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Share Your Devotion

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

My favorite creature type is Lord, hands down. Lord of Atlantis, Lord of the Undead, Goblin King, Elvish Champion . . . if a Lord exists in a set, I inevitably track down four copies and build decks around them.



Looks like a Zombie, looks like a Kobold, looks like an Elf... but no. What gives?

Until recently, my only complaint with the Lord creature type is that if a card is a Lord it doesn't use any other creature type. For example, **Kobold Overlord** isn't a Kobold. As a creature type, Lord is actually kind of lame on its own and too often counterintuitive. Elves don't have Elves as champions? Goblins don't choose a Goblin to be king? These inconsistencies irk me. Thankfully, *Onslaught* has officially fixed the Lord creature type. For example, **Voice of the Woods** is a Lord and an Elf. Logic gods rejoice.

My reasons for liking the Lord creature type so much are twofold. First, I'm a fan of any card that promotes creatures in **Magic**. Basically, I like games that are won and lost with creature battles.

Second, the Lord creature type significantly blurs the line between theme decks and Constructed decks. To use **Goblin King** effectively, you need a lot of Goblins. In fact, you better have a darn good reason for putting a creature into your deck that *isn't* a Goblin. Once you have enough Goblins, cards like **Goblin Grenade** become more attractive. Before you know it . . . WHAM! You have yourself a pretty decent Goblin theme deck that also happens to scare people at Friday Night **Magic**.

Recent sets have included a lot of cards that promote creature themes without explicitly being Lords. **Balthor the Stout** and his evil twin **Balthor the Defiled** are good examples. So are **Dwarven Bloodboiler** and **Squirrel Mob**. In case you were wondering: Yes, I love all of these cards, too.

The *Onslaught* expansion has more cards that blur the theme deck - Constructed deck line than almost all the other sets combined. For instance, each color receives a very Lord-like Avatar that promotes creature themes. White's Avatar card in this cycle is called **Doubtless One**.

What do you notice about **Doubtless One**? Cool art by Justin Sweet to be sure. But it also promotes a deck using a lot of Clerics. It's a Cleric, so it won't die when it's on the board alone. It isn't a Legend, which means there is nothing preventing you from having four in a deck (or in play). It has a reasonable casting cost, which makes it easier to use it as the centerpiece of a deck. With only one * in the cost, it can easily fit into a multicolor deck. It can deal any damage to gain you life rather than just combat damage, so it combos well with cards like **Pandemonium** and **Spirit Flare**. And, to top it off, it doesn't look to have any built-in drawbacks. These are all points in **Doubtless One's** favor.

All of these factors, however, lead us to the following question: Are there enough Clerics to make **Doubtless One** worth it?

The answer to this question begins with **Master Apothecary**. **Master Apothecary**, which is also white and a non-Legend, and **Doubtless One** could have been Siamese twins separated at birth. The only downside to using **Master Apothecary** is that it ties any deck using **Doubtless One** to a heavy white mana base. With cards like **Rotlung Reanimator** rearing their heads, sometimes you don't want a Cleric deck so focused on white. Still, the synergy between the two cards is undeniable. So for now, I'll assume that a deck with **Doubtless One** also wants **Master Apothecary**.



In Standard, most Cleric decks I have seen use **Beloved Chaplain**. **Beloved Chaplain** can hold off a mean creature like **Wild Mongrel** or **Psychatog** forever while slipping through superior defenses once you feel safe.

Sadly, cards like **Firebolt** and **Smother** can quickly get rid of **Beloved Chaplain**. For this reason, I personally like the addition of **Devoted Caretaker**. A 1/2 for * is a good deal, and as long as your opponent is relying on targeted creature removal, **Devoted Caretaker** will shine. Another solid Cleric for * is **Benevolent Bodyguard**. Early in the game, **Benevolent Bodyguard** can deal a few points of damage. Later in the game, there are no better bodies to guard than **Doubtless One** and **Master Apothecary**. With **Master Apothecary**, **Beloved Chaplain**,

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Devoted Caretaker, and Benevolent Bodyguard, you should feel fairly safe against everything except mass removal like Wrath of God or Mutilate. But really, shouldn't Clerics always fear the wrath of their gods?



With cards like these in play, you'll forget what damage feels like.

That makes twenty Standard-legal Clerics in a deck, which is more than enough to fuel **Doubtless One**. The Clerics I've described so far, though, are pretty dinky on their own. I would also consider adding something like **Teroh's Faithful** as a solid blocker with a big butt. In fact, since **Teroh's Faithful** and **Doubtless One** combine to net you a horde of extra life, it might be worth dropping a copy or two of **Test of Endurance** into your Clerics deck as a backup win condition (especially considering the Cleric Lord in *Onslaught*). Either that, or find some other cool use for all that life.

Standard-legal sets are filled with Clerics. **Ancestor's Chosen**, **Dedicated Martyr**, and **Venerable Monk** add more life gain. **Blessed Orator**, **Hallowed Healer**, **Master Healer**, **Militant Monk**, **Pilgrim of Justice**, **Pilgrim of Virtue**, **Samite Healer**, and **Shieldmage Advocate** fit into more defensive decks. **Confessor**, **Pulsemage Advocate**, and **Selfless Exorcist** can combat threshold or graveyard-happy decks. Meanwhile, **Stern Judge** is a good card to play against black decks, and **Nomad Mythmaker** fits into an enchantment-heavy deck. These are some of the Clerics outside the *Onslaught* set. And if **Doubtless One** is anything to go by, it's clear that more Clerics are on the way.

Are there enough Clerics to make an interesting deck? I think so. In Standard, I might try something along these lines (again, avoiding any other new Clerics from *Onslaught* for now):

Doubtless White Standard Cleric deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
24 Plains	4 Divine Sacrament	1 Caltrops
24 lands	3 Golden Wish	1 Circle of Protection: Green
	4 Shelter	1 Circle of Protection: Red
	2 Test of Endurance	1 Karmic Justice
	13 other spells	4 Morningtide
4 Beloved Chaplain		4 Stern Judge
4 Benevolent Bodyguard		1 Test of Endurance
4 Devoted Caretaker		2 Worship
4 Doubtless One		
4 Master Apothecary		15 sideboard cards
3 Teroh's Faithful		
23 creatures		

If you open up the card pool in a format like Extended, your options become virtually insane. The following are a few examples of the Clerics that can make up a **Doubtless One** army: **Academy Rector**; **Atalya, Samite Master**; **Faith Healer**; **False Prophet**; **Mother of Runes**; **Orim, Samite Healer**; **Soltari Priest**; and **Soul Warden**. Open the pool of sets still wider and you can include **Order of Leitbur**, **Wandering Mage**, and even **Temple Acolyte**.

An example of an Extended Cleric deck is below. You will note that both this deck and the Standard deck also make solid theme decks. Again, this is why I love creatures like **Doubtless One** so much.

Fear The Clerics! Extended Cleric deck	
Main Deck 60 cards	

4 Caves of Koilos	3 Doubtless One	4 Armageddon
4 City of Brass	4 Master Apothecary	4 Shared Triumph
2 Dromar's Cavern	4 Mother of Runes	4 Vindicate
14 Plains	1 Orim, Samite Healer	
24 lands	4 Rotlung Reanimator	12 other spells
	4 Soltari Priest	
	4 Soul Warden	
	24 creatures	

Keep in mind, too, that my focus up to this point has been solely on the *white* Clerics. *Headhunter* and *Rotlung Reanimator* are black, but they aren't the only black Clerics in the *Onslaught* set. *Elder Druid* has been largely ignored of late, but he's a green Cleric. Heck, *Sylvan Hierophant* superbly fits in a white-green *Doubtless One* deck. *Storm Shaman*, also overlooked, is from the *Seventh Edition* set and is a red Cleric. *Noble Benefactor* and *Samite Archer* are examples of blue Clerics from older sets.

CleriCon 2002	
Casual Cleric deck	
60 cards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Adarkar Wastes 2 Brushland 4 City of Brass 5 Plains 4 Savannah 4 Scrubland 4 Tundra 	
24 lands	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Atalya, Samite Master 1 Crimson Acolyte 4 Doubtless One 4 Master Apothecary 1 Monk Realist 4 Mother of Runes 3 Noble Benefactor 1 Orim, Samite Healer 1 Pulsemage Advocate 4 Rotlung Reanimator 1 Samite Archer 1 Stern Judge 4 Sylvan Hierophant 	
30 creatures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Breath of Life 1 Riptide Replicator 1 Worship 	
6 other spells	

In fact, toss a *Riptide Replicator*, the new tribal token generator, into your deck and you can have an endless stream of Clerics of any color to fuel *Doubtless One*. Keen!

Thanks to *Onslaught*, I may need to stop claiming that Lord is my favorite creature type. It is clear that a whole host of new creatures (and artifacts, and enchantments, and lands . . .) are here to promote the use of creatures and to blur the line between theme decks and Constructed decks. Someone pinch me, because I think I'm in heaven . . . or wherever it is that *Doubtless One* and those other Clerics of Dominaria think you go after you die.

Have fun at the Prerelease this weekend. And keep an eye out for cards that make your toes tingle!

Next week: Announcing the Rules for Deck Challenge 3

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