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Religion in computer games

Religious themes conveyed through an unorthodox medium

Religionshistoria C
C-uppsats

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is an attempt to create a “first basis” of reliability for religious content in computer games, and its value in academic studies. While not researching it in depth, this essay will also give a suggestion of computer games’ potential as a didactic medium. A quantitative comparative analysis has been performed, to present several common religious themes and their occurrence in the computer game respectively.

While researching the game, an abundance of religious themes have been found, documented and presented. Through this, it is concluded that computer games not only have the capability of presenting religious themes; they are found to be capable mediums of presentation. The content itself is of high varsity and of great interest to any religious scholar.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Presentation

If a person is asked where religious content can be found, chances are that “computer games” is not the first thing that comes to their mind. While there is much information to be found regarding didactic aspects in computer games, articles regarding religious content researched on a deeper level is hard to find. Perhaps it can be said that most computer games in general have no need for including religious content on a deeper level. As an example, it would be hard to incorporate religious content in a generic car-driving simulator. Religious themes in such a game would likely be regarded as highly irrelevant for the rest of the game.

There are, however, games who go great lengths to create virtual worlds as close to being all-encompassing as possible. Just as in a book, the reader/player participant will be more immersed within the described virtual world if the story, characters and plot is convincing. To achieve this within a computer game, some developers include vast amounts of content. Within this content, some games can be found to put much emphasis on religious themes.

In this essay, the computer game Morrowind will be researched to present and examine some religious themes. It will include a chapter regarding definitions of the concept “religion”, and continue on to present the game itself and content following the described model of definition.

The purpose of this work is, as noted in the abstract, an attempt to create a “first basis” of reliability for this type of content and its value in academic studies. No particular knowledge of computer games will be required for this essay. Because of this, and the low reliability of computer games, the introductionary chapter will form a large part of the essay. This is necessary for the reader to understand the nature of the religious content found in the game. Without a careful presentation of this content from the most basic level, it is all too easy to disregard it.

A reader who is already learned in the world of Morrowind may find that only religious content on a more basic level will be presented. All of the game’s diversity and more complex content cannot be summarized in one essay of this span. My ambition is to delve more deeply into specific content in later works.
1.2 Past studies on the subject

At first, the purpose of this essay was to present the game shortly, then proceed to perform a deeper analysis on one or two religious themes within the game. However, when searching for academic materials as a basis for the essay, hardly a scrap of information regarding religious content in computer games could be found.

Perhaps this can be attributed to the common notion that computer games, like other forms of games, are not activities of spiritual nature. An idea of games being devoid of spiritual content is presented in the Encyclopedia of Religion. While it mainly describes the word “games” in other forms than computer games, it still gives a suggestion to the viewpoint of spirituality in games: “in such Western eyes, with the sphere of secular leisure, recreation, mass entertainment: “mere games” of undoubted commercial or social value but of little sacred or spiritual significance”¹ (p. 3266-3267)

Here is told how social psychologists and scientists have studied aspects of role playing in games, but nothing is told of computer games.¹ (p. 3268) This is not surprising as the article was written in 1987¹ (p. 3269) when computer role-playing games were almost, or completely nonexistent. However, it is odd that no-one seems to have discovered the prevalence of religious content in computer games in all this time.

There was an article written by Christopher P. Scholtz regarding this subject, but emphasis was put on the concept and potential for including religious concepts in computer games, rather than actually exploring any games to look for any of these themes.²

Another article was found by the same author, where the video game Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time is researched.³ (p. 176) In this article as well, the purpose was to present ideas of how religious content can be taught through games as a medium, not to analyze the game itself for religious content. However, the usefulness of this particular game is questionable when researching religious content, as is later made clear in the article:

¹ MacAlloon, Encyclopedia of Religion, “Games”
² Christopher P. Scholtz, Religious education and the challenge of computes games: research perspectives on a new issue, 2004
“Two aspects are most important. First the relation between God and humans as described in the game; the tree as the God of the world is getting weaker and weaker and therefore needs Link’s help. Furthermore the antagonist of the good deity is not an evil deity as in the traditional myths, but a human being. These two points correspond to the modern feeling that God is dead” (p. 178-179)

At the same time, there are some instances in this game where a creation myth is presented to the player. This, on the other hand, is not included in his analysis. Choosing to base a religious article on a game while only including themes of a “dying spiritual world” will probably not improve the view of games as capable of presenting religious content. Rather, it gives an impression of the opposite.

Because of this, it was hard to delve deeply into religious themes coming from a computer game. Even if interesting concepts could be found, they could easily be dismissed as irrelevant and useless for religious studies, as it is “just a computer game”. Therefore, the purpose of this essay was changed to explore this subject, which seems to be almost completely devoid of research within the academic world.

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4 Furthermore, this “tree as God of the world” dies after a short period in the game. Author’s note.
1.3 Purpose
Through reviewing concepts and definitions of religion and presenting content of this nature from a computer game, this essay tries to give an example of how computer games can include considerable amounts of religious content. The purpose of this essay is to create a “first basis of reliability”, not only to suggest a didactic potential of computer games but also to dismiss the common notion that computer games are devoid of valuable content for academic studies.

There are several subjects of importance in this game. For example, it presents a fascinating way to learn about different cultures and belief. Here, the player can take part of the religious world in a much more immersive experience than just listening to a teacher’s presentation or reading a book. Instead, the player becomes an active participant and often receives tasks to find information. The process of learning becomes integrated with exciting adventures, making the player feel like a heroic adventurer while learning about subjects as religion, morality and culture. While this process is not the subject of research, it is still noted throughout the presentation of the game.

Question at issue
With this purpose, the research will attempt to answer the following question:

- Is it possible to incorporate religious themes within a computer game?

Through this research, the ending discussion will attempt to answer a second question:

- Can computer games be regarded as a potentially valid medium of presenting religious content?
1.4 Method
The game Morrowind presents different methods of research in itself. Some references included in the appendix consist of content found in a book, while other content is taken from conversations held with various NPC:s in the game.⁶

Concept of religion
An analysis of religious content can only be performed with a clear definition of the word ‘religion’. Religion as a general concept is difficult to describe, however, and the purpose of this essay is not to perform a deeper research regarding the nature of religion. Furthermore, some elements are hard to incorporate within a computer game, an issue that will be included later in the essay. Instead, the concept of religion will primarily be reduced into individual concepts commonly found in different historical religions around the world. In other words, the purpose is to present occurring themes within the game which can be related to themes found in several historical religions.

Presentation of religious themes
To avoid prolonged repetitions, a certain model will be used when presenting religious themes. The ‘Definition of religion’ section will begin with a few short, more general presentations of the concept “religion” to give an idea of some common religious themes. Note that this section will be very short; as will be explained later in this section, the purpose is to present themes without performing a deeper analysis. Therefore, the presentation of these quotes will be very short and terse, comments between quotes will be kept short. These quotes will be followed by a list of themes, partly taken from these “general presentations” and partly taken from other sections of the Encyclopedia of Religion and Eliade’s The Sacred and the Profane. Every aspect will be listed separately, followed by a short description. When presenting religious content from the game, the same list of themes will be used. However, one or several examples from the game will follow instead, replacing the text describing the theme. As a shortened example:

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⁶ The word ‘NPC’ is explained in the ‘Word definitions’ section.
The methods used in Morrowind to teach the player about various subjects is an interesting concept in itself, and deserves much more research.
In ‘Definitions of religion’ section:

**Idolatry**  
Veneration of sacred objects.

In ‘Presentation of content’ section:

**Idolatry**  
In the city of Example, many households contain statues attributed to the deity Example.

Since the Temple faith is described in flowing text throughout the ‘Temple’ section, while the concept of religion is reduced into individual themes, this method allows for the reader to effectively find examples of specific religious themes without searching through a large amount of text.

In other words; if the reader wants a more general description of the Temple faith, they can consult the ‘Temple’ section. If they want concrete examples of religious themes, they can read the ‘Definitions of religion’ followed by the ‘Presentation of content’ section. If they want to speculate whether the summary of these themes can be said to present the basis of a religious faith, the ‘Discussion’ section will discuss the question at issue before the ending ‘Conclusion’ section.

There will not only be an analysis of the religious themes, but also a short explanation of certain problems regarding limitations in the nature of the game. This is also relevant to the question at issue, as problems with the game as a medium can severely impact its ability to present these themes.

These “problematic themes” will not be presented in the ‘Definitions of religion’ section. Instead, they are presented in the ‘Game limitations’ section, together with an explanation why this particular theme is hard to incorporate within this particular game.

**Gathering material**

To analyze these events, their content and functions, relevant sections of the game Morrowind has been played through. Whenever content of interest has been found, “print screens” have been used to capture images directly from the game. These images were later sorted into categories, described more thoroughly in the ‘Quotations, footnotes’ section.
Statements regarding content in the game will be referred to these “print screens”, which are included in the attachment.

**Method of analysis**

It is important to note that religious content will be researched through a quantitative analysis. Contrary to a qualitative analysis, where a few chosen aspects are researched on a deeper level, a quantitative enables presenting content of greater varsity without going into the same depth of analysis.

Performing a qualitative analysis would severely limit the number of aspects that can be presented. While a deeper analysis can end up presenting interesting material, it will be hard to find use for it if the concept of religious themes in computer games has no reliability. To just give a brief description of the game and then quickly continue on to perform a deep analysis of a few religious aspects could be viewed as a severe over-analyzation. Furthermore, it would be hard to form a reliable conclusion that computer games can include religious themes if the aspects presented are greatly limited in number. Therefore, the priority is to present religious themes without necessarily analyzing them deeply.

**Points of emphasis**

The religious content in Morrowind is vast. Even when performing a quantitative analysis, presenting the religious world of Morrowind in its entirety is far too great of an undertaking for an essay of this level. Furthermore, the purpose of the essay is to present the occurrence of religious themes in the game, not to highlight its varsity.

Even when greatly narrowing down the researched area, a thorough background explanation is necessary. The focus will be to try not to introduce too many unfamiliar concepts, so a reader without experience of the game can read the essay without having to consult the ‘Word definitions’ section every other sentence.

Therefore, attempts to highlight some of the religious content found in the game will only be researched from a single area of the game: the Tribunal Temple. Various themes will be researched; such as its cult, teachings and the didactic content incorporated within the duties demanded of a Temple initiate.
1.5 Limitations

- There will be no deeper presentation of Morrowind as a computer game, only the description from the Game Manual will be used. There are several reasons for this. First, the purpose of the essay is to describe religious themes in the game, not the game in its entirety. The presentation in the Manual gives a reasonable explanation of the nature and purpose of the game, and is written by the very people who created it.

Second, a presentation of the game is very hard without using secondary sources explaining the events throughout the game; knowledge of the games’ basic concepts are usually acquired through playing the game itself. If the main plot of the game would be based on a book, for example, a researcher could first describe an event in the game and then refer to the literal equivalent it is based on. There is no such basis in this game, however, which makes it hard to include a longer presentation.

In other words, it is hard to find a reliable description of the game without playing the game itself; the game is the primary source. Including a longer presentation of it would require either secondary sources or a vast number of print screens, which would have little use for the later presentation of religious themes. Therefore, presenting the game exclusively through the text included in the Game Manual is the most effective way to present it without using any secondary sources.

- As explained in the ‘Method’ section, only religious themes found within the Temple will be researched. While the spiritual world of Morrowind in its entirety is much more diverse, there purpose is no purpose to highlight the varsity of religious content.

- When using academic literature, quality has been preferred over quantity. With the purpose of simply presenting basic concepts of religion, there has been no need for using many sources, which would have been the case if certain themes has been analyzed on a deeper level or of comparisons would have been made with historical religions.

- Naturally, “all” religious themes presented by Eliade and the Encyclopedia of Religion will not be noted. It does not need saying that a particular faith does not need to apply to every single theme noted by Eliade or the Encyclopedia to be considered a “true religion”.
- There will be no deeper analysis regarding similarities between religious themes in the game and similarities to any historical religious belief. Furthermore, there will be no deeper discussion whether certain concepts can be regarded as religious or not. If a specific theme is prevalent in several religious traditions, it is regarded as being an aspect of a religious nature.

- It should be noted how no Creation myths will be presented, as research is focused on the Temple worship of Vivec, who was born mortal and is no Creator God. Presenting Creation myths would require an introduction of several new concepts with little relevancy to the remaining presentation.

- As Vivec is born a mortal, not a divine deity, he could be compared to the theme of mythic ancestors\(^7\) (p. 325). However, this theme is not relevant to Vivec for two reasons. First, he was not born in a “mythic era”; his actions remembered by the shrines are honored as “archetypal” but not as some prehistoric form of all mortal actions. They are highly revered, but not archetypes who “reveal the realm of the sacred, death, sexuality, sacred geography, and the methods of food production”\(^7\) (p. 325).

Second, it is hard to call him an ancestor when he is still alive and able to communicate with his followers. His status, both through his place in the Temple faith and through his god-like capabilities, he resembles a divine deity more than the mythic ancestor. No further analysis will be made of this speculation.

- The definition of the Almsivi as gods is a controversial definition, as they are currently living in human form. Throughout the game, the player is granted much knowledge regarding the nature of their divinity, raising many questions on what makes an entity divine. However interesting this issue may be, however, it requires an analysis on a much deeper level and cannot be included here.

- As noted in the Word definitions section, the Tribunal consists of three living gods: Vivec, Almalexia and Sotha Sil. However, since the game takes part in Vvardenfell where Vivec resides, it is not surprising that he receives the “dominant role” in the trinity for the neighboring population. Therefore, emphasis will be put on Vivec when describing the Temple and its Tribunal.

\(^7\) Long, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Ancestors: Mythic Ancestors
- Ancestor reverence has a prominent role in Dunmer faith. Unfortunately, however interesting this theme may be, it requires too deep of an analysis and would rather deserve a whole essay solely dedicated to it. Therefore, this theme will not be presented.

- No comparisons will be made between Morrowind and any other computer games. There is a plethora of computer games including different forms of mythology, and although Morrowind and the Elder Scrolls series contain an abundance of religious and mythical content, the purpose of this work is not to create an image of Morrowind as an “ideal” game for teaching about religious themes. Neither is there a purpose to endorse a view of the game series as a predecessor of games including religious or didactic themes in any way.

- There is a small Temple cult who have interpreted their faith differently. They are called the Dissident Priests, and claim to follow the original Temple teachings. While the suggestion of different interpretations in Temple tradition will be presented, no analysis will be done regarding the Dissident Priests or their concepts of the “original” Temple traditions.

- While pilgrimages will be used as examples at times, they will be limited to the task required of the player at the pilgrimage sites and the purpose they have. The nature of pilgrimages in itself and any comparisons to pilgrimages in historical religions will not be made.

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8 Morrowind, *Ancestors and the Dunmer*  
9 Morrowind, conversation, Savant, asked about “ancestors”
1.6 Quotations, Footnotes

Quotations

When quoting content from literature or the game itself, italics will be used. If italics are used in a certain section of the quoted text, it will be presented without italics. If quotation marks are used in the quote itself, they will be changed to apostrophes. As example:

“This is a quote, and this passage is originally written in italics.”
“One person said to the other: ‘It’s raining today.’”

If different sections of a text is quoted, the sections will be separated by an em dash (—) followed by an ellipsis (...). For example:

“This is a quotation from a text. — ...This is a continued quotation from the same text, but from a different section.”

If quoting a longer text, such as the presentation from the Game Manual, no quotation marks will be used. Instead, the text will be separated into its own section. The text will still be marked in italics.

If a quoted text is referenced from another source in the book, this reference will be included as well. The reference will be presented in the same form as written there:

“John Doe said: ‘This is a quote from the referenced literature; in other words, the Encyclopedia is not the primary source.’ (John Doe 1932, p. 95)”

Complete source references will be included in the ‘Sources’ section.

References taken from the game

Quoting content from the game itself is a difficult matter. Where there are several wiki-based pages containing next to everything found in the game, these pages have very low academic reliability. Furthermore, their validity cannot be verified without purchasing the game.

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10 Referenced literature, page 0
Only primary sources will be used when quoting or describing content of the game. To achieve this, “print screens”, or captured images, have been taken directly from the game when quoting dialogue or books in the game. These will be included as attachments. Through this method, material from the game can be quoted without using secondary sources.

**Book references**

Every book page and every conversation topic used in the essay will be found in the form of a print screen. These are listed in the Attachments folder, which includes one folder for book content, one folder for content found in conversations and a third for content found through the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces.

When content from a book found inside the game is presented, the footnote will be presented in the same manner as books from other literature. The corresponding file will be found in the “Books” folder. Here, the files are sorted after the titles of every book. Page numbers are included in the file names.

It is important to note that some texts, such as the *Guide to Vvardenfell* and *Guide to Vivec*, are written as notes, and are not divided into individual pages. Print screens of the referenced sections will be included, however they will be named after the file name of the print screen. For example, “Morrowind, *Guide to Vivec 3*” refers to the file “Guide to Vivec 3”, the number is not a reference to a specific page.

**Conversation references**

When content from a conversation is referred to, the title of the NPC is presented. If the content comes from an NPC being asked about a certain subject, the subject will be included. For example, when presenting a conversation told by the Temple Patriarch about the subject “my trade” it will be presented as:

Morrowind, conversation, Temple Patriarch, asked about “my trade”

The file name for this example would be “My trade – Temple Patriarch”. Through this, files in the attachments will be sorted after topics of conversation rather than by who gives the information.
It is important to note that much “general information” can be given by several NPC:s, while some dialogue, such as given tasks, can only be given by one specific NPC. For example, all Temple Masters, and the Patriarch, will give the same information when asked about their trade, as they are all Temple priests.
When it comes to more specific information only given by a specific person, the print screens will not be named after conversation topics, as presented above. They will instead be named in a more specific manner, for example:

Morrowind, conversation, Joining the Temple 1
In this case, the file will be found in the “Conversations” folder as well, with the file name “Joining the Temple 1”.
Also, as an example, a reference to “Joining the Temple 1, 2” refers to both the file “Joining the Temple 1” and “Joining the Temple 2”.

**Pilgrimage references**
As the events of the pilgrimage depict neither book content nor dialogue with other NPC:s, content throughout the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces are contained within a third folder. These images present examples of the player’s thanksgiving at specific shrines, and the performance of specific rituals throughout the pilgrimage. These images are presented after the following example:

Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Humility 1
The corresponding file will be named “Grace of Humility 1”, found in the folder “Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces”.

1.7 Word definitions

As already noted, the concept of religion will be reduced into individual themes commonly found in historical religions. The individual themes will be presented in its corresponding chapters.

While the phrase religion can, in this case, refer to “virtual” religious themes of a computer game, the phrase historical religion refers to religion that is or has been practiced by human beings.

A print screen is a computer function used to capture an image file directly from the game. This method is used to enable references directly from the game, without using secondary sources.

Morrowind is the name of the computer game researched. When using the phrase the game, it is always referring to Morrowind, unless otherwise noted.

Geographic areas should also be explained, as it can be confusing for someone new to the game. While the game Morrowind does take place in the province called Morrowind, it only takes place in one part of this province, on an island-continent called Vvardenfell. If a reference is made the Morrowind as a province, it will be specifically described as such. Otherwise, as noted above, it always refers to the computer game itself.

Dunmer refers to the native population in Morrowind, also referred to as “dark elves” in the game.

Role-Playing Game, or RPG, is a term used for different forms of games, not only for computer games but also for some so-called tabletop games. When using the term in this essay, however, it will refer to computer games which puts emphasis on immersing the player into a fantasy world. Further explanation on this concept will be included when presenting the game, as there will be no analysis of Morrowind in comparison to other computer games.

11 Morrowind, Guide to Vvardenfell 1
**Player** refers to the actual person who plays the computer game. The **adventurer**, on the other hand, is the main character created by the player at the beginning of the game. In short, **player** is the person playing the game Morrowind, and the **adventurer** is the virtual character created and controlled by the player.

In some cases, there are difficulties whether the player or adventurer should be addressed. For example, are actions performed by the adventurer or by the player? While the adventurer “physically” performs the act, he is merely doing what the player commands him to do. Virtually, it is the choice of the player. Therefore, actions performed by the adventurer will still be credited to the player.

Of course, the player can be both male and female, and the same goes for the adventurer. However, to keep references simple, both the player and adventurer are always referred to as male.

**NPC**, or Non-Player Character, is a characted included within the game that is controlled by the computer. While there are many creatures unable to communicate with the player, an NPC is defined as a computer-controlled “humanoid” character, who has the ability to communicate with the player through dialogue.

While the literature of all books in the game are, of course, written by an actual human being, the author takes of the role and perspective of a **virtual author** within the game. For example, when writing a book regarded as being written by a Temple priest in the game, the author naturally needs to take on the role of a Temple priest. In other words, when the word **author** is mentioned, it refers to the actual human being who has written the text. **Virtual author**, however, refers to the “author-character” who is supposedly said to have written the book in the game.

Some books include a **preface**, marked with square brackets ( [ ] ). Here certain introductions or explanations may be included, written “out of character”, i.e. written by the author, not the virtual author. There are different purposes for this, often to state common knowledge for the player. One example is the preface in **Sariyoni’s sermons**, which tells how the book is “commonly found in most Dunmer households”.  

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12 (Morrowind, Sariyoni’s sermons, page 1)
**Lore** is a word commonly used to describe content within a fictional fantasy world. Any source of information, historical, religious or of any other nature will be referred to as **lore**.

A **Faction** is an organization the player can join. There are a number of factions in the game, among them spiritual organizations as well as guilds for soldiers, thieves and hired assassins.

The Tribunal Temple is the name for the largest religion of the Dunmer, the native population in the game. When referring to it, it will be called the **Temple**. Note that the same phrase will be used both when referring to the faith in itself and when referring to the Temple faction, the organization joinable by the player, as the faction is based on Temple faith.

The three gods of the Tribunal Temple are named Vivec, Almalexia and Sotha Sil. In the game, they are called by several titles, among them the Tribunal and the Almsivi. When referring to these gods, they will be called the **Almsivi**. It should be noted, however, that emphasis will be put on the god Vivec, who holds the dominant role of the three gods in the game.

The Tribunal were born as humans, and ascended to a divine nature in their living timespan. They still have a physical form, appearing as human beings despite their divine nature. For this, they are often referred to as **living gods**.

When the player first becomes a member of the Temple, they receive the rank of Layman. However, they will not be able to perform any tasks before they have completed the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces and received the rank of **Initiate**. Every Temple member has a certain rank, and the player can rise in ranks during the course of the game. No analysis will be performed on these ranks, however, and **Initiate** refers to any Temple believer who has performed the initiating pilgrimage for gaining full membership in the Temple faction.

A **Temple Master** holds the second highest rank of the Temple. They are authorized to hand out tasks for the player, and can offer the player repentance if they have broken any of the Temple rules.

The **Patriarch** is the leader of the Temple. Note, however, that he also holds the title of Archcanon, which he is called in several books.
Game presentation

Morrowind is a Role-Playing Game, the third installment in a game series known as the Elder Scrolls. In Morrowind, the player is hauled off into a diverse landscape, filled to the brim with diverse content. The adventurer has no memory of his past life, and so the player can choose freely who they are and what they want to do.

The official Game Manual presents the game as following:

"The essence of any Elder Scrolls role-playing game has always been simple: let you do what you want, and make sure you have fun doing it. Huge, detailed, and open-ended are words that frequently come up when talking about Arena, Daggerfall, and now Morrowind. We don’t believe a good role-playing game should restrict you from making choices, even if they’re bad ones. Go ahead and play a wizard that wears heavy armor. You can do it, but remember that it’s another skill to learn and might take time away from your magical studies."

"One of the first questions people usually ask us is, “What do I do in this game?” The answer we give is inevitably “Well, what do you want to do?” Do you want to be a noble knight or a treacherous swine? Do you want people to like you? Do you want people to loathe and fear you? Do you prefer casting spells, wielding swords, or both? Want to plunder dungeons and tombs? Rise to head of a guild? Gather information from everyone about everything? Whatever your interests, there’s plenty for you to do."

"One minute you may be gazing up at the moons and stars over the plains or out for a swim in the Sea of Ghosts, and running for your life from a cliff racer or slaughterfish the next. Any place in Morrowind can quickly turn deadly. Vvardenfell, the setting for Morrowind, is a culturally and geographically diverse place, dominated by the volcanic Red Mountain and surrounding wastelands. You’ll find the island’s population in a variety of different settlements, including small fishing villages with stick huts, strange towns where houses that look like large bug shells are used for housing, dwellings made of giant mushrooms grown by mages, and the majestic ancient city of Vivec."

" Everywhere you go you will find an assortment of do-gooders, scoundrels, eccentrics, and ordinary people just trying to make their way in the world. How you choose to interact with them is entirely up to you, and as a result you will find your gameplay experience may be completely different from anyone else’s. Trust whom you will, dispatch whomever you want, but be prepared for the consequences."
Morrowind is filled with things for you to do…hundreds and hundreds of things. During your efforts to complete the main quest or rise to power in a faction, don’t forget to leave the beaten path now and then to see what’s over the next ridge. Or, talk to people you meet to see what problems or assistance they may reveal to you. It is in these moments, and thousands of others like them, that you will forget the real world—sometimes for much longer than you intended—and lose yourself in ours. Perhaps it’ll be spent searching for a lost artifact that is rumored to be hidden in a tomb. Maybe you’ll choose a side in a war between rival guilds.

No matter what your preference, there’s no right or wrong way to play Morrowind.

— The Morrowind Team

13 Morrowind, official Game Manual
3 Definitions of religion
3.1 General presentation

In the Encyclopedia of Religion, on *Religion [Further Considerations]*, a general description of religion is given by Melford Spiro as “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings” (Spiro 1966, p. 96)\(^\text{14}\) (p. 7702)

However, in *Religion [First Edition]* an issue is raised, which might be attributed to Spiro’s definition. This issue revolves around how religion is often reduced to “the God-encounter type of experience”.\(^\text{15}\) (p. 7694)

It proceeds to credit Mircea Eliade for having “broken” this reductive habit, instead focusing on the prevalence of religious themes in many other forms of culture. When Eliade talks of the concept of religion, there are certain areas of interest that receives special emphasis, among these the concepts of sacred time, space and the concept of hierophanies.\(^\text{15}\) (p. 7694)

Another attempt for a more generalized presentation of religious belief is made by William Alston, including several common religious themes:

“For example, William Alston suggested that the presence of an unspecified number of any of the following characteristics would make a set of cultural practices a religion:

(1) Belief in supernatural beings (gods). (2) A distinction between sacred and profane objects. (3) Ritual acts focused on sacred objects. (4) A moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods. (5) Characteristically religious feelings. (6) Prayer and other forms of communication with gods. (7) A world view, or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein... (8) A more or less total organization of one’s life based on the world view. (9) A social group bound together by the above. (Alston 1967, pp. 141-142)” \(^\text{14}\) (p. 7703-7704)


3.2 Religious themes

Sacred deity
As suggested by William Alston, a common theme in religion is the occurrence of one or several beings regarded as divine, sacred; in some way supernatural.16 (p. 7703)

Divine manifestation
Divinity appearing in the material world in different forms, as described by Eliade as a “manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree—to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ)”17 (p. 11)

Sacred objects
Objects venerated as divine, not because of the nature of these objects but because of their supposedly divine essence, forming “a distinction between sacred and profane objects” 16 (p. 7703) 17 (p. 12)

Religious scripture
One of the most common religious themes in literal society is the prevalence of “texts that are revered as especially sacred and authoritative in all of the largest and many smaller religious traditions”,18 (p. 8194) and are often attributed to “holy men of the past — prophets, saints, founders of faiths”19 (p. 7699)
The Encyclopedia of Religion also notes the importance of interpretations; how they vary in nature and how interpreters “are caught between their desires to be faithful to the original sacred word and to make its exposition relevant and meaningful to their own age”.19 (p. 7699)

Morality
As told among the quotes, religion commonly include concepts of morality, usually said to have been taught to Mankind by a divine deity.16 (p. 7703) As Eliade puts it; “whatever man does has a transhuman model; hence, even outside of the festival time,”20 his acts and gestures imitate the paradigmatic models established by the gods and the mythical ancestors”17 (p. 87)

16 Alles, Encyclopedia of Religion, Religion [Further Considerations]
17 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane
18 Graham, Encyclopedia of Religion, Scripture
19 King, Encyclopedia of Religion, Religion [First Edition]
20 “Festival time” is a reference to sacred time, a concept described later in this section. Author’s note.
Worship
As the described “more or less total organization of one’s life based on the world view”\(^{21}\) (p. 7703), worship refers to the dedication to one or several divine deities and the wish to base one’s life after the teachings of the specific religion.

Prayer
Prayer signifies different forms of communication between a human and a deity. The *Encyclopedia of Religion* presents “a common basic typology of prayer”\(^{22}\) (p. 7367), describing different prayers after the purpose of each individual prayer. Here is listed “petition, invocation, thanksgiving (praise or adoration), dedication, supplication, intercession, confession, penitence, and benediction”.\(^{22}\) (p. 7367-7368)

Organization
While the *Encyclopedia of Religion* states several different meanings of the concept of “religious communities”, one of these feels at least partially relevant to describe a religious organization: “a body of people having a common organization or interests, or living in the same place under the same laws and regulations”\(^{23}\) (p. 7716)

No further speculation on the nature of sacred communities will be made. The concept of a sacred community will simply be regarded as an organization which encompasses several religious themes.

Sacred time and space
In *The Sacred and the Profane*, A major point of emphasis is put on the concept of sacred time and space, which Eliade claims encompasses all religious rituals:

“Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, ‘in the beginning.’”\(^{24}\) (p. 68)

He explains how the religious man’s world contains “two kinds of time”\(^{24}\) (p. 70), being able to return to this “eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites”\(^{24}\) (p. 70)

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\(^{21}\) Alles, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Religion [Further Considerations]

\(^{22}\) Gill, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Prayer


\(^{24}\) Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*
The acts in themselves are not important; rather the concept of a return to the sacred time: “they are reproducing, to the smallest detail, the paradigmatic acts of the gods as they were performed in illo tempore”.25 (p. 87)

Emphasis is put on sacred time as a return to the exact time of the “original act”.25 (p. 85) This mythical time is often said to be from where Mankind was first created, or from when humans first learned important lessons, such as “the various kinds of social behavior and of practical work”.25 (p. 90)

Several concepts of sacred space can be correlated to the functions of sacred time, as they can be two facets of the same religious experience. Sacred time is the concept of symbolically transporting the worshippers to the mythic time of the original sacred act. Sacred space, on the other hand, is the concept of symbolically transporting the worshippers to a “sacred dimension”, entwining it with the present, material world. These “breaks in space” are often seen as different forms of sacred buildings, such as temples, who are often seen as “the earthly reproduction of a transcendent model”25 (p. 58)

25 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane
The Tribunal Temple

4.1 Faith

The Temple, short for the Tribunal Temple, is the native religion of Morrowind. It is dedicated to the worship of the Almsivi, three gods called Vivec, Almalexia and Sotha Sil.26

In the game, a person not initiated in the basic concepts of the Temple is encouraged to read a book called *Fellowship of the Temple*.27 (p. 1) Under the chapter “Articles of faith”, the concept of the Almsivi is presented:

“*The Temple believes that Almalexia, Vivec, and Sotha Sil were mortal guardians of Morrowind who walked the earth, defeated the Dunmer’s greatest enemies, the Nords and the Dwarves, and achieved divine substance through superhuman discipline and virtue and supernatural wisdom and insight. Like loving ancestors, they guard and counsel their followers. Like stern parents, they punish sin and error. Like generous relatives, they share their bounty among the greatest and least, according to their needs.*”28 (p. 3-4)

One important aspect to note is how the Almsivi are told to have been born as mortal beings, not born divine but achieving it during their mortal lives. It should also be noted how the Almsivi are not gods who lived in the earthly world “a long time ago”, but reside in the province of Morrowind in present time.29 (p. 4)

These living gods, particularly as they have a physical form in the present time, are seen as the ideal example how a Temple initiate should lead their life. As a scholar notes: “*The Temple cultist’s relationship with the Tribunal is a relationship with a living, breathing god who walks the earth, speaks in person with priests and cultists, and whose daily actions are prescribed models for the daily actions of their followers.*”29 (p. 4)

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26 Morrowind, conversation, Temple Priest, asked about “Temple”
27 Morrowind, *Fellowship of the Temple*
28 Morrowind, *Fellowship of the Temple*
29 Morrowind, *Reflections on Cult Worship in the Empire*
This is one example where the player is presented with the notion that a Temple initiate should follow certain rules and guidelines:

“**Heartlanders do not speak with their gods, and do not think of their actions as under constant review and judgement by their gods; the Dunmer feel that all they think and do is under the ever-watchful eye of the Tribunal and family ancestor spirits...**”\(^{30}\)\(^{31}\) (p. 5)

In Morrowind, Vivec resides in a city named after him. It is made up of several individual structures, together forming a pattern similar to a cross. Vivec himself resides in his palace at the southernmost part of the city, the closest structure being the High Fane, the largest temple on the island-continent.\(^{32}\)

If a Temple priest is asked about their trade, they call themselves **“an intercessor between Almsivi and their worshippers, caretaker of the temple and shrines, and councilor and educator for the faithful and laymen.”**\(^{33}\) In other words, the priest tells how his knowledge is taught on to initiates of the Temple faith, suggesting some form of sermons being held for the faithful. Whether this is true or not, the priests offer to teach the player on several subjects if asked.\(^{33}\)

This is one of several ways to gain knowledge of the Temple. To gain deeper knowledge of Temple faith, the player needs to read books on the subject. Being learned in Temple faith is a great virtue, which is noticeable in several events of the game. After performing tasks for the Temple, the player is often given books and is encouraged to read them.\(^{34}\)

As already suggested, there are several books in the game covering different subjects of the Temple. Among these are the above quoted *Fellowship of the Temple* and *Reflections on Cult Worship in the Empire*, covering a general presentation of the Temple faith and its attributes in comparison to “Heartlander faith” respectively.

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\(^{30}\) This book presents differences in belief between the faith of Imperial “Heartlanders” and the Dunmers’ Temple faith. Author’s note.

\(^{31}\) Morrowind, Reflections on Cult Worship in the Empire

\(^{32}\) Morrowind, *Guide to Vivec*

\(^{33}\) Morrowind, conversation, Temple Patriarch, asked about “my trade”

\(^{34}\) Morrowind, conversation, Cure daedra worshipper
In *Fellowship of the Temple*, the author refers to four additional books, telling the reader of their importance: “For those who would be wise, these sacred books will be of interest.”\(^{35}\) (p. 5) These books cover different themes of the Temple faith, and gives a further understanding of the Temple faith:

*Saryoni’s Sermons* has a preface which tells how this book is “the best selling of the Temple annotated texts, and therefore inexpensive and commonly found in most Dunmer households”\(^{36}\) (p. 1), signifying its importance in the Dunmer culture. Here, the reader can find “Vivec’s most famous sermons and the popular explanations of his Gospels.”\(^{36}\) (p. 1) In other words, this book tells of sermons held by a divine deity, how they have been passed down among the people, and how these sermons have been analyzed and interpreted in different ways. Here the player can read the sermons of the Seven Graces, the prominent theme of a pilgrimage the player has to perform to become an initiate of the Temple. These Graces will be explained when presenting the pilgrimage.

*Lives of the Saints* tells of faithful individuals whose actions made them recognized as saints. These saints are still venerated,\(^{37}\) and are said to represent different valors. The *Fellowship of the Temple* tells that “Members of the Temple who wish to be virtuous will model their lives on the lives of the saints”\(^{36}\) (p. 5) when referring to this book. Eleven saints are presented, telling who they were and of their actions which made them recognized as saints:

“If you would learn reverence, follow Saint Llothis the Pious, Patron of Tailors and Dyers. Contemporary and companion of the Tribunals, and the best-loved Alma Rula of the Tribunal Temple, he formulated the central rituals and principles of the New Temple Faith. Saint Llothis is the symbolic mortal bridge between the gods and the faithful, and the archetypal priest.”\(^{38}\) (p. 6-7)

Other examples of “saintly deeds” are of generosity, when Saint Rilms “gave away her shoes, then dressed and appeared as a beggar to better acquaint herself with the poor”,\(^{38}\) (p. 2-3) or of the “love of peace” through Saint Meris, who wandered large battlefields, healing soldiers from both sides without distinction, managing to end a large civil war.\(^{38}\) (p. 6)

\(^{35}\) Morrowind, *Fellowship of the Temple*

\(^{36}\) Morrowind, *Saryoni’s Sermons*

\(^{37}\) Morrowind, conversation, Hermit, asked about “saints”

\(^{38}\) Morrowind, *Lives of the Saints*
The Pilgrim’s Path is essential if the player wishes to become an initiate of the Temple. It describes the location of the shrines visited during the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces, which is described later.

The Consolations of Prayer describes the different shrines found throughout Morrowind, dedicated to different deities or saints. If the player prays to these shrines, they will receive a boon of various nature. The shrines have the ability to cure poison and disease, restore physical strength, willpower and other attributes, and even strengthen certain abilities or shield the player from different forms of harm.39 (p. 1-4)

Nonbelievers can also receive these gifts. However, a sum of gold needs to be offered as a token of respect. If a person has proven their faith by becoming an Initiate of the Temple, they can receive these blessings without monetary gifts.39 (p. 4-5)

39 Morrowind, The Consolations of Prayer
4.2 Rituals, pilgrimages

To become an initiate of the Temple, the player must first complete the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces.\(^{40}\) All over Vvardenfell, pilgrims can be found who wander the island-continent in search of different shrines, to pay their respect to the gods.\(^{41}\) Vivec City alone is “visited by hundreds of tourists of pilgrims daily”\(^{42}\)

When asking a pilgrim about their trade, they answer:

“I am a pilgrim. I search for enlightenment, and hope to purify my soul through facing and overcoming the challenges of pilgrimages that reenact the tests and trials of gods, saints, and heroes. I visit the shrines and make devotions everywhere I travel – in village Temple shrines, and the High Fane of Vivec, or at the remote shrines scattered all over Vvardenfell.”\(^{44}\)

As noted in the ‘Temple – Faith’ section, the sermons attributed to each of the Seven Graces are listed in the book *Sariyoni’s Sermons*. However, to understand the nature of the Seven Graces, the player needs to learn about the events attributed to them. Scattered around different parts of Vvardenfell, as told by the pilgrim, there are seven shrines.\(^{43}\) Three are found in close proximity to the High Fane and the Palace where Vivec resides, while the remaining four are found in other places.\(^{44}\) All are attributed to one of the Seven Graces. At each particular one of these, Vivec is said to have performed an act that is revered as an archetype for one of the Seven Graces:

*The Fields of Kummu: Shrine of Humility*

*Here Lord Vivec met a poor farmer whose guar had died. The farmer could not harvest his muck without his guar, and he could not provide for his family or his village. So the Lord Vivec removed his fine clothes and toiled in the fields like a beast of burden until the crop was harvested. It is at the Fields of Kummu we go to pray for the same humility Lord Vivec showed on that day.*\(^{44}\) (p. 1-2)

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\(^{40}\) Morrowind, conversation, Pilgrimage 1

\(^{41}\) Morrowind, conversation, Pilgrim, asked about “my trade”

\(^{42}\) Morrowind, *Guide to Vivec* 1

\(^{43}\) Note that, while these will not be analyzed, there are more than just these seven “pilgrimage shrines” found throughout the game, related to other tasks. Author’s note.

\(^{44}\) Morrowind, *The Pilgrim’s path*
To complete the pilgrimage, the player needs to travel to each of the shrines and quote the corresponding sermon of each Grace from *Sariyoni’s Sermons*, pledging to do their best at upholding these ideals:

“Thank you for your humility, Lord Vivec. I shall neither strut nor preen in vanity, but shall know and give thanks for my place in the greater world.”

However, simply quoting these texts and visiting the shrines is not enough to complete the pilgrimage. When visiting a shrine, an act of offering is required. As the mentioned farmer was harvesting muck, the player is expected to leave a piece of muck “to represent Vivec’s humility”. Through this, the Grace of humility is completed, and the player receives a blessing.

Through this, the player performs a symbolic re-creation of Vivec’s act of Grace, reenacting the trials of a god as described by the pilgrim. This theme is clearly suggested when presenting the Grace of Valor:

“Within the Koal Cave, Vivec fought a battle with Ruddy Man, the father of the Dreugh. — ...Dreugh within the cave itself are fearsome enemies; only experienced and capable adventurers should attempt to re-enact the epic battle with the dreugh in the cave. — ...When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a portion of dreugh wax as a token of Vivec’s victorious struggle with Ruddy Man.”

The first thing to note is how dreugh wax, which can be found on defeated dreugh, is offered as a symbol of the defeat of Ruddy Man. However, as the text implies, this shrine is special as it allows an adventurer to further prove himself through a more literal re-enactment. Deeper inside the cave, a particularly powerful “Dreugh Warlord” can be found. If it is defeated, the player not only receives the customary blessing when completing the Grace, but also receives a powerful piece of armor made of a dreugh carcass.

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45 Morrowind, *Sariyoni’s Sermons*
46 Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Humility 3
47 Morrowind, *The Pilgrim’s Path*
48 Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Humility 1, 2, 3
49 Dreugh are powerful, hostile creatures found in the game. Author’s note.
50 Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Valor 1-6
In a village called Gnisis, the shrine of Justice is found. When reading the inscription on the shrine, it tells the following story:

“Here in Gnisis Vivec made a potion to cure a villager who had fallen ill but could not pay for the healing of the Temple. Vivec promised that the Temple would always cure those who could not pay and left his sacred Mask as a sign of that promise.”

To complete the Grace of Justice, the player is expected to leave a potion with the ability to cure disease as a symbol of Vivec’s promise. When offering the potion, the player reads the Grace of Justice, found in Sariyoni’s Sermons:

“Thank you for your justice, Lord Vivec. I shall be neither cruel nor arbitrary, for fair dealing earns the love, trust, and respect of our people.”

If the player touches the shrine again after the Grace is completed, he is presented with Vivec’s Ashmask, the above mentioned item left by Vivec himself. If the player touches the mask, they are blessed with Vivec’s touch, the ability to cure others of disease.

When all seven Graces are completed, the player is finally recognized as a true Initiate of the Temple. Through this, the player receives free blessings while visiting Temple shrines and enables him to receive tasks that need to be done in the name of the Temple.
4.3 Temple tasks

When the player has become an Initiate of the Temple and has finished the pilgrimage of the Seven Graces, he can ask any Temple Master for duties, tasks that needs doing in the name of the Temple. While there are different sorts of tasks, some are used as a tool to teach the player about morality.

Reminding of the Grace of Justice, the player is asked to cure certain NPC:s with different backgrounds. The player is asked both to cure a diseased non-believer and an outcast. As the Temple Masters put it: “The Temple does not proselytize, but we do good works for non-believers.” In other words, they do not make attempts to convert others to their belief, but choose to help non-believers for the sake of charity. Once more, this follows well with the Grace of Justice, teaching how Temple initiates should model their actions after Vivec’s wish to help those in need.

This work of charity is taken one step further, however, when the player is asked to cure a diseased Daedra worshipper. As meetings between Temple initiates and Daedra worshippers usually result in battle, a task to cure one of these worshippers may strike the player as odd. The Temple Master describes the task as a lesson, and tells how “Vivec often showed compassion to his enemies.” When the player returns, the Temple Master rewards the player with a book: “You cured Bulfim gra-Shugarz and have proven your compassion. You might be interested in this book, which has an important lesson on the rewards of compassion.”

In another task, the player is shown how Temple initiates see knowledge of the Temple as a great virtue. The player is tasked with making sure a severely diseased pilgrim leaves a populated town to avoid spreading the disease. The Temple Master tells how she might be convinced by “some show of your devotion to the Temple’s teachings”. If the player simply begs her to leave, she refuses and says she might listen to a faithful person. To prove this, the player can quote from Saryoni’s Sermons to convince her to leave.

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57 Morrowind, conversation, Cure diseased nonbeliever 1-3
58 Morrowind, conversation, Cure diseased Ashlander outcast 1-5
59 Morrowind, conversation, Cure diseased nonbeliever 1
60 Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Justice 1
61 Without delving into the concept of the Daedra, they are considered evil by the Temple. Author’s note.
62 Morrowind, conversations, Daedra worship 1, 2
63 Morrowind, conversation, Cure daedra worshipper 1-3
64 Morrowind, conversation, Cure daedra worshipper 4
65 Morrowind, conversation, Diseased pilgrim 1
66 Morrowind, conversation, Diseased pilgrim 2, 3
67 Morrowind, conversation, Diseased pilgrim 4, 5
5 Presentation of content
5.1 Religious themes

Sacred deity
As presented mainly in the ‘Temple’ section, Vivec is one of the Almsivi who are venerated as gods of the Tribunal Temple.\(^68\)

Divine manifestation
The most prominent divine manifestation is, naturally, Vivec’s physical manifestation, which can be compared to Eliade’s definition of a "supreme hierophany".\(^69\) (p. 11)

Sacred objects
As one example, the shrines dedicated to different saints can be regarded as sacred objects as prayers are directed to them. They are not only sacred because of this veneration, but also through the blessings they confer to those who pray.\(^70\)
A different form of sacred object is the Ash mask of Vivec, called a “holy relic” by the citizens of the village Gnisis.\(^71\) It is a symbol, not only for Vivec’s promise to the poor,\(^72\) but also as a symbol for one of his Acts of Grace. Furthermore, the Mask still contains supernatural qualities, as the player receives the ability of curing disease if he touches it.\(^73\)

Religious scripture
There is no need for any religious scriptures of the Temple to written by “holy men of the past”\(^74\) (p. 7699) as Vivec himself is alive at the present time. Sariyoni’s Sermons, however, which is noted to be “commonly found in most Dunmer households”\(^75\) (p. 1), is written by the Temple Patriarch, and contains sermons held by Vivec himself. Furthermore, it is said to contain “popular interpretations” of Vivec’s teachings, suggesting that interpretations of sacred scriptures is an active process.\(^76\)

\(^{68}\) Morrowind, conversation, Temple priest, asked about “Temple”
\(^{69}\) Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane
\(^{70}\) The shrines and their properties are described in the book The Consolations of Prayer and the ‘Temple – Faith’ section. Author’s note.
\(^{71}\) Morrowind, conversation, Guard, about about “Mask of Vivec”
\(^{72}\) Morrowind, pilgrimage, Grace of Justice 1
\(^{73}\) Presented in the ‘Temple – Rituals, pilgrimages’ section. Author’s note.
\(^{74}\) King, Encyclopedia of Religion, Religion [First Edition]
\(^{75}\) Morrowind, Sariyoni’s Sermons
\(^{76}\) Further examples of religious scripture is presented in the ‘Temple – Faith’ section. Author’s note.
Morality
Right at the start when the player first asks about the Temple rules and doctrine he is told, among other things, how he must “Never transgress against your brothers or sisters – in thought or deed – as we are all one body.” Here a variation of the Golden Rule is presented through the notion that “we are all one body”. (p. 3630)

Among the Temple books, concepts of morality are perhaps most evident in The Seven Graces and Lives of the Saints. In the first, the player is told of seven acts performed by Vivec himself, and demands the player to perform a symbolic re-creation of these acts to become an Initiate of the Temple. Lives of the Saints also depict actions seen as models of the archetypal Temple Initiate, and encourages the faithful to base their lives after these models.

Worship
The nature of the pilgrimages are in themselves of a religious nature, as presented by the pilgrim in the ‘Temple – Rituals, pilgrimages’ section. However, to make a more general description of the suggested prevalence of worship within the game, An overview of Gods and worship in Tamriel can be consulted:

“One defining characteristic of all Gods and Goddesses is their interest in worship and deeds. Deeds in the form of holy quests are just one of the many things that bring the attention of a Deity. Deeds in everyday life, by conforming to the statutes and obligations of individual temples are commonly supposed to please a Deity. Performance of ceremony in a temple may also bring a Deity’s attention.” (p. 4)

Here, the book suggests the prevalence of performances in temples and highlights their purpose to receive the attention of a deity. Furthermore, it does not only suggest that rules and tasks for organizations such as the Temple is of a religious nature, it also suggests that “everyday deeds” pleases the Deity of the faithful. These “everyday deeds” might not always be noticeable in the game itself, but still serves to further the immersive notion of a rich spiritual life within the virtual world.

77 Morrowind, conversation, Joining the Temple 1
78 Plaks, Encyclopedia of Religion, Golden rule
79 Further explained in Lives of the Saints and the ‘Temple – Faith’ section. Author’s note.
80 Morrowind, An overview of Gods and worship in Tamriel
Prayer

While the player receives the honor to talk with Vivec in person near the end of the game, this is an honour received by few people. The opportunity for direct conversation might diminish the need for “traditional prayer”, but this is not an issue for most Temple initiates who never get to talk with Vivec in person.

Of the nine different sorts of prayer listed in the ‘Definitions of religion’ section, several events found in the game can be attributed to these. When the player is praying at a specific shrine, they request, or make a petition, for a certain deity or saint to grant a certain blessing. This could also be seen as an invocation, as the player direct himself to an individual deity or saint who offers the particular blessing desired by the player.

When performing the Pilgrimage of the Seven Graces, the player performs thanksgiving for Vivec’s original act of Grace, at the same time consecrating the shrine through associating it with Vivec’s sacred acts, with a vow to follow this model of virtue.

As mentioned in the ‘Temple – Temple Tasks’ section, the Temple does not perform any missionary work. While they are open for anyone to join, (p. 1) they only accept initiates who choose to seek out a Temple Master on their own initiative. Therefore, any prayers made on behalf of others, intercession, may very well be uncommon in Temple traditions. There is a stronger feeling of unity among the believers of the Temple, however. The above mentioned concept of all Temple initiates being figuratively seen as being all of one body suggests a stronger unity, which in turn may suggest the occurrence of prayers on behalf of others within the Temple faith.

Note that while no prayers of confession or penitence are held, the player can still be expelled from the Temple if they break any of the Temple rules. To repent of their sins, the player has to consult a Temple Master or the Patriarch.

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81 Morrowind, Guide to Vivec 2
82 Note how both “petition”, “supplication” and “benediction” denotes a prayer asking for a deity to provide the believer with something, usually different forms of guidance or blessings. As the player asks for a blessing, this act can be called both a petition, an act of supplication and for benediction. Author’s note.
83 The pilgrimage is described in the ‘Temple – Rituals, pilgrimages’ section. Author’s note.
84 Morrowind, Curing diseased nonbeliever 1
85 Morrowind, Fellowship of the Temple
86 Morrowind, Joining the Temple 1
87 Morrowind, conversations, Expelled from the Temple 1, 2
Organization
As noted already in the ‘Word definitions’ section, the Temple is both the name for the native faith of the Dunmer and the large organization attributed to the doctrine of the Temple faith. In other words, all members of the Temple faction follow the same rules, share the same belief and hold the same ideals. The members of the Temple faction are the one who have recorded Vivec’s sermons and taught them on to other believers. It is the Temple Masters who accept new Initiates and send them out to do tasks in the name of the Temple. In short, many, if not all of the religious themes described throughout the ‘Temple’ section can be attributed to the Temple faction.

Sacred time and space
As presented in the ‘Temple – Rituals, pilgrimages’ section, the Pilgrims found throughout the game describe explicitly how their pilgrimages are performed to “reenact the tests and trials of gods, saints, and heroes” and how they view it as a way to purify themselves and gain enlightenment. The whole pilgrimage of the Seven Graces is a symbolic re-enactment of Vivec’s acts. While Vivec is not attributed to creating mankind, his actions remembered on the pilgrimages can perhaps be seen as lessons for “social behavior and of practical work” mentioned by Eliade as one of the events from the “mythical time” of religious festivals. (p. 90)

When describing rituals concerning sacred space, Eliade puts heavy emphasis on the concepts of recreating the world. (p. 29-31) Recreation rituals attributed to Vivec are hard to come by, however, as he is not considered to be a Creation God. (p. 3-4) As he was born mortal, it is also likely that the models for the constructed Temple buildings are not based on a “transcendent model” as described in the ‘Definitions of religion – Religious themes’ section.

Instead, other aspects of sacred space should be considered. Since Vivec still exists in physical form, and resides in Vvardenfell, the Acts of Grace may very well have been performed literally, while the sites of the seven pilgrimage shrines may very well be the literal places of Vivec’s Acts.

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88 Morrowind, conversation, joining the Temple 1
89 Morrowind, conversation, Pilgrim, asked about “my trade”
90 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane
91 Morrowind, Fellowship of the Temple
While this would change the nature of the pilgrimage from a more abstract, symbolic set of actions to a more literal re-creation of the Acts of Grace, they are still very much re-creations of a divine deity’s actions, and a way for a pilgrim to confirm their faith. If anything, knowing that the deity literally walked the same roads as them should be able to induce the exact same feeling and function as sacred time and space does.

### 5.2 Game limitations

Morrowind is not a new game, and has several limitations in capability that becomes apparent at certain points. These difficulties, and their effects on the game, are important to highlight. Without a proper explanation, these limitations can be seen as undermining the reliability of certain sources of information.

#### 5.2.1 Gameplay limitations

Some concepts are explained in one way in a book, but seen differently in the game itself. The *Guide to Vivec* tells how the city of Vivec is “visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims daily”. However, only a few pilgrims at most can be found at the shrines in the game. Through these observations, a conclusion could be made that the book stating the number of pilgrims is lying. However, the limitations of the game must be considered. While a modern computer might be able to handle dozens of pilgrims praying at the same time, an average computer of the time where the game was released would likely be strained to the breaking point. Furthermore, creating convincing dialogue between NPC:s is very hard, and is almost nonexistent in Morrowind; information gathered is almost exclusively recieved through dialogue or otherwise direct conversation with the player. Conversations between NPC:s are uncommon. Even if the game would have the capability for large numbers of pilgrims, including large numbers of generic NPC:s with no interaction amongst each other would have a hard time leaving a convincing impression on the player. Therefore the lack of pilgrims can be attributed to limitations in the games’ capabilities, rather than incorrect information in the book.

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92 Morrowind, *Guide to Vivec* 1
Some issues are more directly involved with the adventurer controlled by the player. This issue is highlighted with the concept of food and sleep in Morrowind. As is commonly known, food is a basic, universal need for all human beings. Because of this, it holds an important role in culture: “Societies of every sort have restricted what their members may eat, specified the circumstances in which certain types of nourishment may be taken, and made use of food in religious ritual.”

In Morrowind, however, the adventurer does not have the basic needs of food and sleep, and can go without both for any amount of time without consequences. There are several forms of food found in the game, but they are of little use except if used as ingredients in magic potions. The player also has the option to “wait” or “rest” for up to 24 hours which passes in the blink of an eye, further undermining a “normal” perception of passing time within the game.

Because of this, incorporating religious ceremonies regarding themes of food, sleep or passing time would be arbitrary. Including significant dates within the game would be far too easy to miss if a player chooses to “wait” or “rest” for 24 hours. It should be noted, however, that Saryoni’s Sermons talk of how “More elaborate editions are handsomely illuminated with Vivec’s quotations from the Gospels for days, seasons, and festivals.” This seems to signify religious calendar events not seen in the game itself.

The occurrence of spoken sermons is also mentioned in books, particularly the sermons attributed to Vivec, and is suggested to be performed by Temple priests. However, the noted lack of a “natural timespan” makes it hard to incorporate this form of sermons effectively within the game.

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93 Latham, Gardella, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Food
94 Morrowind, Saryoni’s Sermons
95 Morrowind, conversation, Temple Priest when asked about My trade
5.2.2 Book limitations

The concept of prefaces is explained in the ‘Word definitions’ section. It is important to note, however, that the preface of certain books seem to suggest an occurrence of content that cannot be found.

A striking example is *The cantatas of Vivec*. In the preface the reader is told that “*The Cantatas of Vivec are gospels written in the form of epic songs. They trace the evolution of Vivec from a foolish mortal into an enlightened divine*”\(^96\) (p. 1) and how he attained the “*Wisdom of the Seven Graces*”,\(^96\) (p. 1-2) among many other stories. In the end of the preface, however, it tells how this book only presents an excerpt from one short story found in this book, regardless of how the other parts of the preface seems to suggest a book of great length. Furthermore, going back to *Sariyoni’s sermons*, the preface tells of how the book contains popular interpretations of Vivec’s sermons\(^97\) (p. 1), while these explanations are not available for the player inside the game.

Just as with the example of the number of pilgrims in Vivec city, these problem should not be understood as a form of inconsistencies or lies within the books. Instead, the reader must consider that while an RPG strives to create a world as immersive as possible, writing hundreds of pages containing sermons, interpretations, explanations and other forms of scriptures would take an immense length of time.

By adding these interfaces, the book can suggest the prevalence of these stories and scriptures, their content and their traditions, enabling the player to speculate around their “true content”. While some might argue that the game would be better off completely without these “incomplete books”, this would most certainly give an impression of a barren culture. Through these prefaces, further suggestions are given of a rich spiritual life within the game.

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\(^96\) Morrowind, *The cantatas of Vivec*  
\(^97\) Morrowind, *Sariyoni’s sermons*
Discussion
A presentation has been given of the religious world of Morrowind. It is very important to note how this is only one facet of its rich spiritual world. In truth, the purpose of this essay has only been to scratch its surface.

It is no surprise that the introduction of a new, unorthodox medium for religious content brings about controversy. How is the spirituality of religion be transferred through a computer game? On the other hand, an outside perspective might claim the same problem regarding television programs broadcasting religious content. How is the viewer supposed to come closer to God when they are not located in the church, inside their traditional sacred space?

There are several minor aspects which could speak against the validity of any religious content found in the game. For example, it could be said that since the religious content consists purely of fiction and has never had a real-life cult, it cannot be defined as a “true religion”. However, in my opinion this argument is irrelevant. The purpose of this essay is naturally not to prove the religious content as “real”, in neither myth nor cult. In one way, discovering or researching religious content in computer games could possibly be related to the historical events where people have found “foreign” religious cults in newly discovered parts of the world. There are all too many examples where missionaries have disregarded native populations as primitive and godless, simply because the missionaries were unable to regard the concept of religion itself outside of their own perspective and understanding of it.

On a quick glance, it could be argued that some rituals would not hold religious themes. “So, the player gives a piece of muck to a statue. What has that to do with religion?” However, this example could be compared to any other religion. “So, a person drinks some wine and eats some bread. What does that have to do with their belief in a divine deity?”

In truth, the presentation of religion through a different medium creates a “new arena” for discussions regarding the nature of religion. Walking on water was considered a divine act in the Bible. In Morrowind, any adventurer can walk on water through magic or potions. Magic items conferring increased strength, wisdom or other attributes is very much real. Furthermore, praying at a shrine can grant immediate, observable effects for the player.
When the world of magic, not to mention divinity, suddenly becomes a part of profane reality, the concepts of hierophanies are fundamentally changed. How is divinity manifested in this world, and how is the separation between the sacred and the profane defined?

Earlier, some issues regarding game limitations were mentioned. It should be noted that, of course, this is a problem attributed to Morrowind and not computer games in general. These issues could be solved if the game designers would want to. In other words; while some religious themes were not incorporated within Morrowind, they could very well be included in other Role-Playing Games. These issues are in no way a suggestion that these themes are impossible to be incorporated in computer games.

The ‘Book limitations’ section noted the prevalence of books that suggest great content without presenting it in its entirety. This is just one example of “open ends” of knowledge in Morrowind; many issues are never given a definitive answer, instead leaving it open for interpretation among the players.

Just consider the preface in Sariyoni’s Sermons. Even though Vivec is alive in present time, and can be asked in person, there are several interpretations to his most popular sermons, suggesting he consciously chooses to leave them open for interpretation! Through this, Vivec keeps one of the themes that make sure “ancient”, “archaic” scriptures of historic religions are still actively read, researched and interpreted today. In my opinion, this method of presentation throughout the game is perhaps the single most convincing argument that the games’ spiritual world deserves recognition in the academic world.
6.1 Ideas for continued research

To me, the number of subjects of academic interest throughout Morrowind and the other Elder Scrolls games seems endless. As told several times, this essay has only scratched the surface. Several important concepts in its religious world, such as its differing Creation myths, the concepts of Aedra and Daedra, and the view of them as both deities and ancestors has been excluded. The entire “Main quest” of Morrowind has been ignored, while it is teeming with fascinating religious content deserving academic research.

Research can be made on several other subjects. The didactic function of a spectator-participant role when the player performs the rites of a pilgrimage deserves further study. I personally think that it generates much more immersion than by simply reading of these pilgrimages in a book. At the same time, the player has taken on a role. Through this, performing religious tasks not of the player’s own faith might not become as much of a personal issue compared to if the rites are expected to be performed in person. In other words, it may present an effective way for people to gain knowledge of other religions, cultures and customs without the feeling of being “enforced” to perform rites outside of their own faith. Further research on this topic could, potentially, transform the very nature of religious studies.

Another topic of interest has been discussed on online forums for many years: the disappearance of an “ancient race” called the Dwemer. Without delving into the subject, it touches many subjects regarding the nature of sacred and profane existence, their relation to each other and what happens when they intermingle. It also concerns several themes suggesting an eventual relation to a version of the “tower of Babylon story”, and of divine punishment. This topic has been, as mentioned, discussed on online forums for years, as no definite answer has been given. An academic research on this topic would provide the academic world with a story that has fascinated many thousands of players.
7 Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was first to research whether religious themes can be included effectively in a computer game or not. Through the concluded research, an abundance of religious themes were found, various in nature and clearly presented as religious both through literature and conversation in the game itself. While some themes were hard to incorporate, as noted, these concerns refer only to this particular game. In other words, not a single one of the presented religious themes have been found impossible to incorporate within a computer game.

In this game, a player can perform pilgrimages and other acts of faith while finding many other faithful dedicated to the same services and worship. The player can join a religious organization, choosing to live after their particular doctrine and to perform services of a religious nature. There are also many revered scriptures depicting "archetypal acts", still re-enacted and seen as role models of morality.

These findings, among the many other themes presented, undoubtedly suggests that religious content not only can be included, but is capable of being effectively incorporated and presented to form a "virtual religious experience". Contrary to just reading a book or listening to a teacher, this game presents the didactic capability of a computer game to immerse the player into a world of religious content, turning the player into a participant who actively searches for information on their own by playing the game.

Conclusively, this essay should be seen as a resource for any further studies regarding religious content in computer games. While more specific research will be needed when researching other games and subjects, this essay serves as a basis of reliability for content of this nature.
8 Sources

Game content sources:
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The official Game Manual is written by Pete Hines and Ashley Cheng of Bethesda Softworks.

Encyclopedia of Religion sources:


**References from the encyclopedia:**


**Other sources:**


9 Attachments

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Fellowship of the Temple
by Archcanon Tholer Baryoni

I have been asked to write this
guidebook for outsiders who are
unfamiliar with the Tribunal
Temple, and interested in joining.

All those who are earnest, and
who are willing to submit to the
wisdom of Blessed Almsivi,
Triune Grace, the saints, and the
priests, are welcome to the
Fellowship of the Tribunal
Temple. The Temple is the
religion of Morrowind and
Dunmer people, and has been for
generation upon generation. With
guidance and counsel of
Almalexia, Vivec, and Sotha Sil,
the Anticipations, and all the
hosts of saints of ancestors, the
Temple guards and protects the
lands and peoples of Morrowind.

Those who follow the Tribunal
must have the Personality to lead
others and the Willpower to
resist the world’s temptations.
When violence is needful, we
fight with staves and hammers,
armored only in our faith. We
study Restoration and Alchemy to
heal the people, and Mysticism to
learn more of the divine. We must
also study Conjuration to speak
with the spirits of our ancestors
and protect against those who
traffic with the Four Corners.

Those interested in joining the
Tribunal Temple should speak to
priests at the temples in Aldruhn,
Balmora, Molag Mar, and
Ghostgate, or with priests at the
High Fang in the Temple
Compound in Vivec.

Articles of Faith

The Temple believes that
Almalexia, Vivec, and Sotha Sil
were mortal guardians of
Morrowind who walked the
earth, defeated the Dunmer’s
greatest enemies, the Nords and
the Dwarves, and achieved divine
substance through superhuman
discipline and virtue and
supernatural wisdom and insight.
Like loving ancestors, they guard
and counsel their followers. Like
stern parents, they punish sin and
error. Like generous relatives,
they share their bounty among
the greatest and least, according
to their needs.

Duties of the Faithful

Your fourfold duties are to: Faith,
Family, Masters, and all that is
good. Derform holy quests and
bring luster to the Temple. Never
transgress against your brothers
or sisters, and never dishonor
your house or your ancestors.
Serve and protect the poor and
weak, and honor your elders and clan.

For those who would be wise, these sacred books will be of interest.

Saryoni’s Sermons
Learn from the teachings of Vivec, and from the Archeacon’s sermons on the Seven Graces.

Lives of the Saints
Members of the Temple who wish to be virtuous will model their lives on the lives of the saints.

The Pilgrim’s Path
Take 5 Drev

The path to wisdom and self-knowledge is through pilgrimage. Those who would rise in the ranks of the faithful may retrace the steps of the Lords and Saints, and gain blessings and learn virtue by suffering and overcoming hardships.

The Consolations of Prayer
Learn what bounties and blessing might be gained by prayer at the shrines found in temples, and in places of pilgrimage, and in the tombs of our ancestors.

Vivec City is the largest settlement on Vardenfell, and one of the largest cities in the East. Each of the great cantons is the size of a complete town. The High Fane and the palace of Vivec are visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims daily. Citizens flock to the Arena for public entertainments like mock battles and comic plays. Outlanders mostly confine themselves to the Foreign Canton, while natives live, work, and shop in the Great House compounds and residential cantons. But most of all, this is Lord Vivec’s holy city. The Ministry of Truth, the Temple prison, hangs above the great
judicial, and martial operations of the Tribunal Temple. The Palace of Vivec is the abode of the god-hero Lord Vivec, the Warrior-Poet of the three deities who comprise Almsivi, the divine patrons of the Tribunal Temple. Only the most devout are admitted to the presence of Lord Vivec, and only at his initiation. Beneath the Palace of Vivec is the Puzzle Canal, a place of worship and testing for questing heroes hoping to receive Vivec's favor. Many choice treasures are guarded by Daedric servants in the Puzzle Canal's dark passages.

Vivec City is the largest settlement on Wardenfell, and one of the largest cities in the East. Each of the great cantons is the size of a complete town. The High Pancl and the palace of Vivec are visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims daily. Citizens flock to the Arena for entertainments and war games. Outlanders mostly confine themselves to the Foreign Canton, while natives live, work, and shop in the Great House compounds and residential cantons.
Lives of the Saints

If you would be wise, model your lives on the lives of the saints.
If you would learn valor, follow St. Nerevar, the Captain, patron of Warriors and Statesmen. Lord Nerevar helped to unite the barbarian Dunmer tribes into a great nation, culminating in his martyrdom when leading the Dunmer to victory against the evil Dwemer and the traitorous House Nagoth in the Battle of Red Mountain.
If you would learn daring, follow Saint Veloth the Pilgrim, Patron of Outcasts and Spiritual Seekers. Saint Veloth, prophet and mystic, led the Dunmer out of the decadent home country of the Summerset Isles and into the promised land of Morrowind. Saint Veloth also taught the difference between the Good and Bad Daedra, and won the aid of the Good Daedra for his people while teaching how to carefully negotiate with the Bad Daedra.
If you would learn generosity, follow Saint Rilms the Barefooted, Patron of Pilgrims and Beggars. Saint Rilms gave away her shoes, then dressed and appeared as a beggar to better
acquaint herself with the poor.
If you would learn self-respect and respect for others, follow Saint Aralar the Penitent, Patron of Tanners and Miners. This soul criminal repented his sins and traveled a circuit of the great pilgrimages on his knees.
If you would learn mercy and its fruits, follow Saint Beryn the Merciful, Patron of Brewers, Bakers, Distillers. This pure virgin of modest aspect could heal all diseases at the price of taking the disease upon herself. Tough-minded and fearless, she took on the burdens of others, and bore those burdens to an honored old age.
If you would learn fierce justice, follow Saint Felms the Bold, Patron of Butchers and Fishmongers. This brave warlord slew the Nord invaders and drove them from our lands. He could neither read nor write, receiving inspiration directly from the lips of Almsivi.
If you would learn pride of race and tribe, follow Saint Rosis the Martyr, Patron of Furnishers and Caravaners. Captured by Argonians just before the Arnesian War, Rosis proudly refused to renounce the Tribunal faith, and withstood the cruel
tortures of Argonian sorcerers. Vengeance and justice for the martyred Saint Roris was the rallying cry of the Arnesian War.

If you would learn the rule of law and justice, follow Saint Olms the Just, Patron of Chandlers and Clerks. Founder of the Ordinaries, Saint Olms conceived and articulated the fundamental principles of testing, ordeal, and repentance.

If you would learn benevolence, follow Saint Nelyn the Wise, Patron of Potters and Glassmakers. Saint Nelyn was head of House Indoril, a skilled lawyer, and author of many learned treatises on Tribunal law and custom.

If you would learn the love of peace, follow Saint Meris the Peacemaker, Patron of Farmers and Laborers. As a little girl, Saint Meris showed healing gifts, and trained as a Healer. She ended a long and bloody House War, intervening on the battlefield in her white robe to heal warriors and spellcasters without regard to faction. The troops of all House adopted white robes as her standard, and refused to shed the blood of their brethren.

If you would learn reverence, follow Saint Llothis the Pious.

Patron of Tailors and Dyers, Contemporary and companion of the Tribunals, and the best-loved Alma Rula of the Tribunal Temple, he formulated the central rituals and principles of the New Temple Faith. Saint Llothis is the symbolic mortal bridge between the gods and the faithful, and the archetypal priest.
Reflections on Cult Worship in the Empire

[from the correspondence of Cuseius Zleeta, Imperial trader, writing from the Vos Tradehouse in Vvardenfell District, Province of Morrowind]

"...I have noted that Heartlanders like myself, and assimilated Imperial citizens of other races, tend to impersonal and formal relationships with their gods and spirits. For us, cults are first and foremost social and economic organizations. We typically think of the Eight Divines in the most abstract terms -- as powerful but indifferent spirits to be propitiated, and do not think of their relationships as personal. Notable exceptions include minor charismatic sub-cults of Akarosh and Dibella. The Imperial Cult of Tiber Septim also has a significant charismatic sub-cult.

With the exception of the Alessian Order, which Heartlanders regard as a dark age, religious cults have played only minor parts in Heartlander and Imperial history. The Septim emperors have made it a policy to limit the influence of cult authoritaries in aristocratic, military, and bureaucratic affairs.

Cult worship is regarded as a private and practical matter, and public pronouncements by religious figures are not welcomed. Nordic hero-cults provide a strong counter-current to the dominant secularism of the Empire. The Imperial cult of Tiber Septim is just such a hero-cult, and among the military, provincial colonists, and recently assimilated foreigners, the cult is particularly strong and personal.

The Tribunal Temple in Morrowind, and its predecessor, house ancestor cults, are, by contrast with Imperial cults, extremely intimate and personal. In ancestor cults, the worshipper has a direct relationship with a blood family ancestor spirit, and the Temple cultist's relationship with the Tribunal is a relationship with a living, breathing god who walks the earth, speaks in person with priests and cultists, and whose daily actions are prescribed models for the daily actions of their followers.

The differences in religious temperament between Heartlanders and Morrowind Dunmer accounts in large part for consistent political and social misunderstanding between the
two cultures. Heartlanders do not consider cult affairs as serious matters, where the Dunmer consider cult affairs, and in particular, ancestral spirit veneration, to be very serious matters indeed.

Heartlanders are casual and tolerant in religious matters; Dunmer are passionate and extremely intolerant. Heartlanders do not speak with their gods, and do not think of their actions as under constant review and judgement by their gods; the Dunmer feel that all they think and do is under the ever-watchful eye of the Tribunal and family ancestor spirits...

SARYON'TI SERMONS
BLESSED ALMSIVI, MERCY, MASTERY, MYSTERY

[This volume of the Hierographe (i.e., 'priestly writings') was written and collected with commentary by Archon Thol Thar Yoryoni. It is the best selling of the Temple annotated texts, and therefore inexpensive and commonly found in most Dunmer households. Yoryoni collects Vivec's most famous sermons and the popular explanations of his Gospels. This text exists in many editions. More elaborate editions are handsomely illuminated with Vivec's quotations from the Gospels for days, seasons, and festivals.]

Listen, faithful, to Vivec's words, for he says five times and five ways —
Forge a keen Faith in the crucible of suffering.
Engrave upon thy eye the image of injustice.
Death does not diminish; the ghost gilds with glory.
Faith conquers all. Let us yield to Faith.
Better to suffer a wrong than to do one.

Hear the words of Lord Vivec, and heed his sermons on the
Seven Graces, for he names them seven times and seven ways --

VALOR
DARING
JUSTICE
COURTESY
PRIDE
GENTERSITY
HUMILITY

The Grace of Valor
Thank you for your valor, Lord Vivec. I shall not quail, nor turn away, but face my enemies and my fear.

The Grace of Daring
Thank you for your daring, Lord Vivec, I shall not shun risk, nor hide behind the mask of cautious counsel, for fortune favors the bold.

The Grace of Justice
Thank you for your justice, Lord Vivec. I shall be neither cruel nor arbitrary, for fair dealing earns the love, trust, and respect of our people.

The Grace of Courtesy
Thank you for your courtesy, Lord Vivec. I shall speak neither hurtful nor harsh word, but shall speak respectfully, even of my enemies, for temperate words may turn aside anger.

The Grace of Pride

Thank you for your pride, Lord Vivec. I shall not doubt myself, or my people, or my gods, and shall insist upon them, and my ancient rights.

The Grace of Generosity
Thank you for your generosity, Lord Vivec. I shall neither hoard nor steal, nor encumber myself with profitless treasures, but shall share freely among house and hearth.

The Grace of Humility
Thank you for your humility, Lord Vivec. I shall neither strut nor preen in vanity, but shall know and give thanks for my place in the greater world.
The Cantatas of Vivec

The Cantatas of Vivec are gospels written in the form of epic songs. They trace the evolution of Vivec from a foolish mortal into an enlightened divine. Vivec sought out experiences that tested him in every way possible, particularly in the defense and protection of his Dunmer people, and through his long life, his humility, and his unconquerable spirit, he attained the Wisdom of the Seven Graces. The Cantatas relate many stories of Vivec’s experiments with challenge and risk, his failures and triumphs.

Take 1

his blessings of insight and good fortune, and his debt to his partners, Almalexia the Lover and Sotha Sil the Teacher. The poetry is simple and dramatic, lyric and personal, composed to be sung or recited. The following is an excerpt from Lord Vivec’s ‘Brooding Beneath Red Mountain’.

The gaunt ghostfires loom as subtle shrouds, Smokes and shades on the biers of Red Mountain.

Arches and spires line the rock halls, Dimly lit by the spirits of the dead.

The blood of broken hearths and houses Runs in red rivers, blossoms in fountains.

Girdled round within walls of wit’s glass The shattered hosts slumber in cradles of ash.

But when shall they wake? What dark crucible may kindle their souls to light?

How long beneath red-recking clouds Must flickering watchfires burn?

Take 3

How many lifetimes of labor and lament Will it take to seal this restless tomb?
The Consolations of Prayer

Through the bounty of Blessed Almsivi, Triune Grace, and all the hosts of saints, the faithful who pray at the Temple's shrines may be granted blessings through the miraculous sacraments of prayer and devotion. The three-sided shrines betoken the three-faced benison of Almsivi, and may be found in Temples, or at sites of pilgrimage, or in the tomb of the sanctified.

What benefits may be gained shall be listed herein for the edification of the worshipper and pilgrim.

All shrines grant cures of common diseases, of blight diseases, and of afflictions of poison.

Those shrines bearing the images of Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil also may grant the blessing of Almsivi Restoration, which restores damaged attributes, and the three blessings of Almsivi: Vivec's Mystery, for good fortune; Soul of Sotha Sil, for magical power, and Lady's Grace, for endurance of hardships.

Those shrines bearing the images of the saints may also grant the particular blessings of the saints, which are listed for you here:

St. Aralor grants Aralor's Intervention, for fortifying character.
St. Delyn grants Shield of St. Delyn, for resistance to blight diseases.
St. Felms grants Felms's Glory, for greater skill in restoring magics.
St. Llothia grants Rock of Llothia, for fortifying the will.
St. Meris grants Meris's Warding, for resistance to corpus disease.
St. Nerevar grants Spirit of Nerevar, for fortifying the body's vigor.
St. Olms grants Olm's Benediction, for resistance to common disease.
St. Rilms grants Rilm's Grace, for endurance of hardships.
St. Roris grants Roris's Bloom, for fortifying the body's health.
St. Scryn grants Scryn's Shield, for resistance to poisons.
St. Veloth grants Veloth's Indwelling, for magical power, and also grants the blessing of Almsivi Restoration, which restores damaged attributes.

The Faithful are granted these blessings when they pray at the shrines and make a modest donation. The Blessed of the Initiate rank and higher of the
Temple have already made their
devotions in service and piety, and
need only pray at the shrines to
receive their benefits. And Almsivi
is generous, so even the
Unbeliever may receive a blessing
if he prays, if he proves his
respect with a generous donation.

The Pilgrim's Path

The pilgrim must visit each of
the Shrines of the Seven Graces.
At each site the pilgrim must
stand before the three-sided stone
triolith and read the inscription.
To ease the pilgrim's task, the
Temple has made this list of
shrines along with directions and
advice to pilgrims. The blessings
of each shrine last at least a half
day.

The Fields of Kummu: Shrine of
Humility

Here Lord Vivec met a poor
farmer whose guar had died. The
farmer could not harvest his
muck without his guar, and he
could not provide for his family or
his village. So the Lord Vivec
removed his fine clothes and
toled in the fields like a beast of
burden until the crop was
harvested. It is at the Fields of
Kummu we go to pray for the
same humility Lord Vivec showed
on that day.

The Fields of Kummu are west of
Buran on the north shore of Lake
Amaya as you head towards
Delagrad. The shrine is between
two rocks, and most easily
noticed while traveling east along
the road. Aloef's farm nearby has a
small dock on the north bank of Lake Amaya. This is the only dock nearby which Alfo kindly allows servants of the Temple to use. It is customary to leave a portion of muck at the shrine to represent Vivec’s humility.

To Stop the Moon: The Shrine of Daring
When Sheogorath rebelled against the Tribunal, he tricked the moon Baar Dau into forsaking its appointed path through Oblivion. The Mad Star inspired the moon to hurl itself upon Vivec’s new city, which Sheogorath claimed was built in mockery of the heavens. When Vivec learned of

potions may be purchased from the Temple. Homemade potions are not acceptable.

The Palace: Shrine of Generosity
Long after Lord Nerevar and the Tribunal triumphed over Dagoth Ur, the people wished to build a monument to the heroes of that war. Vivec thanked them, but said that it would be better to dedicate a monument not only to the glorious heroes, but to all people, great and small, who suffered and died in the war. It became the custom to make offerings here, either in thanks of our good fortune, or for those less fortunate.

The Shrine of Generosity is on the top steps of Vivec’s Palace, the southernmost Canton of Vivec City. The customary donation for those in good fortune is 100 gold.

The Puzzle Canal: The Shrine of Courtesy
In a battle with Mehrunes Dagon, Vivec gave his own silver longsword to the Daedra Lord rather than dishonor himself by fighting an unarmed foe. This so impressed the Dremora, the most honorable and chivalrous of Mehrunes Dagon’s Daedric servants, that they now share a bond of respect and courtesy with
the followers of the Tribunal, though we must never forget that they are our enemies.

The Shrine of Courtesy is found in the heart of the Puzzle Canal, a labyrinth beneath Lord Vivec's Palace in the city of Vivec. The journey through the Puzzle Canal can be confusing, and it is suggested that common pilgrims carry a scroll of ALMSI الموسیقی Intervention in case they get lost. The Dremora Krazzt is found in the center of the Puzzle Canal, and will accept a plain silver longsword if spoken to with courtesy. After Krazzt accepts the sword, pilgrims must read the inscription on the triolith.

Take 7 Prev Next 8 Close

The Mask of Vivec: Shrine of Justice

Near the altar is Vivec's Ash Mask. In the Days of Fire when Dagor Ur first crept back into Red Mountain and awakened it, Vivec led refugees here as they fled the ash and blight. Weary, they rested here a while. When Vivec awoke, he found himself and all his followers encased in casts of grey ash. Frozen like a sleeping statue and unable to free himself or help his people, Vivec was filled with despair. Vivec's tears weakened his ash cast. He tore the ash from his perished followers, breathed life into their lungs, and cured them of the blight. This is Vivec's heroism -- his tender heart provides strength when his might fails.

The Shrine of Justice is guarded within the Gnosis Temple, in the village of Gnosis, northwest by road from the town of Ald'ruhn. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a potion of Cure Common Disease as a token of your respect for justice. Suitable potions may be purchased from Temple. Homemade potions are not acceptable.

KoaL Cave: The Shrine of Valor

Within the KoaL Cave, Vivec fought a battle with Ruddy Man, the father of the Dreugh. When he defeated Ruddy Man, Vivec spared his life, on the condition that Ruddy Man and his children would give up their rough hides to serve as armor for the Dunmer.

The Shrine of Valor is inside the KoaL Cave, a cavern on the seacoast west of the ancient stronghold Berandas and south of Gnosis. The cave mouth faces south, towards the sea, and is marked by a large natural arch of stone. The region is wilderness, and finding the cave mouth can be difficult. Dreugh within the cave itself are fearsome enemies; only experienced and capable adventurers should attempt to
re-enact the epic battle with the dregsh in the cave. Dregsh wax may be bought at the Temple in Gnisis. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a portion of dregsh wax as a token of Vivec’s victorious struggle with Ruddy Man.

The Ghostfence: The Shrine of Pride

The Ghostfence is a lasting symbol of the indomitable will and power of ALMSIVI, and a monument to Nimmer pride in overcoming its enemies.

The Shrine of Pride is found within the Ghostfence, just northeast of the Ghostgate itself. The safest route to Ghostgate is along the Foyada Mamaca, a volcanic ravine running from the top of Red Mountain south-west to its end just below Balmora. An old Dwemer bridge crosses the Foyada near Fort Moonmoth. A pilgrim may follow the Foyada Mamaca all the way to Ghostgate. Any journey inside the Ghostfence is dangerous, but even the most timid pilgrim should be safe, so long as he does not stray too far from the Ghostgate and flees from any minions of Dagoth Ur. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a soul gem in remembrance of our ancestors who were bound to the

Tribunal’s service.
What brings you to the Temple, Layman? Have you been lax in your duties?

Duties
To belong to the Temple is to practice compassion.

Compassion
Vivac often showed compassion to his enemies. You must show compassion by curing Balfim gra-Bhugarz, a Bhogorath worshipper in Matakashliah. Take this portion of cure blight. You can cure Balfim by giving him this potion. But it is expensive, I would prefer you learned a spell such as "Klim's Gift" and returned to the potion to me.

Your journal has been updated.

Portion of Cure Blight Disease has been added to your inventory.

Argh! Must I constantly be tormented by... AAAHH! Leave me! I am diseased and I must suffer in solitude!

Disease
Yes, I have ash-chancre. Look at my face! My hands! That is why the others stay away from me. You'd better stay away, too, if you know what's good for you.

Ash-chancre
They say it is my disease that angers me. Fools! Are you here to mock me as well?

You are a sad case.
I will heal you.
Thank you for curing me, Vaith. I’d get out of here if I were you.

Ash-Charon
Yes, I feel better already. You better leave before my... friends see that you’re here.

Have you shown compassion to Bolsim gra-Shugaz?

Compassion
You cured Bolsim gra-Shugaz and have proven your compassion. You might be interested in this book, which has an important lesson on the rewards of compassion. Were you able to preserve the potion?

The Four Guardians of Serirah has been added to your inventory.

Yes, I have it right here.
No, I had to see it.
What brings you to the Temple, Disciple? Have you been lax in your duties?

Durie:
The outcast Ashlander Assantus Hansar has fallen ill.

Assantus Hansar:
The Temple does not proselytize, but we do good works. Assantus Hansar is an ill Ashlander in the outcast Ashlander camp of Abnurupal which is just south of Ghostgate. Find and cure him. You may need a way to calm him, for outcast Ashlanders are often aggressive towards strangers.

Your journal has been updated.

---

Assantus Hansar:

Leave me. I am diseased. I do not need your help.

Disease:
I have Droops. I can barely move and I have no strength.

Droops:

Yes, but I am outcast. The Wise Women will not cure me.

Not my problem.

May I try to cure you?
Leave me, I am diseased. I do not need your help.

disease:
I have Droops. I can barely move and I have no strength.
Droops
Yes, but I am outcast. The Wise Women will not cure me.

Screenshot: File 'Screenshot1472.bmp' created.

Have you a potion or will you cure me with a spell?

Go ahead.

Goodbye.

---

Yes. Thank you, Valth. Thank you for healing me.

Goodbye.
Were you able to cure Assantus Hansar?

Assantus Hansar

As Assantus Hansar has been cured! Good work, Vaith. Take these potions in case you were infected as well.

Your journal has been updated.

3 Potion of Cure Common Disease has been added to your inventory.

What brings you to the Temple, Disciple? Have you been lax in your duties?

duties

A villager in Tel Mora has fallen ill, but there is no Temple in Tel Mora where she can go for healing. Go to Tel Mora and cure Lotte.

Lotte

The Temple does not proselytize, but we do good works for non-believers. Lotte, a Redguard in Tel Mora, has swamp fever. Cure her of swamp fever and return to me.

Your journal has been updated.
Yes, I have Swamp Fever. My head is swimming and I feel terribly weak.

Swamp Fever
It's awful. I hope it will go away soon. There are no temples here and none of the wandering priests are anywhere to be found. Do you seek to heal me?

You... you will? Oh, you're from the Temple, aren't you? Well, go ahead.

I shall use a spell.
I offer you this potion.

Your journal has been updated:
Thank you.
Who are you, outlander? And what are you doing here?

Who are you
I don't know you, outlander. What are you doing here? Are you here to worship at this foul shrine?

Yes, I'm here to worship.
No, I'm here to loot this shrine.

Who are you
I don't know you, outlander. What are you doing here? Are you here to worship at this foul shrine?

Then you defy the law of the Temple, and shall die for it.
What brings you to the Temple, Adept? Have you been lax in your duties?

A holy woman here in Vivec is spreading the Divine Disease to others. Someone must convince Tanuska Veloth to leave Vivec City.

leave Vivec City
Tanuska Veloth is a holy Pilgrim and well loved by the people. Do not kill her unless there is no other way. Try and convince her to go to the Corprusarium before she spreads the Divine Disease to others. She is very devout and would be most easily impressed by some show of your devotion to the Temple’s teachings.

Your journal has been updated.

It’s no trouble at all, Vaith. I’m always happy to help.
leave Vivec City
Why should I leave?

You have the Divine Disease.
Do this as a favor for me.
Tanuqua Veloth

It's no trouble at all, Vaith, I'm always happy to help. Why should I leave?

ScreenShot: File "ScreenShot 142.bmp" created.

I have heard others make these claims. Why should I believe you? Am I deceived? Do I look as if I have a purpose? If you were more pious, perhaps I would listen to you. I doubt you have even read "Barony's Sermons".

Your journal has been updated.

---

Tanuqua Veloth

A very good day to you, Vaith. Why should I leave?

Quote from Barony's Sermons.
Do this as a favor for me.

---

Goodbye.
A very good day to you, Vaeth.
leave Vivec City
Why should I leave?

Screenshot: File 'Screenshot 1424.bmp' created.

Enough, you do not need to quote from your copy of 'Barony’s Sermons'. I will do as you ask and go to the Corpsumarium.
Your journal has been updated.

By your actions, you have lost the trust of the Temple. Until you make amends, expect no favor from me.

make amends
You must speak with a Master of the Temple to clear your name.
Are you here to request an audience, Patriarch?

make amends

The Temple welcomes everyone into its fellowship, but not all are able to complete their journey. You broke our rules, but you have great potential, and I will forgive you this once offense. But nothing like this must ever occur again. If it does, the Temple will have no use for your potential.

Welcome, my child. Do you seek to join the Temple?

join the Temple

You have a promising lack. Perhaps we could use you. Do you wish to join? Or shall we hear our doctrine first?

Your fourfold duties are to: Faith, Family, Masters, and all that is good. Perform holy quests and bring honor to the Temple. Never transgress against your brothers or sisters -- in thought or deed -- as we are all one body. If you somehow fail to uphold these ideals, you must speak with a Master or the Patriarch to be cleansed of your wrongdoings. Still want to join?

Yes, I am worthy

No.
I'm an officer of the Imperial Legion. Move along.

**Background**

I am Largakh gro-Bollim, Guard and Spearman of the Imperial Legion.

**Onisis Temple**

Onisis Temple is the only shrine in Onisis. Pilgrims visit the Temple to pray before the Mask of Vivec, a holy relic. The Temple maintains a hostel for pilgrims and travelers, and provides the other services common at any small shrine.

**Mask of Vivec**

Vivec's Ash Mask is a holy relic displayed within the shrine of the Onisis Temple. Pilgrims travel from all over Morrowind to view this sacred artifact.

---

Do you want something?

**my trade**

I am a pilgrim. I search for enlightenment, and hope to purify my soul through facing and overcoming the challenges of pilgrimages that reenact the tests and trials of gods, saints, and heroes. I visit the shrines and make devotions everywhere I travel -- in village Temple shrines, and the High Pele of Vivec, or at the remote shrines scattered all over Vvardenfell.
Thulor Barony

Little sewage:
Don’t be in such a hurry when you’re traveling. Take your time.
Keep your eyes open. Learn from your experiences. You’re on the
road to learn about yourself and the world around you.

Little sewage:
I am a priest of the Tribunal Temple, an intercessor between
Glethin and their worshippers, caretaker of the temple and
shrine, and counselor and educator for the faithful and laymen. I
can tell you about the Temple, the Daedra, the scribes, and the
ancestors. I can explain about pilgrimages and why we hate
eccentricity. I can also tell you something about other cults.

What brings you to the Temple, Layman? Have you been lax in
your duties?
Duties:
Before I give you any other duties, you should prove your faith by
making the pilgrimage of the Seven Graces.
Turb Valen

What brings you to the Temple, Layman? Have you been lax in your duties?

Duties
Before I give you any other duties, you should prove your faith by making the pilgrimages of the Seven Graces.

Seven Graces
Yes, you have finished the pilgrimages of the Seven Graces. I commend you for this. You are now ready for more challenging duties.

Your journal has been updated.

Sabinus Bathis

a guar, she lived to a ripe and sprightly old age.

Screen Shot: File 'Screen Shot 1492.bmp' created.
Saint Veloth
Saint Veloth, the Pilgrim, is the patron of Outcasts and Spiritual Seekers. This prophet and mystic led the Dunmer out of the decadent home country of the Dunmeri Isles and into the promised land of Morrowind.

Screen Shot: File 'Screen Shot 1493.bmp' created.
Saints
The Temple honors our greatest ancestors as Saints, celebrating them as models of virtue and piety, and invoking their aid and protection.
Yes, I'm Mehra Mile, a librarian for the Hall of Wisdom. Can I tell you about our collection?

Temple

The Tribunal Temple is the native religion of civilized Morrowind. They worship three God-Kings: Nalakiri, Balam札, and Vivec, who are known together as the Tribunal. We usually just call it The Temple.
Would you like to donate muck and ask for a blessing?  

Yes  No

Fields of Kimmu Shrine

Your journal has been updated.

The Grace of Humility: Thank you for your humility, Lord Vivec. I shall neither strut nor preen in vanity, but shall know and give thanks for my place in the greater world.
Here in Onisia Vivec made a potion to cure a village who had fallen ill but could not pay for the healing of the Temple. Vivec promised that the Temple would always cure those who could not pay and left his sacred Mask here as a sign of that promise.

Would you like to donate a Potion of Cure Disease and ask for a blessing?

Yes  No
The Grace of Justice: Thank you for your justice, Lord Vivec. I shall be neither cruel nor arbitrary, for fair dealing earns the love, trust, and respect of our people.

Vivec Ashmask
Weight: 3.0
Value: 50000
Here Vivec defeated Ruddy Man, the god of the Druzh. Vivec showed him people how to make armor from the wax of the Druzh.
Would you like to donate your Drough Wax and ask for a blessing?

[Yes] [No]

Koal Cave Shrine

Your journal has been updated:

The Grace of Valor: Thank you for your valor, Lord Vivec. I shall not quail, nor turn away, but face my enemies and my fear.