at least 1d6 seconds of prayer (the GM rolls in secret). Praying for at least five minutes adds +1 to the attention (not reaction) roll; praying for two hours or more adds +2.

Attention Roll Table

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Roll	Cost	Roll	Cost
4	15	11	90
5	20	12	110
6	25	13	130
7	35	14	150
8	45	15	170
	55	16	200
10	70		

At the end of the prayer, the GM makes an attention roll to see if the deity acknowledged your request. If so, the GM then makes a reaction roll modified *only* by previous requests that day, the circumstances, and your recent behavior -- standard reaction modifiers do *not* apply! The circumstances modifier could be as high as +2 for a situation in which multiple people may die and you have tried all other options or as low as -4 if the request is one of convenience instead of need. Your behavior can provide up to +1 if you have been 100% faithful to your religion, truly living up to the name "paragon," or as low as -6 for recent sins and other acts against your faith.

On a roll of **Very Good** or better, the god sends an undeniable miracle -- a quake may swallow your enemies, a spring may bubble up from nowhere to slake your thirst, or a dead friend may be brought back to life. A **Good** reaction causes a more subtle miracle, similar to the effects of Serendipity, such as a wound not being as bad as it looks or an enemy's gun jamming. On a **Neutral** reaction, you receive a minor blessing, in the form of a bonus to a roll (or a reroll) or a minor beneficial coincidence. Nothing happens on a **Poor** reaction. On a **Bad** reaction, the deity makes his displeasure known in a non-harmful way (an ominous thunderclap is traditional), you cannot make further requests or use any learned prayers (see below) for the rest of the day, and any negative modifiers for your behavior are *doubled* for the next 1d6 days. A **Very Bad** or worse reaction is similar to a Bad one but also results in the god smiting you in some manner best left up to the GM's imagination.

Regardless of the reaction rolled, if your prayer is acknowledged, all further prayers that day are at -1 to both the attention roll *and* the reaction roll. Note that if nothing happens, the GM does not tell you whether it was the attention roll or reaction roll failing. Among other things, this means a failed prayer will always require at least six seconds of praying before you know it had no result.

Miracles and Learned Prayers

A paragon can pray for whatever help his god is willing to send him, or he can ask for a specific miracle. A list of sample miracles is provided below, along with the minimum reaction required for the miracle to be granted. The predictability and control of asking for a specific miracle is offset by the "all or nothing" aspect -- if you achieve the minimum reaction (or better), you get the miracle. If not, you don't.

A few miracles offer an *enhanced* version. The paragon need not specifically request the enhanced version; he will be granted it with a sufficiently high reaction roll.

The miracles below can also be *learned*. This represents the paragon being granted a special prayer which is a "hotline" to one particular miracle. Once learned, the miracle can be invoked without making an attention *or* reaction roll -- the paragon simply wills it to be (taking one second of concentration) and it is! Note that the power is never truly in the paragon's hands, however. God can remove it in an instant, and will do so on any Bad or worse reaction roll, or if the paragon breaks the Vows or Disciplines of Faith which represent his piety.

Each example below includes a *Learned Prayer Cost*, which is how many character points it costs the paragon to buy the miracle as a learned prayer, as well as a *Learned Prerequisite* which is the level of Divine Favor that *must* be purchased before the learned prayer can be purchased. If the paragon is using a learned prayer, ignore the *Minimum Reaction*, as there is no reaction roll involved.

Blessing

Minimum Reaction: Neutral

Learned Prayer Cost: 3 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 4

This miracle may be prayed for *before* making any appropriate roll (page 66 of the *Basic Set*); roll three times and take the best roll. If this is a learned prayer, it may be used every half-hour of game time. Otherwise, it applies to one roll.

Statistics: *Ridiculous Luck* (Active, -40%; Pact, -10%)

Protection from Evil

Minimum Reaction: Neutral or Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 3 or 5 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 4 or 6

For as long as you brandish a holy symbol in front of you or otherwise assert your faith, you can prevent any malign supernatural entity from approaching within one yard. If you are granted the enhanced version of this miracle, roll a Quick Contest of Will; if you succeed, they cannot come closer than your margin of victory (in yards).

Statistics: *True Faith or True Faith* (Turning, +65%)

Sermonize

Minimum Reaction: Neutral

Learned Prayer Cost: 4 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 5

Your reaction rolls, influence rolls, and Leadership and Public Speaking rolls are all at a +5 bonus, as long as you are open and honest with your words. This miracle lasts until you lie or hide the truth.

Statistics: Charisma 5 (Cannot Lie, -10%; Pact, -10%)

Sense Evil

Minimum Reaction: Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 7 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 7

This prayer grants you knowledge of where all nearby evil beings are. It will only detect those with evil supernatural abilities or those who are (in the GM's opinion) completely devoted to or taken over by evil (though without distinguishing between the two). Range varies from a few miles to a few hundred miles depending on where the worst evil is.

Statistics: Detect (Truly Evil Beings; Cannot Analyze, -20%; Cosmic, No Die Roll Required, +100%; Long-Range 1, +50%; Pact, -10%; Precise, +100%)

Smite

Minimum Reaction: Good or Very Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 8 or 16 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 8 or 11

When this miracle is invoked, every malign supernatural being within four yards immediately takes 2d-1 damage. They will see the attack clearly, while normal people will see nothing. If this is a Learned Prayer, it can be used repeatedly; otherwise, roll 1d+1 to see how many seconds the paragon retains this ability. The enhanced version of this miracle is identical, but does double damage.

Statistics: Burning Attack 2d-1 (Accessibility, Malign Supernatural Beings Only, -50%; Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Cosmic, Irresistible Attack, +300%; Low Signature, +10%; Pact, -10%) or Burning Attack 4d-2 (Same Modifiers)

See Evil

Minimum Reaction: Very Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 11 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 9

You are granted the ability to single out "evil" people in a crowd. Anyone truly wicked and sinful to the core will register to you, as will anyone possessed or under the influence of evil supernatural forces. By making an IQ roll, you can gauge just how much evil lies in anyone's heart. This miracle lasts long enough for you to size up those around you (GM's option.)

Statistics: Detect (Evil; Cosmic, No Die Roll Required, +100%; Pact, -10%; Vision-Based, Reversed, -20%)

Faith Healing

Minimum Reaction: Very Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 13 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 10

Divine power channels through your hands, healing whoever you touch. The strain costs you 1 FP for every 2 HP healed and can even repair crippled limbs. See page 59 of the *Basic Set* for healing diseases; you can cure any disease with a penalty of up to your IQ-3. The miracle will stay with you long enough for you to heal whoever you need to or until you fall unconscious.

Statistics: Healing (Cosmic, No Die Roll Required, +100%; Faith Healing, +20%; Pact, -10%)

Holy Glory

Minimum Reaction: Very Good

Learned Prayer Cost: 22 points

Learned Prerequisite: Divine Favor 12

Invoking this miracle causes everyone who can see you, human, demon, or otherwise, to immediately roll against unmodified Will or against a 13, *whichever is lower*. All evil supernatural beings who fail must roll on the *Fright Check Table*, while all humans must roll on the *Awe Check Table* (*GURPS Powers*, page 85). Fearlessness, Unfazeable, etc., have no effect, but anyone who resists is immune for an hour.

Statistics: Awe (Cannot choose version of Terror, -30%; Cosmic, Irresistible Attack, +300%; Pact, -10%)

This list is far from exhaustive! GMs are encouraged to create their own miracles. One way to do so is to make note of any improvised miracles -- the kind the GM comes up with on the fly when the paragon successfully prays for nonspecific help. If the gaming group finds one of these miracles enjoyable enough that it keeps coming up in play, the GM should write it down using the above examples as guidelines, and let the paragon add it as a learned prayer.

Above all, have fun. The tone of the divine help should fit the flavor of the campaign, from subtle and realistic to over the top and campy. These rules will let you build everything from a beleaguered but faithful local priest dealing with spiritual evil to a superprophet who parts the central city river on his way to fight crime. As long as the campaign's deity approves, it's all right either way.

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