

Temples, Cults and Apostates

Adding Faith to Fantasy Campaigns

Temples, Cults and Apostates

Adding Faith to Fantasy Campaigns

by Rick G. Gordon, John Karnes and Red Rahm © 2020
Cover created with Pixabay images, specifically art of Stefan Keller

INTRODUCTION.....	4
TASK RESOLUTION	6
UNDERSTANDING TENETS.....	6
UNDERSTANDING THE CONGREGATION	7
GODLY POWER (D8)	7
WHAT DID THAT PROVE?	8
SHAMANISM	9
POLYTHEISM	9
HENOTHEISM.....	9
MONOTHEISM	9
ABSENCE OF FAITH.....	10
WHERE ARE THINGS AT?	11
STATE OF GRACEFUL GROWTH (D8).....	11
TRIBAL CULTS	11
RAISE THE TEMPLE	11
DOGMA	12
PERSECUTION	12
POLITICAL ASSIMILATION.....	14
PROSELYTIZING FAITH.....	14
CRUSADING FAITH	14
COMPLACENT FAITH.....	15
ON THE OTHER HAND	15
CHARISMA RULES	15
TEMPLE SECRETS	17
ASSAULT ON LIBERTY	17
EXTINCTION DOCTRINE	17
FALLEN IN DISGRACE	18
POGROM AND FORCED CONVERSION.....	18
DISRUPTING FARMING	19
EMBRACE CHANGE.....	19
THE EVOLVING PANTHEON	20
LOCAL ASPECT (D8)	20
PERSONA ENIGMA	21
ALL KNOWING FATHER	21
CREATOR	21
PERSONA SUSTENANCE	23
PERSONA MOTHER	23
DARK FORM	23
PERSONA BRAVERY	24

PERSONA DESTRUCTION.....	25
ANCILLARY FIGURES.....	26
DEMIGOD (D8)	26
TRICKSTER.....	26
HEROIC SON	27
BEASTMASTER.....	27
PERSONA VITALITY.....	28
CONSORT.....	29
ARCANE SCHOLAR.....	29
GUARD OF TOMB.....	30
FACE OF EVIL	31
CREATING THE CAMPAIGN HEAVEN.....	32
USE A FAMILY TREE.....	32
OUTWARD GOAL	33
DIVINE QUEST.....	33
SECRET AGENDA.....	34
GOD EXISTS UNDER EVERY ROCK.....	34
CULTS.....	34
CULT ORIGIN (D8).....	35
LIE	36
SENSORY MISTAKE.....	36
INSANE VISIONS	37
MAGICAL GIFT	37
SOMETHING INEXPLICABLE.....	38
MIRACLE.....	39
EPIPHANY.....	40
DIVINE INTERVENTION.....	41
WHO'S WHO IN SACRISTY OF EVIL	42
DARK PROCEDURE	43
IS EVERY TEMPLE BASE?.....	44
CAST OF CHARACTERS.....	45
FRONT MAN	46
MANIACAL WIZARD	46
MAZE DESIGNER	47
MASTER BEASTS.....	48
VIVISECTIONIST	49
UNDEAD CAPTAIN.....	49
HIGH PRIEST	50
TORMENTOR.....	50
ASPIRANT.....	52
NOBLE CAPTIVE.....	52
KEEPER OF KEYS	53
DOOM FORECASTER.....	54
FOREST TRICKSTER.....	55
DARK ARTIST	56
PROPAGANDIST	58
INHUMAN CONSORT (PET)	58
POISONER	59

DEMONIC CHILD.....	59
PIT FIEND.....	60
INSANE CLOWN	61
ARTIFICER	62
DARK KNIGHT	62
MINDLESS ENFORCER.....	64
MEAT CARVER	64
WHISPERER	65
OVERSEER.....	66
VESTMENT TAILOR.....	67
GATEKEEPER.....	68
RETAINER'S PROVOCATIONS (3D8).....	69
ASSEMBLE THE RITUAL (MASS)	71
TEMPLE SCHEMATICS.....	72
ARENA.....	72
PULPIT.....	73
GREAT HEARTH	73
ANTECHAMBER	73
BARRIER.....	73
DORMITORY	74
FLIGHT STEPS.....	74
BURIAL VAULT	75
CLERK COINS	75
SCRIBES	75
CHAPEL.....	75
DANGER	75
DESOLATE HALL.....	75
LAVISH CHAMBERS.....	76
CRYPT	76
SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGES	76
BASEMENT STORES	76
EVIL ALTAR.....	78
DARK SHRINE.....	78
UNLIT CELL.....	78
EXAMPLES FOR OUTLANDS	79
CHEAT SHEET.....	81
Q&D DEFEAT A SUBCOMMANDER	81
IS THERE MORE?	86
A DESIRED TONE	87
HODGE PODGE OF QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS	88
JUDGMENT DAY	91
APPENDIX CREATING AND GROWING A FAITH.....	92
FLOWCHART OF FAITH	92
GUIDANCE ON SIGNIFICANT EVENTS	94
BEST TWO OUT OF THREE?.....	94
START GREAT IDEA (A)	94
START RISE RANKS (B).....	95
START SUBVERT A CULT (C)	97
SUPERNATURAL RETALIATION (D)	98
LIEUTENANTS (E).....	99

STANDARDIZE RITES (F)	100
MARTYRS (G)	102
WARRIOR ELITE (H)	103
DEBATE APOSTATE (I).....	105
PROSELYTIZE (J).....	107
ASSASSINS & CURSES (K)	109
FRANCHISE (L)	111
CHALLENGED & TRIUMPH (M).....	113
PURGE HERESY (N).....	115
GOBBLE GODLY ASPECTS (O).....	118
PLAY POLITICS (P).....	120
BACKLASH (Q)	122
FOSTER RIOTING (R)	124
CONVERT NOBLES (S).....	126
REVOLUTION (T).....	132
CULT PERSONALITY (U).....	134
WAGE WAR (V)	135
PURITY ENFORCEMENT (W).....	137
TRIBUNALS (X)	139
GOD MANIFESTS (Y)	140
SELF-DOUBT (Z).....	141
OUTER (AA)	142
GLOBAL ACCEPTANCE	143
BEST OF THE BEST.....	144

Introduction

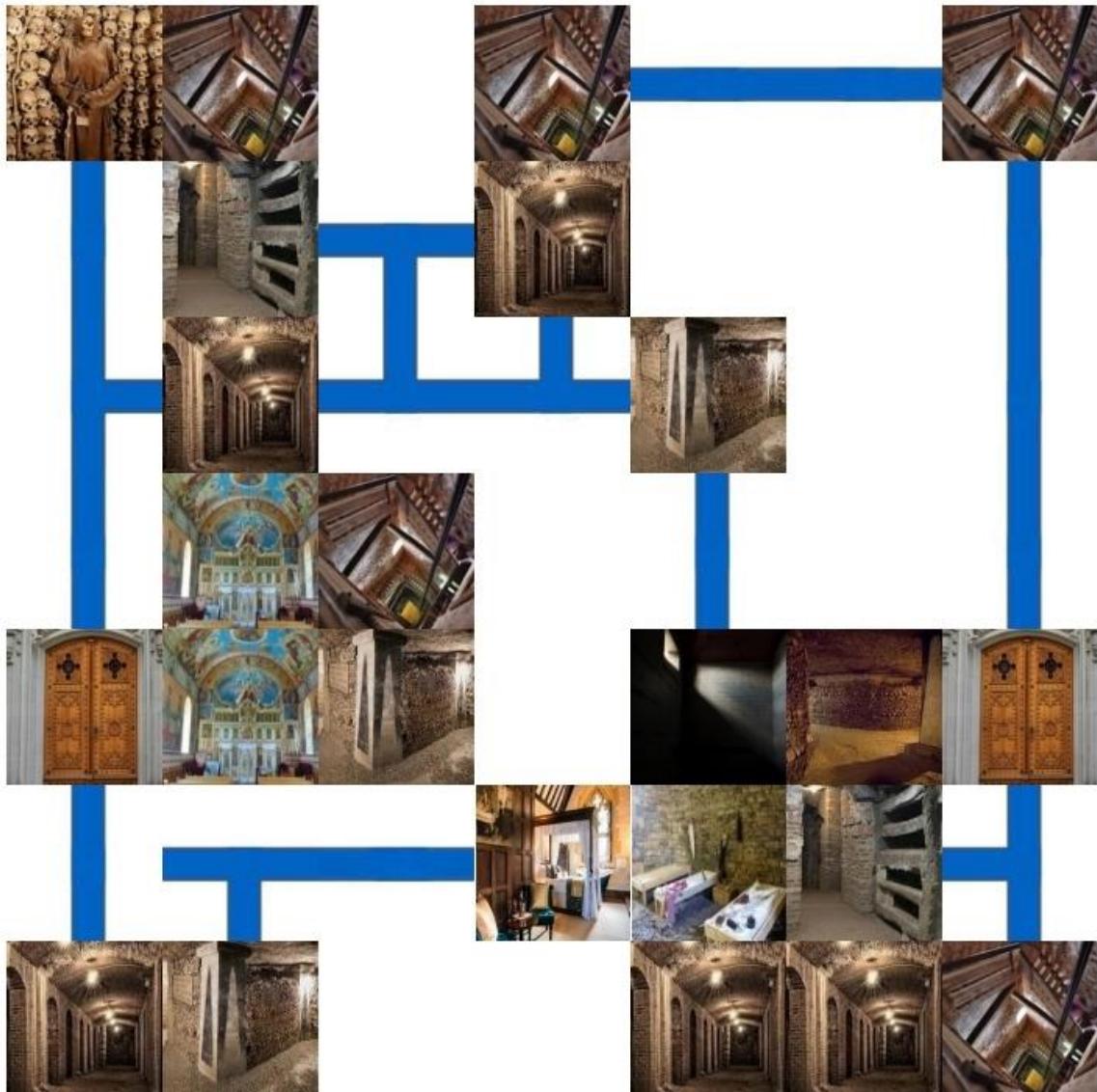
What is a religion and how do you broach the subject without causing real-world conflicts? In most cases by simply playing a fantasy game, you and your fellow players will easily distinguish game from actual values. If you're easily offended, you'd best stop reading.

Soldiering on, I see. Taking offense is unwarranted. *Mens Rea*, there is no intent in this booklet to insult anyone. On the other hand, your characters *should, will, and are* offended at every bend in the road. Use that to generate some spicy hot brouhaha and persistent intrigue. Shall we laugh and mock, together.

Religion is a constant source of conflict. Why not use it in your gaming to force events?

Every cultural system establishes behaviors and practices, adopts a moral worldview. Some have texts, sanctified places, engage in prophecies, preach an ethical standard. This constitutes a religion, at least according to Wikipedia.

But what does this all mean in terms of gameplay? The priestly caste must be more than a static list of gods and some strange iconography. Sure, you can have lengthy interludes involving philosophical debate, bring the party to a fervor, even indulge in some communal fratricide. If you're looking for an academic study of comparative religion, there are better sources than this pamphlet. We need game rules; we need just the Quick and Dirty results.



Herein lies that blood and guts. The campaign will be a sea of faiths and generating these can lead to many encounters and conflicts. Even if the players are not inclined to religious dogma and genocide, they could cross sections of the campaign where such is occurring. The very nature of a fantastic world means that new cults and established temples, some vibrant

and most in ruins, are as common as river rats. Choice of wording both deliberate and not.

Disclaimer: This text is written by an Atheist, an Agnostic and a Wiccan. Don't try to guess which is which; our faiths are none of your business.

Back to game play, shall we? This is not a Gods and Demons primer. You're clever enough to create exotic names for the higher order. We're not going to describe the divine in terms of hps and magic powers. This booklet is just going to show you where to start, how to organize the faithful and when to bring the whole state to chaos. If you enjoyed the Fantasy Baronial Lifestyles, you're in for another treat.

Task Resolution

Degree of Difficulty of Deed, Feat or Task	Level of Character			
	0 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 7	8
Routine	Automatic			
Ordinary	7	5	4	3
Difficult	12	10	7	5
Tasking	14	12	9	7
Nearly Impossible	16	15	14	12
Impossible	Never, not even w/ make-roll			

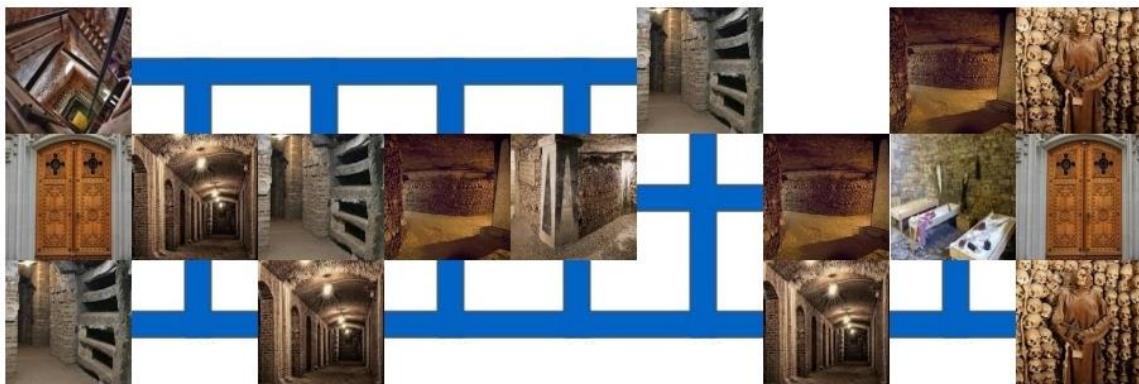
This **Generic Chance of Success** is very germane to free-style role-play. When a test is mentioned as *Difficult* or *Tasking*, refer here to the relative difference, perhaps to extrapolate into for your *Other Favorite Role-Play Game*.

Understanding Tenets

Mankind had questions. Thought came with observation but not answers. That and some strange funky things occur in fantasy campaigns. Do we really have balance and ecology? Is there evolution, science and determinism in the realm of the unreal? Hold on, don't go all crazy. Stick to brass tacks. Men create the rules. Male gender pronouns are used without implication. Yet sexual taboo is a big part of most theology.

People create the rules under which they live. The larger the group, the more diverse, the more laws. Religions are truly contracts, social agreements on how to live, how to understand the unfathomable, an agreement to do what you're told despite personal selfishness and even self preservation.

There is a higher order. These are the rules given onto us by the gods. It will be said many times – those extremely frivolous beings do exist, and each has more power than restraint. The truly benevolent gods are either dead, caged or far away. What mankind experiences is the wrathful ones who trade secrets for lauding rituals.



Understanding the Congregation

Why do men seek knowledge through superstition? Why does bias work or prayer comfort? Too big a topic. Maybe what we need to know is just how many minions the order has. Each grand godly power listed below will have about an eighth of the campaign world in its sway. I'd name the influences, but that's a fun exercise better handled by each Ref.

Godly Power (D8)

1 or less: Able to correct the mistakes of man, a manipulator of time. This guy tends to be uncaring. He sees man as paramecium on a slide. He intervenes for abstract reasons. He tends a garden, a kid playing a Sim who leaves it running for eons before he shuts it off.

2: Able to raise the dead and restore life. He probably would not bother with disease or injury, fixing those; he'd rather inflict such. He likes watching his followers suffer. The world is a Rekt video, which he rewinds on occasion. Those rewinds lead to new stories. All rather fantastic.

3: Creates the terrain and shapes the foundations. He's adding things to the world, and his logic is not sound. He's a meddler. He moves

mountains knowing it topples cities. He may not be vindictive, but much of his actions are detrimental. He vents a volcano and loses control, reshaping a sea. He doesn't like order and routine. He revels in hands-on action on a continent scale. The worst *Case Three* is a toddler building brain connections as he thrashes. Pray something greater can moderate or devise a way to slay the infant god.

4: Spawns strange creatures and sets them free. He wants his minions to procreate and combat often. He's a collector of the misshapen and bizarre. He reaches out and crushes with his fingers many of the animals he only wishes he could cuddle.

5: Betting on favorites, a gambler. He sees the world as an arena, and he wants to win. The game rules and the entities he competes against are too complex to fully understand. He will bestow gifts on certain followers and offer coaching. His idea of success may be illogical or the smallest of whimsy. His support of an army might be his manner of upturning the soil or clearing a field of metaphorical or literal weeds. Stranger still, he's solo gaming and bets against himself, trying to best his last high score.

6: Testing universal truths—physics, science, matter, energy, empathy, consciousness—all in transition because the deity is flatulent. He may be the universe itself, but more likely is a higher being, one of a prehistoric race that rose on-high and commands and controls at the pinnacle of all magic, artifice and technology. He is the giver of relics, ever forgetful and losing his toys.

7: Unloved by his own kind, he comes to the world seeking friends, pets, those who will praise and call out his name. He takes credit for what he might not even control or understand. He's explaining the inexplicable with couched expressions and grand gestures. He punishes the unfaithful more than the ignorant.

8 or more: The servant of an even higher master plan, he wants to aid mankind in obtaining some ultimate state of being. He may wish to create the Id, which will free him from his servitude. He may be a collective conscious of mankind itself. Self awareness has come with superpowers that his race can hardly understand.

What did that prove?

The gods are not here to serve mankind. They want followers for too many rational and irrational motives. Do not seek understanding. Instead, see each religion as a collection of humans using faith and the social order to justify all manner of self aggrandizing and wealth accumulation. But I think we got

ahead of ourselves, trying to understand and define the heavens. Where did all this start?

Shamanism

The beginning of a creed, the worship becomes part of a daily ritual of survival. Often animals and natural forces are feared; anthropomorphism assigns human characteristics to objects that truly have none. Fish are said to be smart, wily. Lions are courageous. The Fae mysterious. Confirmation bias takes over. If an earthquake occurs right after a bird lands on the altar, the bird becomes a portent. He may even have been such (again we are fantasy here). Pray to the birds to leave us in peace or warn us further in advance.

Polytheism

A pantheon of gods and heroic servants are worshiped, starting with an all-father or highest of the holy. Other faiths are not dismissed, they are coopted. The religious goals tend to be to subordinate other faiths into the hierarchy. The local forms of the spirit world are dominate. Other creeds are mere aspects of the greater host of gods and godling creatures. Teach the ignorant. Most faiths of many gods function in abject poverty. The priests do not organize and compete for the favors of many godlings. The common man fears them all and seeks no favors, only anonymity.

Henotheism

Though many faiths are recognized, all are seen as inferior. There is one principal deity which guides all. This could be simply an all-powerful, everlasting essence, or it represents a force which must be obeyed. The god itself might be competing in the heavens. More often the name of the deity masks the goal of a high priest.

Other godlings are seen as mere champions or defilers who oppose the supreme order. The term Pagan starts to appear in speech. People of the faith tend to denigrate the beliefs of outsiders by declaring them ignorant and pagan.

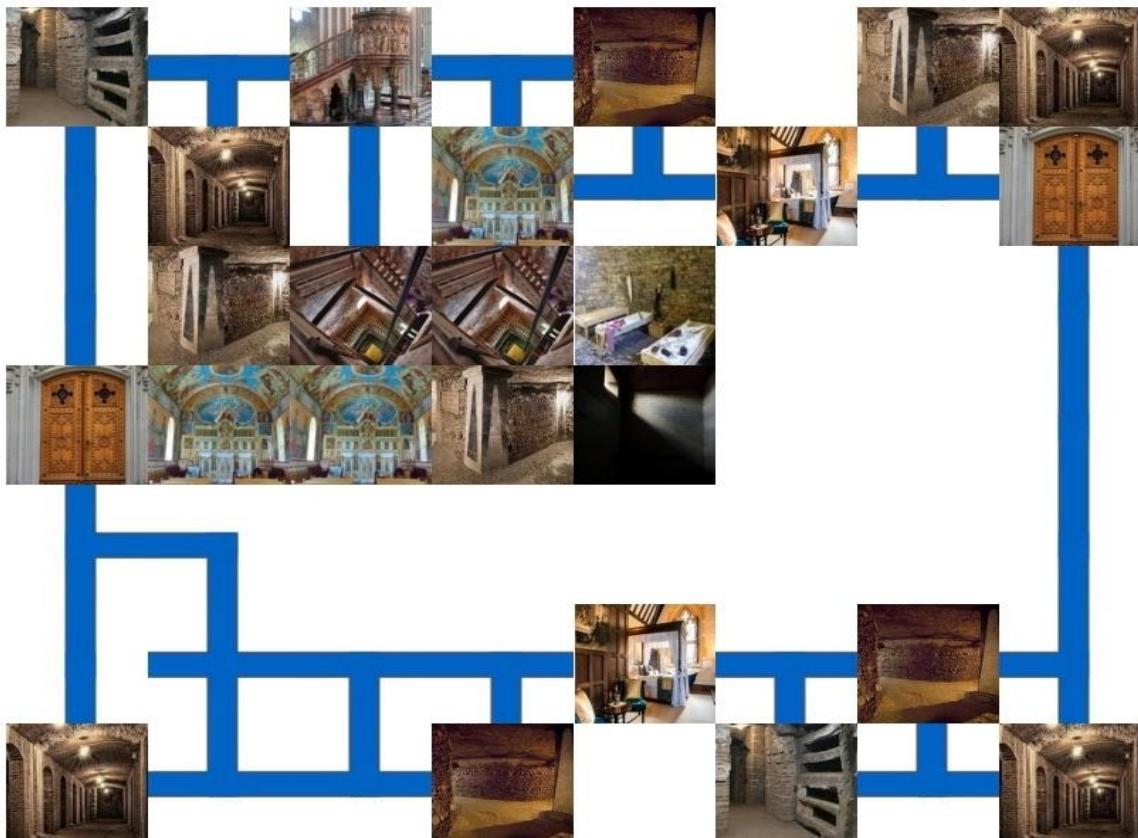
Monotheism

The rejection of all other faiths and objects of worship. The monotheist has his single deity to praise. When this starts to become a contradiction, as bad things happen to good people, then a lesser force, a Satan appears in the role

of the hated, a source of all blame. Else, outside conjuration is distorting and harming the faithful. These faiths start with high goals of manumission, emancipation and salvation. But as the creed gains political will and regional dominance, the equality of the flock becomes secondary to the enrichment of the worthy. Those who do not follow the tenets are considered infidels. A person who rejects the teachings he once espoused is called blasphemous. Someone who desires alteration or clarification of the vows is deemed heretical.

Absence of Faith

Hard to imagine atheism occurs in a campaign world were terrible and powerful creatures do appear. The character with this perspective imagines a world rid of the supernatural and all-powerful, a place where mankind decides its own destiny. The atheist, simply the non-theist, often sees earthly motives in religion, and these he secretly rejects. What he does not understand, he refuses to attribute to a god. He'd rather say, "I don't know," rather than "Must be God." Many are urbanites who have not experienced the true wonder of the campaign. To reject the god or gods is apostate. Most religions will slaughter these contrarians enthusiastically.



Where are Things At?

A very complex question can be distilled into a model. Where is a faith on the campaign map. How many is the enumerated followers. Free-style play works better with adjectives, less with raw numbers. Apply which works for you, a total headcount or grand estimate.

State of Graceful Growth (D8)

- 1 or less:** Tribal Cult
- 2:** Temple
- 3:** Dogma
- 4:** Persecution
- 5:** Political Assimilation
- 6:** Proselytizing
- 7:** Crusading
- 8 or more:** Complacent

Note: in the paragraphs to follow you can read more on each of these topics and the counterpoints. For every *Cult* and *Temple* met, there is always game play on both sides of that cause.

Tribal Cults

The beginning of ideas. Barely a cause celeb, the cult is at a place where a hearty group of players can snuff it out. Most should be in fact slaughtered. Now we have a reason to adventure.

Set up a situation where the players take offense or see wealth exposed for the taking. Conclude with combat. The cult will typically not be able to contact the demon (deity) which has inspired them. However, the pillage might be avenged. If not by the greater creature, perhaps by the kin of those who went off to find spiritual ecstasy and wound up being robbed and violated. Oh sure, murder hobos, deny that occurred!

Raise the Temple

Enough resources have been collected by a community or city-state to dedicate and consecrate a place of communal worship. It takes true organization to raise a temple. A wizard conjuring one from the earth is not the same, though he might attract a cult of followers for having such power.

The temple will be in various initial states, setting the foundation, celebrating the first mass. The players can enter to help the effort. Most player characters will be mercenary, and there's payment for strong backs. The group may need to quest to find a relic, an ordinary object in a dangerous place, yet one with significance to validate the flock.

They may also be hired by the more established religion or ruling noble to end by arson this rising faith. The cult usually survives, but it may be a generation or more before an equivalent effort occurs. If the temple thrives, then the campaign has a new political faction. The player characters might enjoy being chartered members, in on the ground floor of the venture.

Dogma

The faith now has a creed accepted by a strong minority. Certain beliefs will not be questioned among the faithful. Even if individuals cannot aspire to be faithful to all aspects of the new religion, they hide their inequity or pay for forgiveness. The god itself might be aiding the creation of the doctrines, adding his own demands of the priests.

When the players arrive, they might be the devil's advocates, arguing why certain tenets should not be included. Every group needs naysayers to overcome, to make the rest feel empowered. The dogma will not end, simply by slaughter. That could in fact focus the most rabid of minority views.

The players might also be recruited to join, spread the new faith. They might be hired to guard or escort apostles which are tasked to go forth (and become martyrs). The locals usually support the religion, but the ruling authority is playing wait and see. The petition of the faith might need a strong advocate, like a player character, to take demands to the baron, earl or even king. That is ambitious, but often leads to fugitive status. Each new faith, even a resurrection of old practices, presents instability. For now, that disruption is confined locally. Do nothing and the hullabaloo spreads.

Persecution

This result is not always the consequence of a raising faith. Some skip right to recognition or proselytizing. Yet if you got here by a die roll, so be it. The ruling noble has decided to scapegoat the temple for the region's ills. The members become the latest ethnic group to be the victims of oppressive laws. New taxes or restrictions are hampering the rise of the faith. Even if

the tradition should meld well with other customs, a racial bias is what truly is being exploited.

Fantasy worlds have hybrid creatures. Non-humans are strange; their beliefs are pagan to the established order. The growing religion may even be too strange or too unaccommodating. The new religion is not getting along with others. It's snooty or openly practices in a manner which more traditional faiths find taboo. Cannibalism, Bestiality, Human Sacrifice are considered ancient and long rejected. Or the new faith is the one attempting to end these rituals and other icky practices still part of the traditional mass. The more established faith might not openly practice the abhorrent, but an inner circle might still feed the god. The newer faith may wish to exercise that cabal; yet until they present evidence or storm the inner sanctum, their accusations are seen as slander and must be punished.



There is easy money to be made should the players become enforcers. They might have no vested interest, or one player character will be faced with a spiritual dilemma. This is the next phase of events should the players return to a part of a campaign after previously encountering a cult at conception, returning to the temple years after they helped that initial build. A temple was consecrated, now ask, did it survive?

Presently, the greater power is behind the persecution. The weaker in number or possessing lesser magic adhere to the newer faith. The injured may wish to crush the noble faction which rules the region. Yet to do so would impact every religion, with trade and order sacrificed. So, what's a role-player to do?

Whatever intervention is attempted, should be noted. The players will find it hard to not be associated with one side or the other. Do they have the stomach to walk away? If they do so, that too could earn them some infamy. Even supporting the winning side or finding compromise will make the party responsible for the crusade and reverse persecution which comes later.

Political Assimilation

The ruler of the region has become a member, converted to a new faith. He might plan to make his announcement at his wedding, or the change could be part of his coronation to high lord. If a king or emperor changes gods, it will be a slugfest. If a local city-state ruler even tolerates a rising cult and proclaims the temple the equivalent of other traditional sources of dogma, the intrigue begins. Fantasy intrigue will be knife work, assassins, thefts, abduction, stealing of relics and defiling altars. The very gods too might need to clash. The mountains could shake.

Proselytizing Faith

A regional religion is on the verge of becoming a global superstar. Perhaps not in authority or power, still there remains wide recognition that a new faith exists. People all over want to hear the word. The dogma spreads, yet in each place it has regional overtones. There will someday be a schism, just not yet. The players have all sorts of work available. Relics might be moved and paraded. Deities might need to be summoned as proof. Conversion by the sword requires swordsmen or stopping older traditions from becoming victims is the job of altruists.

Crusading Faith

Here's a good bit of game fun. Some outside group, usually pretty weak, is going to be cut to pieces. Those pieces will be fed to another god's animal fiend. Even if it's not that obvious, the result is the same. One faith needs another faith to die horribly. What better way to prove one is right than trial by combat on a much larger scale. These attacks justify themselves. The weaklings must convert to our god, our dogma. If they truly worship

something strong and vibrant, where is that god? The heavens are seen as zero-sum. Strength elsewhere diminishes the rest.

The players must pick a side or find a way of backtracking. The crusade usually follows the same path of their own quest. It's there and at the very least a nuisance. If you play with servitors—try it, it's fun—the henchmen and hirelings are often raring to join the side which forgives the sin of pillage in advance. Deities might need to be summoned for retribution. The very gods may also join the clash.

Complacent Faith

The religion is static. Most of those at temple are falling asleep or only there for feast days. The religion needs a spark. Enter the players. Burning a heretic is always good for ratings. Let's not go there, unless we must.

One player may be called forth as a portent (or chosen one) as described in the lore. The faith needs a hero to inspire. The high priests may also know they have become secular. They may wish to escape with the best linens before the next messianic champion comes to tear down their walls. The player characters of dissimilar faith might be wrongly (rightly) seen as outsiders to punish the lazy.

On the Other Hand

Many people do not play well with others. As a new faith grows, it tends to make the last one feel neglected. The cool kids are leaving. The impression of many traditional priests and worshipers is that the cult must be stopped. The ruling authority may not like the disruption. Or a lord might seek to reconcile the sides and add to his coffers.

Charisma Rules

The leaders of budding faiths are sadly mortal and frocked with flaws. The goals may be lofty; the result is base. If the religion exists only to praise the high priest or maniacal leader, the force of followers are dangerous, often homicidal. They may also be dabbling with a power that can not be controlled. The leader thinks the demon he summons will be his servant. Yeah, when does that happen? The angry creature from another plane is in agony and being told by a human to obey? The party of players will be wise enough to see deluded people being manipulated. Some members of the cult need to be rescued. Even a guarding wizard (called a Zaire in free-style play)

may be the one to warn the players of a cult and want them to handle a sidebar task to prevent small or large tragedy. This is perfect and fits most game systems, which thrive on killing to restore social justice or return trade to baseline.



Temple Secrets

The players may see opulence, but the temple itself may be a ruse. What is under the temple may be important. The temple may even act as a ward, the faith a mere excuse to get men to bond together and do the right thing. If the temple or even a small part of it, fails to be assembled, then greater evil will be released. That greater evil typically takes over the congregation as thralls.

Assault on Liberty

The comic famously said, I do not want to be a member of any group that would deign to have me as a member (Groucho). All faiths are bounded in rituals, and most have special definitions of sin. Religious leaders usually have ulterior motives. The faithful may start out with a different understanding of the supreme law, and recruited subordinated leaders appear with aspiration to change larger morals.

The faith may be simple, but the dogma is fluid. Interpretation of sacred text or the use of relics is causing realignment. Alignment is a pretty obvious word in roleplay. What was once good or harmless, can turn evil and nasty. The best way to simulate this is by character class or in free-style play the targeting of a skill. Part of the dogma may be no one shall carry arms. No one should use magic. No one should heal; only our god may do so. No one may steal. Now they really crossed a line. Put the players in a position of protecting their freedoms. Does it have to be with combat? No, but use your game rules for that rather good default.

Extinction Doctrine

Most faiths need to demonstrate authority. These are not clubs, agreements to meet on friendly terms. The religion is out to do something. Change the lives of the downtrodden turns into kill all hobgoblins. Those hobgoblins have been stealing babies. They just may have as well. But how many babies were taken? Couldn't have been all of them or mankind would be gone.

The religion will seek to supplant all strange creatures and replace their domains with farmland. Is that desired? Could some of the chimera player characters, those half-elf types or fully non-human dwarves, be less inclined to allow a mountain to be flattened or worst a forest to be incinerated. So long as the god is praised, what is done in his name is never atrocity.

Depends largely on your point of view. Again, conflict and introspection for a character in a game adds to the tension and play value. Faith is never universally shared. Common sense is neither (common nor sensible).

Fallen in Disgrace

When Christianity was named the religion of the Roman empire, the temples were not immediately destroyed. Most were repurposed as churches.

Happens time and time again. Yet people are out of a job. The morally flexible will change sides. The ones hanging on to tradition fret and plot.

No ruling authority loves all equally. Favoritism is important to play. The players too may find they gain rank and privilege, but for how long? Their own roles may be transient. You can throw up your hands and have none of this but can the same be said for a mission's patron or the family left behind.

The campaign is a glorious zero-sum game. Keep it that way. Set the bar at Ten points. If said religion one has three points and falls to two, that extra spot goes where. If a major religion has seven points, it might fall to six with little fanfare. If some doctrine was scraping by at condition one, is it the religion to disappear into obscurity, when something else rises from nothing. There is a finite number of hands clasped in prayer. Even the Polytheists have household shrines and play favorites.

Pogrom and Forced Conversion

As a faith rises in power, the other gods become an annoyance. Parishioners might turn to those other deities, when their prayers are not answered. To stop that, many must be forced to accept the new faith and the new order. Tough to be told, your life stinks and you are worthless. Sometimes death becomes more of the option. The very existence of someone who studied and professed a former religion will offend the new blood.

As the campaign progresses, the friends of the players will be targeted. Religion is seldom the first topic of discussion. Only Conan would dare ask a stranger, "What god do you pray to?" Later the players may discover that friend, they once cherished and trusted, has changed. Friends, someone the group owes favors, become imprisoned. Retired friends (former player characters) die by mysterious circumstances or are outright executed by the new sensation.

Disrupting Farming

People need to plant and harvest, tend in between. The ratio of the farmers to idle thinkers is roughly twenty to one. For every twenty people planting, you can afford a lord, priest, artisan or beggar. Religious fervor causes young men to march off and neglect the fields. These same armies of fanatics consume and destroy other fields as they forage for sustenance. A crusading cause triggers famine, winter starvation, lack of firewood, absence of sword sharpeners, the local protection is off in region XYZ, and the homeland is left unprotected.

Maybe that was the goal all along; a faith is spread to leave a region vulnerable. Farfetched, perhaps, but this is fantasy; someone must be able to see the future. Sure, and can't we conjure food? Yes, and that could also be the goal to eliminate a source and competition. Easy motives tend to work better than complex ones in gaming. *“They mean to win Wimbledon.”*
(Monty Python)

Embrace Change

Many games have a whole class of characters called clergy. Most are Friar Tuck, not caring for god any more than when the next meal starts. Yet someone out there might want to try to upset the faiths of the campaign. Why accept the corruption and complacency? Inspire a cult of your own. Recruit a crusade. Build a temple and preach. The religions of the campaign are static and vulnerable. That ten count of significance could shave off one point dedicated to the followers of the player character or his whole party. A mere snake cult can rise and turn child against parent. That's the plot of Arnold's Conan, recall.



The Evolving Pantheon

If you truly need names, you can easily find a list via Google. Try Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman or Norse beliefs. Stay away from religions which are still practiced; the intent of gaming is never to dismiss nor carry over offenses outside of play. Dare I say you're acting, though that concept is controversial among the authors. Cosplay sux.

What you need to understand is any cult transforms with legitimacy. That and it takes a few generations of mothers teaching children their prayers. The major source of imprinting of the divine on mankind comes from the beliefs and superstitions being passed on to the young. But once mothers are scolding children or blessing meals in the name of a deity, the hope for a peaceful conclusion has ended.

Faiths don't die; only the first supplicants do. As values shift and dogma is declared or changed, the religion is in flux. The creed adapts to oppressive coercion and new prophets. In the fantasy world, a neglected godling might return to reclaim the soul of his temple.

Perhaps known as Ref the trigger, troublemaker, disrupter, which hurls conflict into the path of the player party.

Local Aspect (D8)

- 1 or less:** Persona Enigma
- 2:** All Knowing Father
- 3:** Persona Creator
- 4:** Persona Sustenance
- 5:** Persona Mother
- 6:** Dark Form
- 7:** Persona Bravery
- 8 or more:** Persona Destruction

A persona is an anthropomorphic aspect attributed to the god. e.g. A rock can be said to be calm. When life is ordinary and consistent, the beliefs hold without discord. Whether the rock (or deity) is serene or not is less important to the fantasy campaign element than what occurs when a rock is seen no longer as calm.

Persona Enigma

A part of the religion related to the Seas and Sky is in turmoil. Many ports balance fishing with farming. In historic Constantinople the Blues and Greens competed to see whose god was more powerful and whose subjects more worthy. Riots, murder, cheating, all took place to win the heavenly blessing. The enigma comes from the campaign aspect that there is no actual god or deity that will intervene and appear to decide, either once and for all, or just to proclaim this year's winner. When the part of a faith which is rather broad or even nebulous seems to be changing, this anxiety manifests. People can handle direct conflict. People hate the gnawing feeling that life has changed and they are helpless.

All Knowing Father

This heavenly host grows in dominance as the religion moves away from a pantheon and starts to become monotheistic. The accepted wisdom of the times is changing. The patriarchy is being threatened. Women are being granted more power and rights. The reactionary forces of the religion hate that and often retaliate and repress. The regression could lead to the return of chattel laws, the barring of females to travel alone, the confiscation of property of widows into the care of the All Knowing Father.

The All Knowing often slums among the pious, garbed in rags and trying to test humanity's generosity and kindness. When he does so, he seldom has any real power. He lets himself be mortal and experience pain to properly judge. If the humans react indifferently, or violently, even harshly, he might take a generation to recover. He will mope alone, because he was wrong about the benevolence of mankind. The All Knowing Father is never wrong, and such paradox will split the faith or get parishioners to question their beliefs. That too is obviously a test. He likes ordeals, to teach in riddles and to overly promise aid. Self-reliance is usually the supreme lesson to learn.

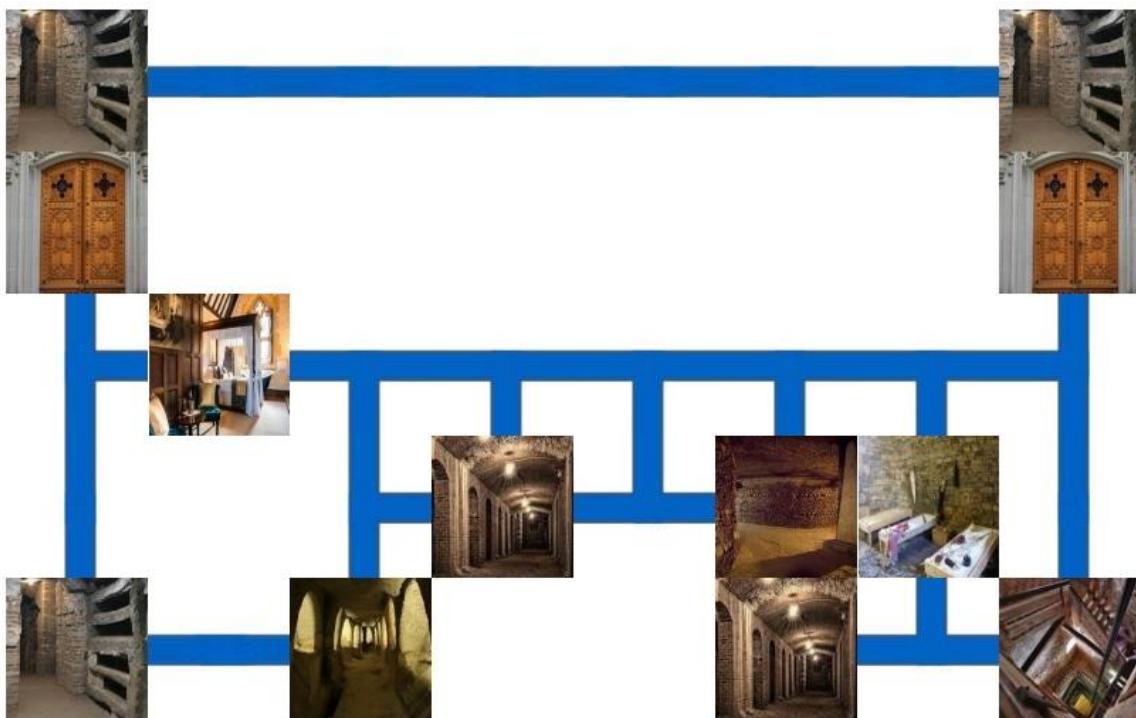
Creator

Most religions have an origin story. Most are very fanciful, somewhat comical. Many involve giant animals. Even in a fantasy genre, there could be simplistic metaphors used to explain very complex natural events behind the Sun, stars and world. These children's' tales are usually just that, the first lessons taught to the young. A god created the world for them, be grateful. Labor and toil is performed even by the gods. Respect the order and what we don't control. Obey.

The answer to every question is the creator; his motives are inscrutable. Things are the way he made them, wants them; his will be done. He may or may not love his followers. He may or may not care much. He is often not petitioned and quickly is relegated to the background as a faith evolves. Priests truthfully are frightened by someone with such power.

Yet what happens when these same metaphors and unquestioning beliefs alter by sophistry and gain moralistic tones? The stories are studied for loopholes or higher truths. The discovery delights the scholarly priest. He becomes closer to the gods, learns their secrets and higher morality.

Imagine a tenet such as this: The world needs stewardship. The greater world is not our property; we only own the part we deserve or need. Swaths of the land might be declared off-limits. Places become sacred and forbidden to the unworthy unbelievers. Others might argue that the intent is being distorted, but none dare say these fables are just that, quaint. If anyone dares question, they are mocking the teachings of the Creator, the most powerful and benevolent of the gods.



Persona Sustenance

People gotta eat. Farming is rough. Any drought, hail, flooding, blight, mold, shifting climate, insects, tornado, sharknado®...all the things that cause crops to fail are inflicted by the gods. Even if the crops are taken by marauders or burned by dragons, the God of Sustenance was angry. People honor and respect the unseen force that feeds them. Hunting as well is seen in the same vain. Often the two are brother and sister or a competing aspect in a single goddess. Who does she favor this year?

The Sustenance God gets angry often. He punishes small slights. He hates man in general, and only loves true believers by feeding the worthy. Hungry people look for scapegoats to blame. Outsiders are the easy choice. Simple shrines placed in the woods or on the edges of fields look like fine places to remove one's boots, sit and rest the feet. Blasphemy!

Persona Mother

Farming communities need children as obedient labor. Even with widespread slavery, the slaves got to breed. Declining birthrate is a sure sign the area is afflicted, cursed or being punished by the gods.

The aspect of the faith that controls fertility is fickle. Women are blamed for male impotence and any failure to sire children. Witches curse men into failure. If the area is in an uproar, the heavenly Mother is being petitioned; there is going to be nonconformist hags burned.

The party is a good group to help collect the sacrifices and ungodly. Else, the paladins might try reason, but often end the adventure barricaded and defending the innocent from the mob or dogmatic archbishop. If you want to go Postman or Boy and His Dog, Little Big Man?, the party may need to help impregnate some virgins. Bring on that fresh seed, baby.

Dark Form

Even if this aspect of faith is not evil, the mention of its name causes dread. The Dark Form is often in opposition with the rest of the pantheon. Was true for the Greeks with Hades. Was true in Empire of the Petal Throne™ with Ksarul. If the deity is presented and expressed in human shape, the Dark Form will be an angry brother or uncle of the All Knowing Father. Family rivalry is understood. In the heavens, jealousy causes strife as well.

When the heavens fight, humans suffer. The player characters have no real influence on how this plays-out or concludes. Still, the player characters will try to intervene. Until the doomed prince is returned to the blue room or the underworld, rock-on foolish and arrogant mortals.

The dead won't stay dead. Else, plague occurs. The people usually never make offerings to the Dark Form which controls the afterlife. The Dark Form is worshiped by vermin and slimy things. He must be on orders from the Father to punish us. The Father cannot punish his children, he is too kind. He dispatches the Dark One to punish. Or, he turns his back on mankind and lets his younger bother, the Dark One, stride the realms of man.

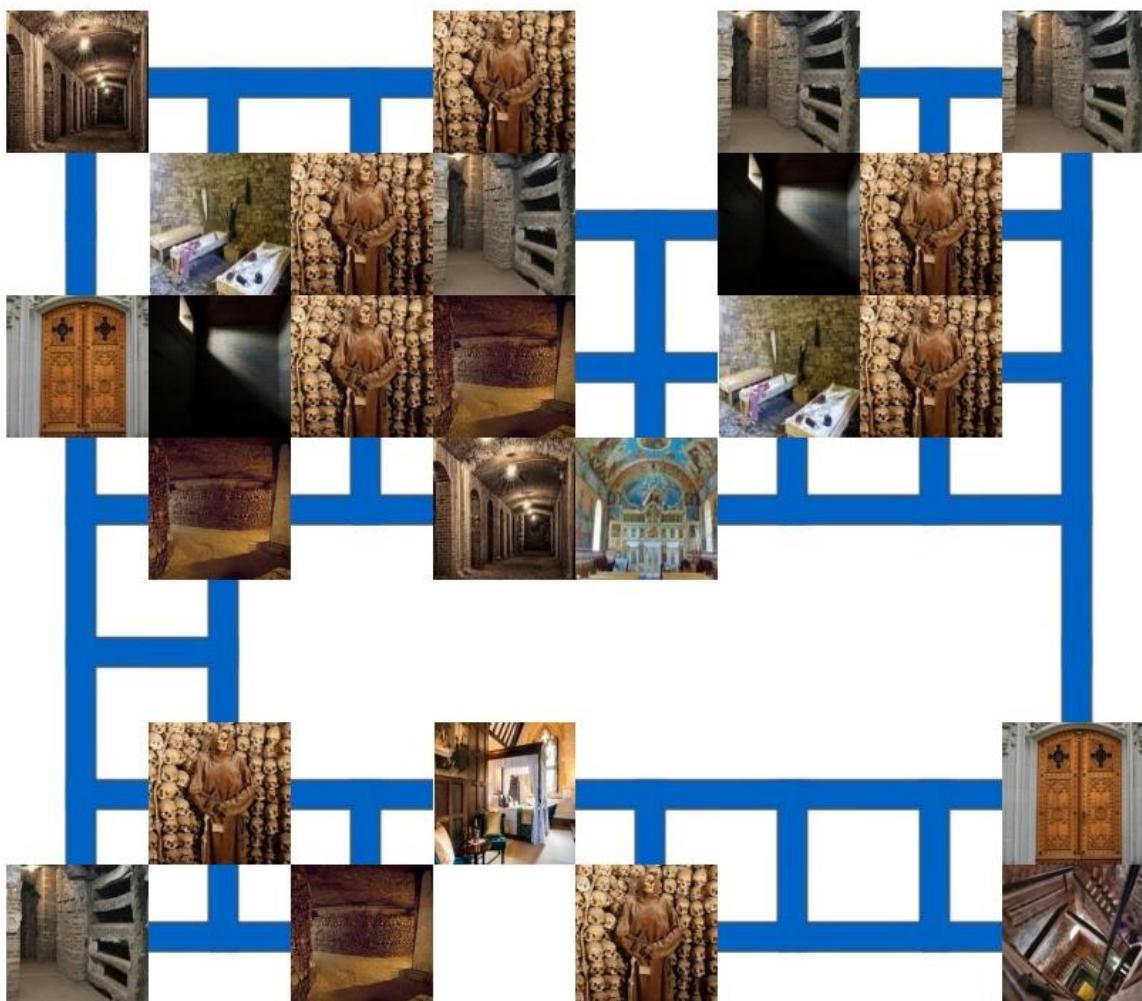
The religious leaders will also fear that a new cult has spawned, which has brought the Dark Form upon the world. Unless the player group does worship evil, the temple will look for an outsider to oust the cult or even dispel the monstrous form of the Dark Form itself. The religious elders cannot fight their own beliefs. The Dark Form is there to remove their inequity. The Dark Form is sent by a Father's love. All that confusion leads to inaction. The players are seldom so detached and seem always ready for action.

Persona Bravery

Fantasy worlds are traditionally medieval and work in a feudal tradition of vassals fighting for lords. There can also be warrior cults or a long tradition of fighting in crusades. The Persona of Bravery also represents loyalty to tradition and authority. When the legions, garrisons or levies refuse to fight, there may be a supernatural element. There could be an appeal to the Gods of Valor to come and help defend the region, while it is vulnerable.

These are opportunities for the players. Enter the players right as they are needed, or when all hell is about to break loose. The outsiders are seen as a transitional force to defend the castle or village, while more men are trained. The site may have sent men off to fight and subsequently lost magnificently. That massacre has left them vulnerable. The enemy is approaching. The gods sent the players. The players may disagree. The temple leaders will not like be contradicted. Any gold exchanged is under the table.

The men of the village may also be dwindling, because weird tests of manhood pit brother on brother. A once trivial practice of letting a child camp alone, could have evolved into the summoning of beasts or demons to judge the aspirant worthy. The threat may also be from outside, yet the congregation refuses to acknowledge they need to change. Ancient tradition needs to be abandoned, because the rites empower something old, now risen and furious.



Persona Destruction

Fire and Weather are controlled by ginns, at least they are in Chronicles of the Outlands. In most FRPG there are many Gods of Destruction, instruments of chaos. These will be the most tangible threat to the party. Instead of myth, the Persona of Destruction will need to be actually defeated. A relic may need to be obtained, wielded; the relic may need to be

countered, shut-off, carted on a quest. I'm going to guess that of all the eight parts of most pagan religions—those eight parts get absorbed into a single heavenly host in monotheism—you don't need much prompting to add some terrible thing to your campaign and attribute its appearance or destruction to religion.

Ancillary Figures

Someone is bound to ask, why do I have to do this? I'm not talking of a player; he must decide for himself how his role is sustained. I'm saying someone in the congregation asks an innocent question or dares to flaunt some part of the religion which seems confusing or ridiculous.

The solution is pretty much always giving the holy of the holy a sidekick. If god has an important minion, it reinforces the need of god to be worshiped. It also, though unsaid, suggests that anyone of the faithful might obtain a special place, at the Right Hand of the Almighty.

There is also a more practical element with this in a fantasy campaign. The gods may remain perfect and obeyed. They do, however, lose control of their minions. If mankind truly believed, without doubt or error, then perhaps the demigods would always stay complacent. Yet the heavens are a big soap opera of ambitions and political deal making, favors and betrayals. Use the demigod element to prompt adventure.

Demigod (D8)

- 1 or less:** Trickster
- 2:** Heroic Son
- 3:** Beastmaster
- 4:** Persona Vitality
- 5:** Consort
- 6:** Scholar Arcane
- 7:** Guard of Tomb
- 8 or more:** Face of Evil

Trickster

Every religion has a prankster or wild card, a notable who revels in mischief. The trickster may seek to usurp another deity or aspect, but it will always fail. He will lack the overall ability, temperament or political muscles.

Despite that he will try. In between seizing the mantle of power, he will delight in causing humans to hate one-another.

The trickster is often fixated on a symbol, a relic he believes holds all the power of the gods. He will tell the party about this talisman and promise everything for its recovery. For more law abiding and chivalrous groups, the Trickster will pretend to be a different god or demigod. This alone should convince the players not to deal with the immortals. Take your injuries and loss of life and move-on, but the players seldom listen and instead blame a spate of low rolls.

Heroic Son

There is typically a role model of the warrior; Orion dominates the Fall night sky. He may not be beholden to the other deities or is not considered a heavenly spirit by the one true god. Yet there he is, larger than life and dominating many a saga. To write directly about a day in the life of god could be heretical. To spin a good tale of admiration on the Heroic Son is more palpable to the faithful.

An amorous All Knowing Father might procreate with mortals and produce all manner of monster or demigods, like Heraclites (Hercules). The Trickster Loki had three offspring, none of them remotely human in appearance.

Beastmaster

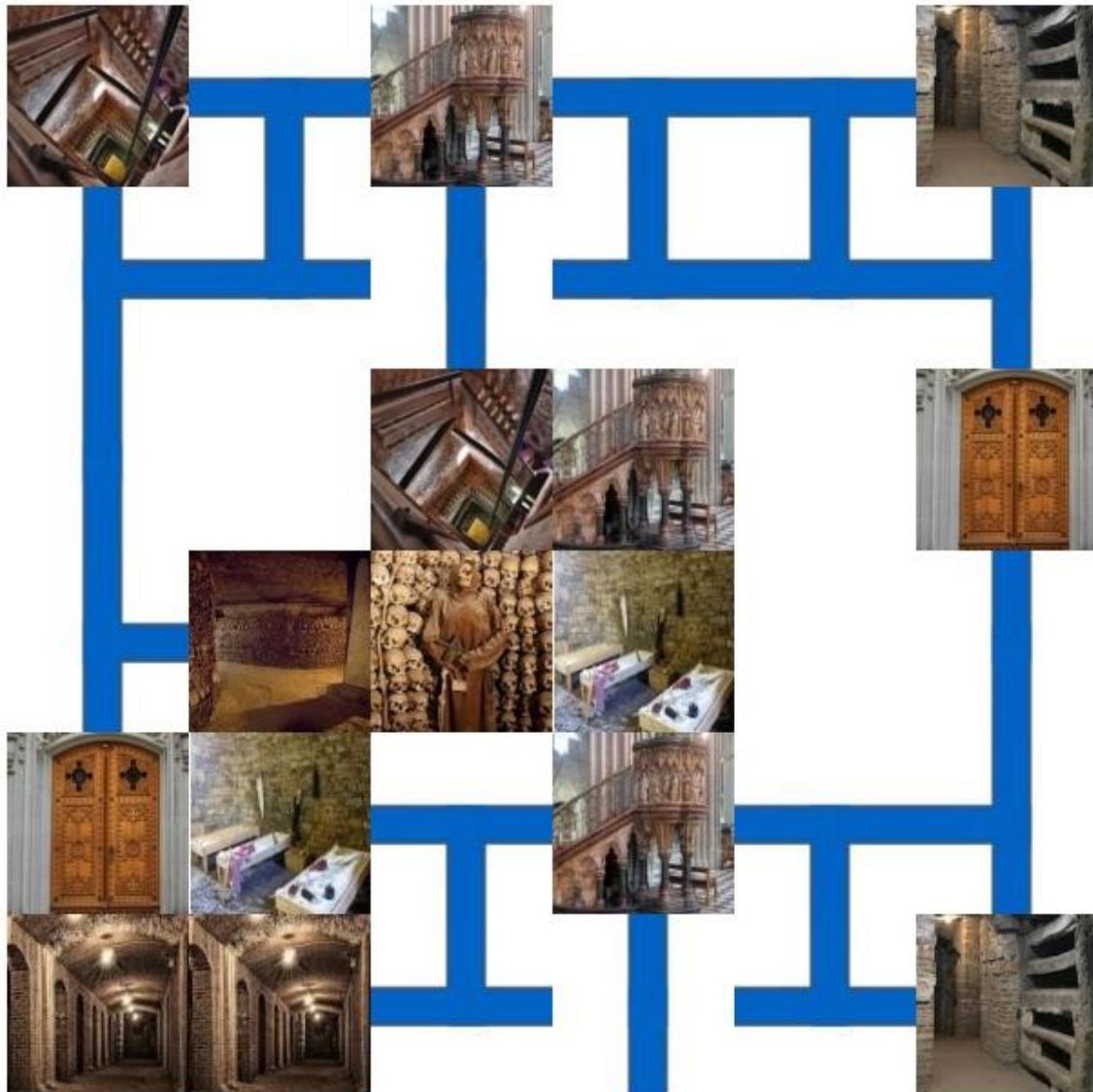
Mankind only tames the beasts, because there was a godly figure who did it first. These skills will be attributed to the tutelage of the Beastmaster. Many artisan skillsets, ones kept secret by the guilds who preform them, say masonry, could have a demigod as a patron. The Catholic Church kept patron saints to fill the same role.

This demigod will have knowledge needed by the group. When the party meets the Beastmaster, they will feel the legend does not match the reality. By design, the Beastmaster will never appear in his pristine form before mankind. Is it just some wise old forest dweller, a genius hermit, a wizard? That the Referee must decide. Or else that one player of the party, the play-baby, might decide he needs to know by plunging a dagger in the guy's back. The godling may decide to feign death, ooze human life, because he is not interested in temples and petitioners. He'd rather people not pray to him.

Persona Vitality

There should be one immortal that does not age and is seductive to both sexes. In puritan values faiths, he is the evil that seduces goodwives, a hooved Satyr. In ancient faiths he was the messenger who talked to mortals. His beauty so engrossing, it cannot be denied that his instructions are divine.

The Persona of Vitality has regenerative and healing properties. He may be able to bestow this power on others for a short period. There's a balance, though, while he might heal someone now, in the next quest that same character begins wounded. He is only a demigod, after all.



Consort

Even heaven has a wayward soul. The mistress of some other deity, the Consort teases all. She is often portrayed as androgynous or having both sets of genitalia. She seduces or is raped as a mere plot point in a faith's morality tales. She may bear heroic children or reaches into the wombs of maids to see what havoc she can wreck. She may not be able to control her sexuality. On the other hand, she may know exactly what she is doing. As an immortal she is frequently punished and exiled, forced to wed against her will, given over to some agent to tame. Does anyone truly think anything can stop her~him from tormenting past and future lovers.

The only one she doesn't bed and control with sex is the Trickster. The two are often brother and sister, or in the truly soap opera pantheons, originally man and fallen wife. There was thought that this would teach husbands to stay-on even in loveless marriages. The lesson of the Consort was often told in a morality play, the forgotten bride seeking her revenge. The Trickster was once a proud figure, until his cuckold.

The Consort's origin story varies. As a cast out wife, her only recourse may be to prostitute herself. Her husband-protector may be murdered or fall in heavenly war. She may be the product of incest. To survive she moves from one protector to the next, paying each guardian with pleasure and driving each one insane with desire. The Consort could be a tease, one who will take control of mortals, making them sin.

The Consort may have an alternate persona of a nun, not a virgin but a woman who keeps her vows even after her husband's countless infidelities. Her cult will expect chastity, and after that edict will range from charity to bloodletting. All depends on her level of forgiveness in the faith. Most err on the side of her being bitter and remaining so until a judgment day.

Arcane Scholar

This demigod is seen as a less busy version of the All Knowing Father. The Scholar may even be the yes-man of the heavens, able to confirm what most of the gods know as truth. He might be looked at as a judge, but his bias will be to favor the one already in power.

The Arcane Scholar is sent to guide man, exclusively. The greater gods might have a whole universe to run or have faithful among more than mere

humans. By having the Arcane Scholar, the heavens can be worshiped by every creature without conflict. The scholar only helps mankind, usually by telling them how to defeat monsters.

If the Dark Form or Trickster unleashes a denizen upon the world of mortals, the Arcane Scholar might craft the blade of its destruction. Else, he can teach a select mortal champion; he might instruct the Heroic Son or Beastmaster with the player group as selected henchmen, handing the small things (like whelp dragon offspring).

The Scholar often is supported by cults and colleges raised in his name. He is often melded with the All Knowing Father or Creator as a benevolent deity. The Scholar represents another god by being able to walk the earth in a lesser impure form. Surely the gods are too mysterious and untainted to touch soil. Problem solved, *deus ex machina*, enter the Arcane Scholar.

Guard of Tomb

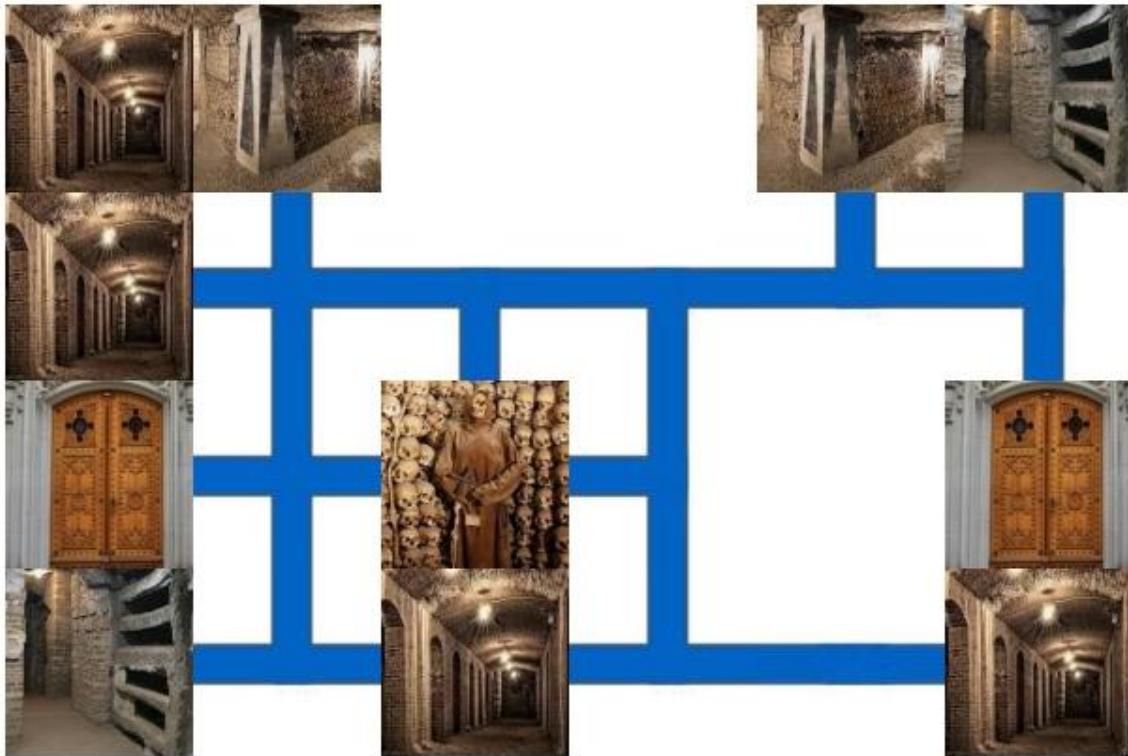
Tomb, as a description, may be too specific; this would probably also be a titan like Atlas that holds up the world or that Aesir that stands on one end of a rainbow bridge. (Look it up if you haven't seen the Disney® movie.) The Guardian may not even be of human form. A flaming sword often is used by religions to describe a warden on the gate into a place, where mortals are forbidden. Will that stop the group?

The inclusion allows me also to reflect on the representations of the gods and demigods. Most religions favor human form from head to toe or just neck down. Chimera are a blend of species. Gods are often Chimera. The Egyptians had lots of animal-headed gods. Yet divine objects need not be inert. The spirits of metals, and the ginn inside of the same for Outlands, will animate, making the items self-aware. All should have names and personalities.

The Guardian is a thankless role, forever being a policeman. He might be the watcher over the Consort. Yet there he is forever letting his prisoner wrangle free. Incompetent, perhaps? Corrupt, perhaps, but not for mere wealth. How could he profit and enjoy any luxury in whatever grind he finds himself.

A classic trope has the Guardian request from a mortal hero a respite. Hercules held up the world for Atlas. While I do not think the player

characters could do that feat, perhaps they can sit vigil and protect something seemingly tame or innocuous, that transforms as soon as the Guardian departs (to take his overdue pee). That may be a test. Oh look, the egg is now a baby dragon, growing very fast.



Face of Evil

The Dark Form may sometimes spawn a great menace. Even a mere Trickster, like Loki, might sire the Midgard Serpent. The Dark Form can be assumed too powerful for mankind. If the Dark Form gets free, he dominates and enslaves mankind. Game over. So, there needs to be a more, arguably competitive, challenge in the form of the Face of Evil.

What are the many faces of evil? (That's all I'm going to say, since your creative juices now bubble and boil and perhaps roil.)

The power of the face of evil is also uncertain. It may be just equal to the party for a good brawl. It may wane over time, so the group must first fight and run, only later return to finish. It may be indestructible and horrific (in Outlands that would be too weak, so instead Great) but for a limited time. There may be a trigger or event to make it leave the earth. It may actually be doing something; until it finishes the task, it will remain.

The Babylonian war god Marduk summoned Annunnaki to punish the humans for dancing. Lots of versions of this with different gods in similar roles. Marduk could not control what he released and spent the resulting flood, hiding with his counterparts in a cave. Only One family, Utnapishtim, survives. Sound familiar?

Creating the Campaign Heaven

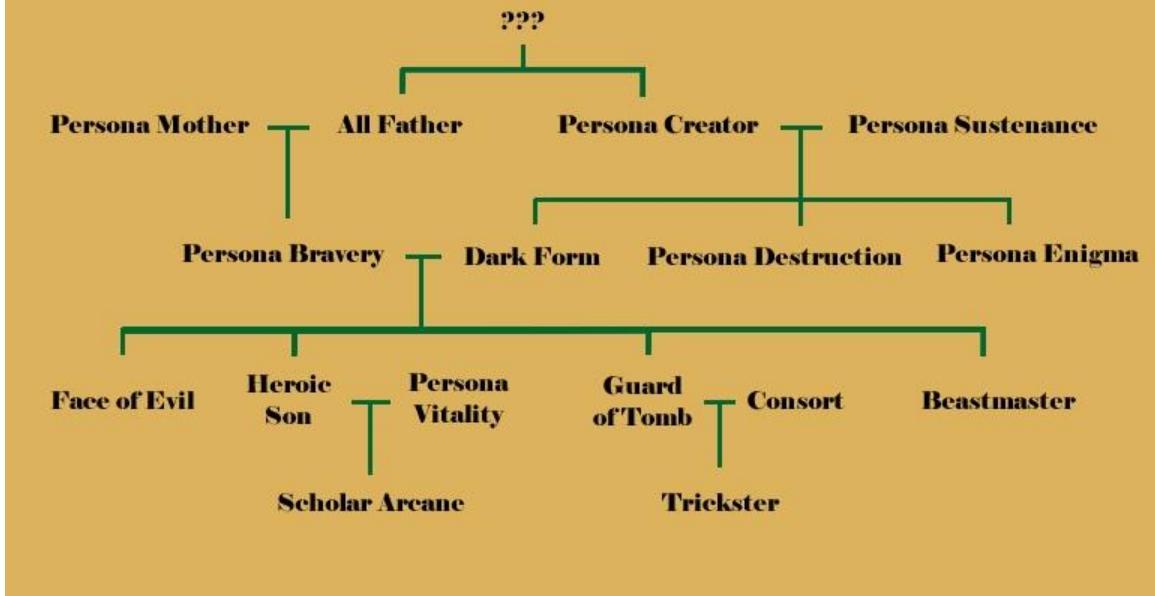
If you decide to use a pantheon in your fantasy campaign, do not make too many gods, not at first. There can be many but limit the players to selecting one of the Eight Aspects for their inspiration. Name all eight, of course, or let each player name his preferred patron deity, even when you know he/she/it exists by a different name. Let the player be proven wrong or slowly informed of his mother's errors. She obviously did not teach the child the correct name and prayers. Add demigods liberally, again not all at once.

Use a Family Tree

The heavens will feel more familiar if the gods are connected. The lines of a family tree are useful. It need not (at first) have anymore than eight aspect members. Start with the All Knowing Father. Place him center on the page. Add his siblings, add his children, add his uncle. The father of the father should not appear. Yet hard-fast rules often fail. Did the father beget himself? Did the creator begat it all, but then die only to be reborn at the foot of the throne of the Father. Any line up the page suggest a first generation of gods, usurped or abdicating power to the Father (aspect). Marking his spouse adds a nice power dynamic, bickering. Otherwise the wives and lesser offspring of all are to be added later as the campaign evolves.

Using a family tree of connections allows the heavens to have a model similar to that of the powerful families that run the world. If you have kings in your campaign, the All Father is a monarch. If you have ruling priests or a matriarch of spellcasters, then the gods too might be all female. They may be a fraternity of equals (in outward appearance). Yet the members still need relationships. Unlike the mortals below, there need not be an Heir Apparent nor plans on an order of succession.

Example Heavenly Family Tree



Outward Goal

The heavens should have a temperament. A grand goal is nice, some words that define the virtues they expect of man. Heaven needs a nice mission statement. “A formal summary of the aims and values of a company, organization, or individual.” (Again, wiki.) Or for role-play, a list of things the Gods want the party to do for them to prove worthiness. If the group is atheistic or not of that faith, then converting the group one by one may be important. Afterall, the players are the only thing important in the campaign. The world evolves around them and their tales. The gods understand this and watch.

The goal of the gods may not precisely match the priesthood on earth. That's fun. When the party is closer to heaven's goal then the established protectors of the faith, the player characters face immediate conflict and envy.

Divine Quest

Add a seven part adventure. Wait, most players want to believe they have free-will and the campaign is a sandbox (for them to scratch about). There should be something the heavens want done. The task is often cryptic and completed without urgency. Most parties will haphazardly enter a saga.

They may not expect to be anything more than freebooters, but the gods have plans.

Grand quests are fun, and each Ref must run one for his players if only in broad events. Other Better Games pamphlets offer some guidance there. Yet best to be prepared to wing-it. Anything more than an outline is too much wasted effort, because the players are corralled like cats. That sandbox is their litterbox.

Secret Agenda

Far more useful than the grand quest in the campaign is the wager. The gods are tossing dice (as the players do so). The gods will be betting on events. The gods will interfere. The gods will help and later betray, help again and not understand why the humans are skeptical. Gods do not understand mankind. They truly just want adulation. Man should not ever understand the gods, no more than they should be able to outguess the Ref.

Add some NPCs as the mouthpieces of the gods. Have these harbingers represent past and future motives. The gods change their minds or were misunderstood by one or more harbingers. Which one is truly closest to the agenda of the heavens must be pondered, debated and tested. Good fun is had by all. Did I say “good”? I meant “No fun is had by all.”

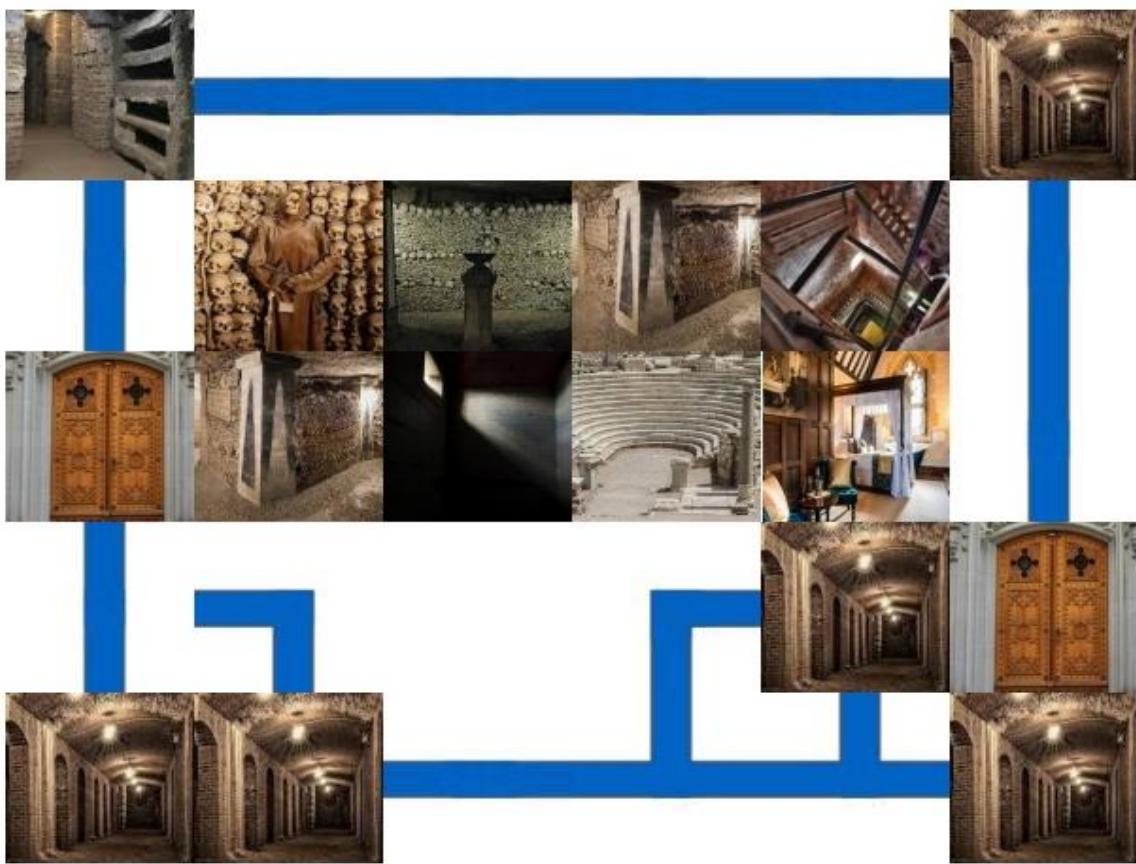
God Exists Under Every Rock

Even if that is true, you’re just a Ref. The gods should not be ever present. Give it a rest and let play (often) be just mortals and mortal aspirations. Let your NPC priesthoods claim they have divine aims and backing, but truly the gods are indifferent or distracted, even asleep. Wake them up when you need to jumpstart the campaign, especially for higher level characters.

Cults

Latin *cultus* means *to worship*. In game terms, every cult starts with one grandly bad idea, the crazier the better. The followers are attracted to the simplicity of an argument or the baffling nature of an idea stated enthusiastically. Why do cults start? Narcissism, insanity, fantastic experience, seldom simply for derision or greed. The faith begins with fury and dies in moderation.

Every cult has an origin story, the moment of revelation, novel discovery, an epiphany. Something happens and that transforms the first member. He tells his tale to others. His charisma attracts followers or better still he dies a martyr's death at the hands of a more established religion. From death comes mystery and belief. A living testament can be questioned, interrogated, debated. A dead savior inspires dogma and discipline and secrecy to prevent further reprisal. A shared secret is a powerful enticement, something which bonds a community.



Cult Origin (D8)

1 or less: Lie

2: Sensory Mistake

3: Insane Visions

4: Magical Gift

5: Something Inexplicable

6: Miracle

7: Epiphany

8 or more: Divine Intervention

Lie

Teens go off to fornicate. People take things they don't own. The mistake or offense is not confessed. Instead a hoax is propagated. Ghosts are blamed. Pregnancy becomes immaculate. There could also be a criminal cover-up. Scooby-Doo level conspiracy. The high priest might not be in on the actual crimes, the lost objects, the murders, the mysterious overtones. He just thinks that the damage would be worse if his rituals were not finished.

When the players enter and debunk the hoax, they are never thanked. People would rather believe the lie than lose a connection to the divine. The criminal element that profits from people accepting divine loss will not be amused. There may be a great conspiracy to keep the faith alive. There may be continued hoaxes perpetrated, even additional murders, to justify the rituals.

Sensory Mistake

I thought I saw something evil in the woodshed. This time the founder didn't. He only thought he did. He saw light, heard a inhuman growl, smelt a delightful odor. He thought he witnessed an angel, a heavenly messenger. He won't go as far as to say he spoke with the divine. However, soon the hysteria of this close call spreads; others either lie or delude themselves into the same experience. Someone finally comes forward and proclaims he was the one who the angel eventually saved. Lots of diverse motives there.

The Trickster may also just appear and validate what was observed. A person's personal pain or madness may be involved. He needed to believe, so he did. Nonetheless, his sincerity is never in doubt. Even when no other person or a companion witness can't corroborate what happened, the intensity of the founder's voice gets others to take drastic action. From that action the cult is born. Long after the panic, the believers continue to tell the tale and recite incantations to honor the founder.

The players will often be recruited by the cult itself to verify the claims. When they can't, they will be seen as apostates, agents of other religions sent to persecute. Just another no-win situation, a pile of excrement waiting to be stepped upon by our heroes.

Insane Visions

The cult begins as an interpretation of an apparition. While this may seem logical in a fantasy campaign, the supernatural here was not involved. Night terror is a real event. The afflicted wake from a dream state, yet their body's natural curare, keep them frozen. When humans dream, the body self paralyzes to prevent injury. Dreams are seen as portents, messages from above. Dreams are subject to interpretation. The loudest voice wins here. The vision was a warning, a summon to action.

Swamps emit gases that confuse. Mushrooms? Alcohol and other drugs, the works of alchemy may be involved. A whole village can suffer mass hysteria from corn mold. An illusion can be created by mishap or dwarfish prank, but that seems more like magical gift, event four. The cult should not start by an outside malevolent act. If sinister sorcerers or monsters are involved, skip on, to perhaps, Something Inexplicable.

Enter the players who may rationally explain and even demonstrate real magic. The cult usually has no power and has no function, except to placate irrational fears or enrich opportunists. Yet should the players demonstrate their own ability, that becomes the event focus. One or more of their party members will be asked to stay and safeguard the place. To teach a priest such abilities, so the cult can protect themselves from the next manifestation.

But there was no threat? Try telling insane people that. If you won't stay freely, then you give the cult no choice but to waterboard you for your secrets. These cults turn maniacal quickly.

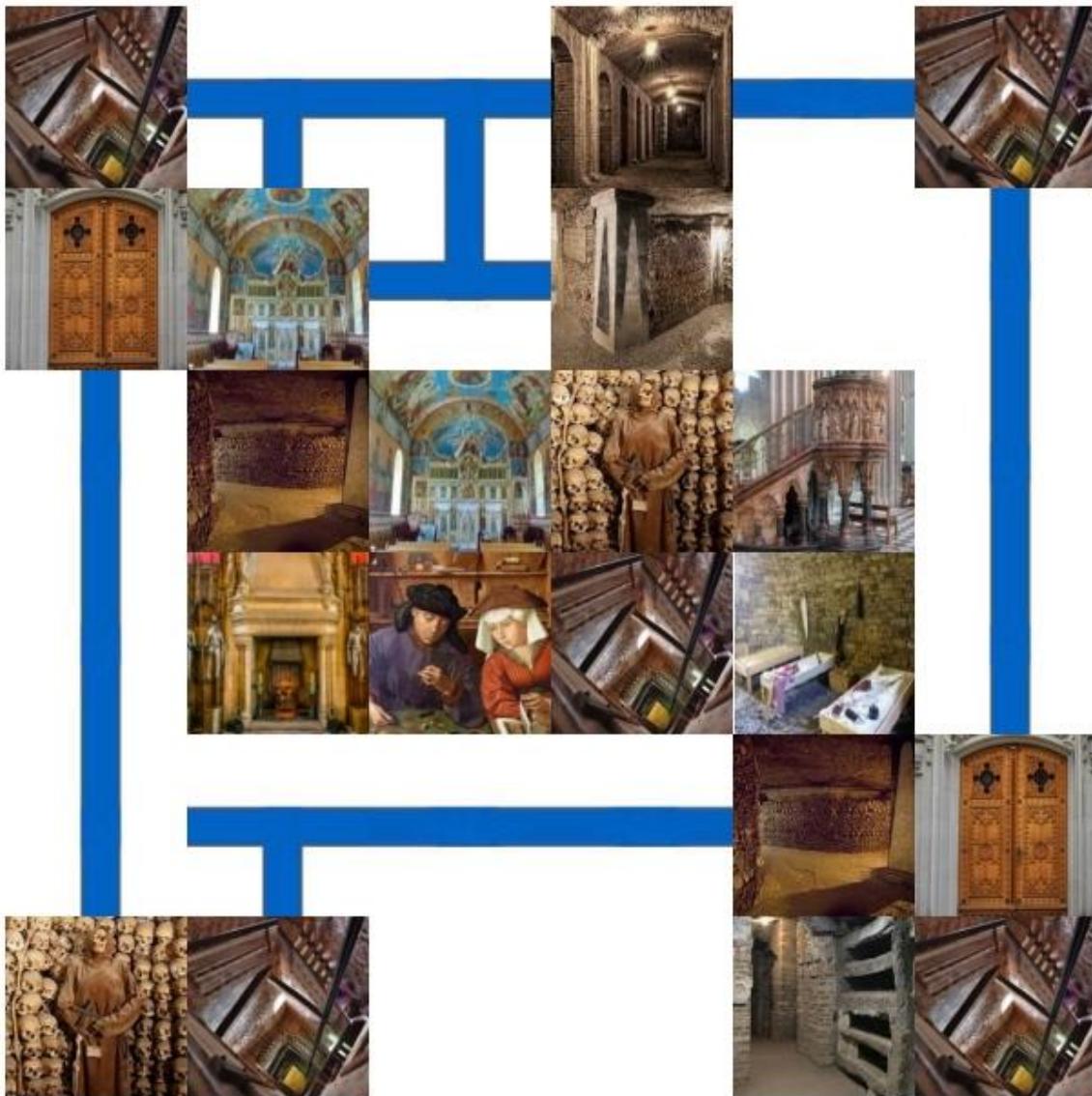
Magical Gift

The common folk shun magic use for good reason. Magic is disruptive and difficult to control. The side effects are damaging. Well, not in every game system. Most games at least make it rare and force the player to grow his talent. In some magic heavy worlds, though, every village would seemingly have a cult if not a Hogwarts Correspondence School of Magic and Wizardry. Trademarks all.

Someone was able to use magic, usually a child. The event was startling. Should the child hide what he did, you may have a founding Lie. Often the child is the first of a village to be so gifted, at least in a few generations. The talent is seen as divine. The cult starts as a way of controlling the power.

When the child grows and wants freedom, he is often imprisoned, for his own safety, of course.

The players might mount a rescue. Gain an apprentice. Equally as likely, they free a mistreated magic user to now truly rule the cult created in his name. His thirst for revenge will never slake. Ominous music plays as he offers his thanks and waves goodbye.



Something Inexplicable

Mankind likes answers, hates questions. The unknown is feared. The obvious is often denied as a burden. Blame is often found by looking outward. Here you have the founder experience something he has never

before beheld. The event is real. His interpretation is wild. Even if his assessment if accurate, the fact he starts a religion is extreme.

The easiest representation is the sighting of an underworld creature. There could also be supreme beings arriving as UFO, but that's less likely in a fantasy game. If someone sees a bizarre beast and decides it is worthy of worship, you have a cult. The goal may be to pray the danger away. The goal may be to redirect the monster toward enemies. The experience can be once only. The threat never materializing. Yet that too adds more credence to the fact that the monster must be worshiped, offered sacrifice and prayer, placated.

If the monster has a pattern, to appear yearly (as part of its own ecology or bizarre manner) then the cult is more likely to grow. Trial and error, cause and effect will be applied erroneously. A sacrifice may be left, gold or fruit. A prayer scripted or talisman fashioned will be attributed to driving away the harm. Could that be true? Usually not with new cults.

Yet that question is often not asked by any player. How long has this happened. So, when told the beast flees the odor of garlic, off the players go to slay the thing with actually no protection. Also, killing the monster may be what most desire, except the newly elected cultist high priest. If his god bleeds, he will be seen as a fool. Linus worshiping the Great Pumpkin level of foolishness; hopefully you've read or seen Peanuts®.

Miracle

Magic occurred, and the origin was external. The magic was real, and typically repeats. The place has a fountain, tree, altar, buried relic, guardian spirit or the protection of a wizard. The miracle saved the place from ruin. Could be healing, could be an aura that prevents greater threat from entering the town.

The players become trapped. If they leave, they lose that protection. They may not believe there is a miracle at work, but the danger will be palpable. Step away and *watch your flesh rot* level of real. How long will it take for the players to surmise that such a place could not exist? How do they grow food? Magic. How do they trade? Magic. Don't they miss the kiss of loved ones in neighboring towns? Magic. Easy answers or perseverance is always insisted. Don't rock the boat; don't allow the greater threat to enter; don't

break the charm. Secretly, the cult has a method of permanently curing the ailment, dispelling the curse or crossing the no-man's land. Certain secret agents are so empowered.

The lesser cult members might even admit to such but have been too afraid to drink the sap or traverse the underworld route, reading from the old book or touching the metal that shocks the hand. The cult leader will deny any easy solution. He will deny players the path to freedom. He needs disbelievers to walk away and die hideous deaths for all to see. He needs travelers to enter and agree to stay.

There may be redemption for all. Kirk would be able to solve this puzzle and save the town. More sci-fi? A knife to the heart of the head guy may seem the straight ahead approach but that could escalate with the cult enraged. Appeal to even greater threats may also occur. Tit for tat – some on both sides may die before compromise is reached.

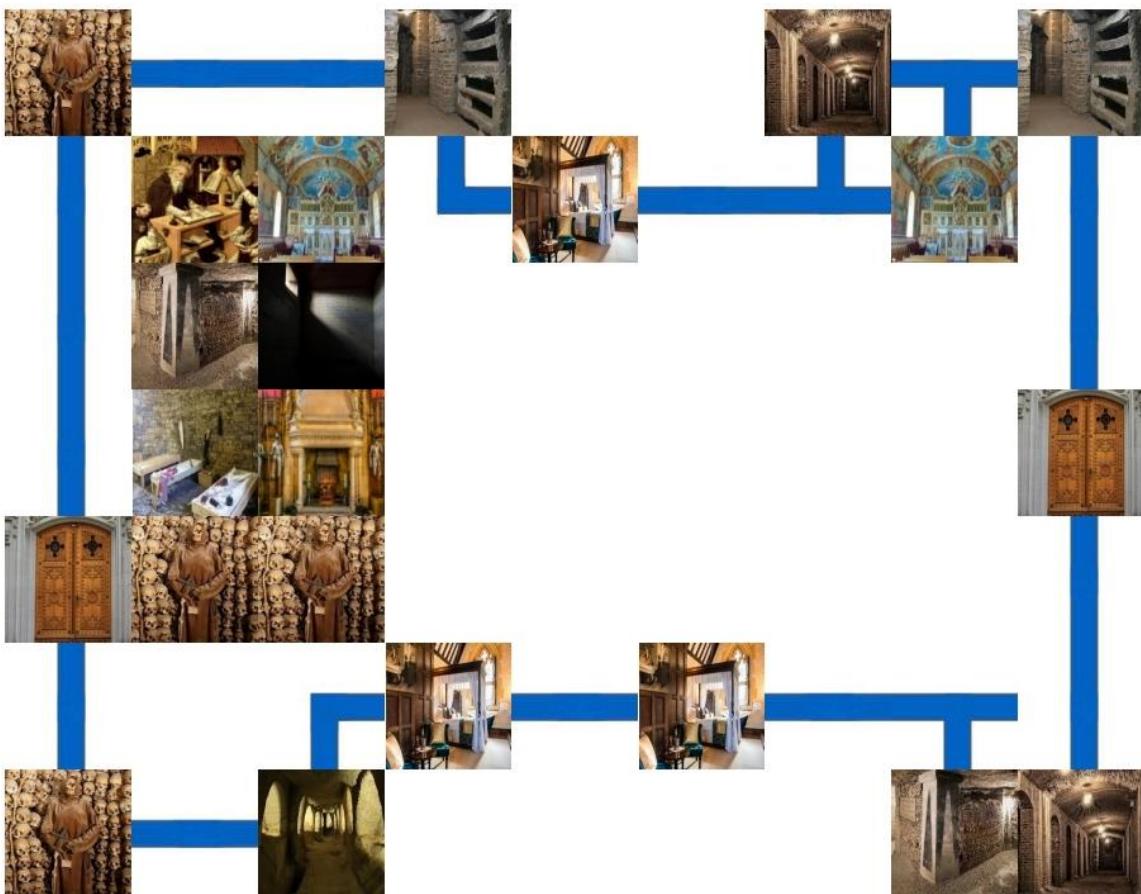
Epiphany

Philosophy should not end with magic. Deep thinkers will exist and inspire followers. For game play, these learned men should spin less toward humanistic beliefs and more toward crazy-crazy. Said twice so you know it's very not nice. The sage will seem persuasive to some of the party. Here's where a saving throw helps.

Even if all resist the charismatic appeal and compelling logic of the cult's argument, the players must pretend to believe to escape. (Yes, another Trek episode.) The leader will seem a genius in every way. He will be someone easy to follow and obey. He need not even use magic. In fact, he shouldn't. No spell should hold the reverent. He just explains complex notions in simple terms. Most of his conclusions end with "now that you understand, kill for me."

Before your modern players react with a raspberry, ask them to role-play. Fug that; cosplay sux. Ask them if there is any reason to kill? Have a thoughtful discussion. Smile, cause they are playing a game where most of the activity and dice rolls involve slaughter. Now that they admit that killing is not a problem for the characters, remind them that saving throws were failed. Saving throws, Lord High Gygax has been summoned and has revealed himself.

Else, know your audience and you can probably make them kill for the guy. They may even enjoy killing for the guy. Genocide? Bah. There're only orks. Sometime ahead the leader will perish, or the party will move-on blood soaked and blessed. A part of the cult will continue with them. Whether that be in a player character's shifting morale compass or within the hearts of many of his soldiers and henchmen. You don't think people can be ordered to kill and will do so? I don't know how to say anything other than it happens pretty readily with us humans. "*Hey, I'm playin' an elf?*"



Divine Intervention

How does one handle the situation where a god or demigod introduces himself or hands someone a tablet? Not sure we need a table or game mechanic here. Most referees act rather godlike by describing each scene. Do what you will and move on. That's all I'd recommend.

Gods do not even have to act logically. I'm a big fan of context, a clarifying meaning. Unless, it comes from on-high. Human thoughts and tacit acts to stimuli do not mirror in divinity, especially fantasy worlds. Mortals are bugs. Our brains are too small.

Gods act without explanation. Or the nuance is lost, and the humans are left with declarative. See, that was hard to read and understand. That's very much like the gods. They say stuff, but you never quite know what it means. Or, why they even deign to appear. "*I'm not worthy.*" (Monty Python)

Gods should be wish spells. Gods should be Ref fiat. Gods resurrect. Change dice rolls. Make enemies vanish. Make a player character vanish. Use them sparingly. The followers of a faith are far more interesting.

But overall, yes, gods do have divine intervention. Real miracles and real retribution. In Empire of the Petal Throne™ that was one D6 damage per level of victim. Pray for a low roll. The gods are terrible and ever close to destroying the world.

Who's Who in Sacristy of Evil

The players look for lodging and debate staying at an Abbey. All will appear normal except this time it isn't. If you want a normal place with humans attending to local social order, perhaps use the Castle booklet and generate the site as just another rural manor. Here, the place will seem ordinary, but the motives are very corrupt.

The place can start as mysterious with the players alert. The player party might pass through a forested area, and there appears in a clearing an arcane temple. The temple complex can be underground, below ruins which offer bad shelter in which the players camp. They take shelter from a storm and discover evidence that a ritual was recently performed.

There are many starting prompts to bring the party into the midst of the temple and ghastly clergy. The referee has a ready source of danger to test each character's abilities. Unlike baronial manors, most of these places are not for making friends. Enemies lurk within as secrets become known.

You may use this system as a way to generate climax challenges, for many an adventure can end here, among the paranoid, monstrous and unholy.

Dark Procedure

Start at zero and add a single D8. That person, numbered one to eight, is among the temple insiders. Use his **Zealotry** as a founding basis for the cult.

Keep generating results, each time thereafter adding two D8, until you stop when the result is above twenty-eight. Every misguided intention and misunderstanding of the true nature of the randomly generated faith changes with each roll.

The first character role is an obvious antagonist with something to hide. He is beyond reproach, a model citizen, until his truth is revealed. The second roll generates an internal rival, motive read as **Intrigues**, but the role could be equally as deadly as a Zealot. Alternate between a dangerous zealot and a potential ally to the party yet having the suggested intrigue. The even rolled NPC and their intrigues typically are weaker than the odd roll Zealots.

All can be foes within. The intrigues are plotted but the NPC lacks courage. Else, they would have already acted. The party offers them a chance to usurp greater authority in the temple hierarchy.

Don't misconstrue. The secondary figures are still corrupt. The intrigues do not always have benevolent outcomes. The lesser figures are simply opportunistic, seeing a chance to take over the temple leadership. The party may find it necessary to side with the lesser evil as allies to secure escape, to reach their own objectives or to defeat the main host.

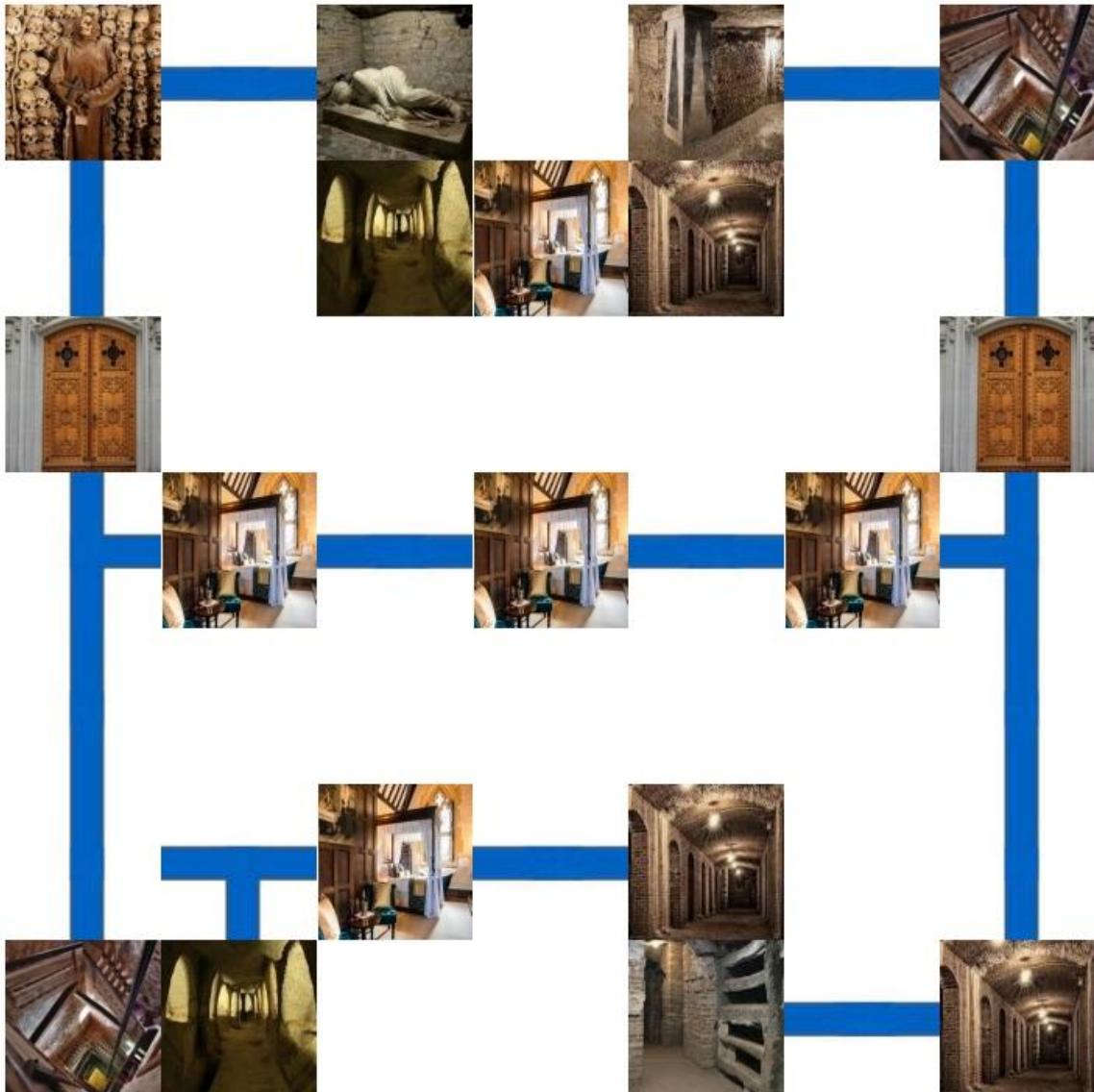
If the player characters are truly working for good, they will need to dismantle the entire power structure. All the NPCs generated will need to be revealed for what they are, brought to justice in a baronial court.

If simply slaughtered, the neighboring community typically refuses the evidence. The temple has a benevolent front; evil is hard to see. The temple was part of their tradition, the source of divine protection. Now the faith seems in turmoil, because outsiders (the group) overreacted or were themselves criminal. Be careful what you steal, if you expect to be greeted as liberators.

Don't expect to be praised. Instead the commoners will view the player characters not as saviors, but as murderous thieves. *Who will make our crops grow* is often the refrain even as a demon corpse is dragged into town.

Is every temple base?

There may be quaint temples, mostly in the confines of major city-states. Yet here is a process of generating the unknown and the occult. The player characters may be duped or instead suspect every temple is corrupt. Is it worth staying a night outside instead? A powerful faith will require the players to supplicate. Secret cults may attempt to silence intruders. There's no merriment here.



Cast of Characters

- 1: Front Man
- 2: Maniacal Wizard
- 3: Maze Designer
- 4: Master Beasts
- 5: Vivisectionist
- 6: Undead Captain
- 7: High Priest
- 8: Tormentor
- 9: Aspirant
- 10: Noble Captive
- 11: Keeper of Keys
- 12: Doom Forecaster
- 13: Forest Trickster
- 14: Dark Artist
- 15: Propagandist
- 16: Inhuman Consort (Pet)
- 17: Poisoner
- 18: Demonic Child
- 19: Pit Fiend
- 20: Insane Clown
- 21: Artificer
- 22: Dark Knight
- 23: Mindless Enforcer
- 24: Meat Carver
- 25: Whisperer
- 26: Overseer
- 27: Vestment Tailor
- 28: Gatekeeper

Over 28: Stop

All these roles are highly fantastic; many will not be human. Yet the amount of magic should be augmented to your taste. In some campaigns, everyone and everything has spell casting ability. In other places, only the rare few can be called actual wizards.

Front Man

Role in Hierarchy: Acts as the respectable face, the honest everyman who represents the temple to the community. The person knows of the greater evil being sheltered in the temple or in chasms below. That monster should be generated separately. It often is not civil. The Front Man will not be in strict denial; he may hope someday to become part of that evil. He's a familiar of sorts, a mortal that serves and adores a ghastly or vampiric force. His role may be generational, a long line of servants. He will be personally powerful, not a fool. He is the kind face, devoted to feeding the demon below. *"Want to see something glorious?"*

Zealotry: He will be a model citizen, a good natured man well regarded. He will house the poor, welcome the traveler. He is recognized as deceptive by the player group, but his ignorant community adores him. The locals will know of strange tidings but have another scapegoat to blame. The Front Man is beyond reproach, until his secret is revealed. Even then, he may simply swap roles and be treated as a Zealot High Priest, leading the congregation in worship of the powerful force below.

Intrigues: Statistically impossible for him to be neutral, to be clear this Front man is always deceitful. He may pretend to be ignorant; he may pretend to be shocked at what the players discover. He comes from a long line of people who serve the horror. He will never truly aid the party. His friendship is false. To confuse the situation, just enough, the Front Man can pose in the role of Aspirant or Overseer. Another aloof figurehead will then appear outwardly as the temple's master. Most players know the most vocal NPC is the one they can trust the least; mix things up. The Front Man has a front man?!?

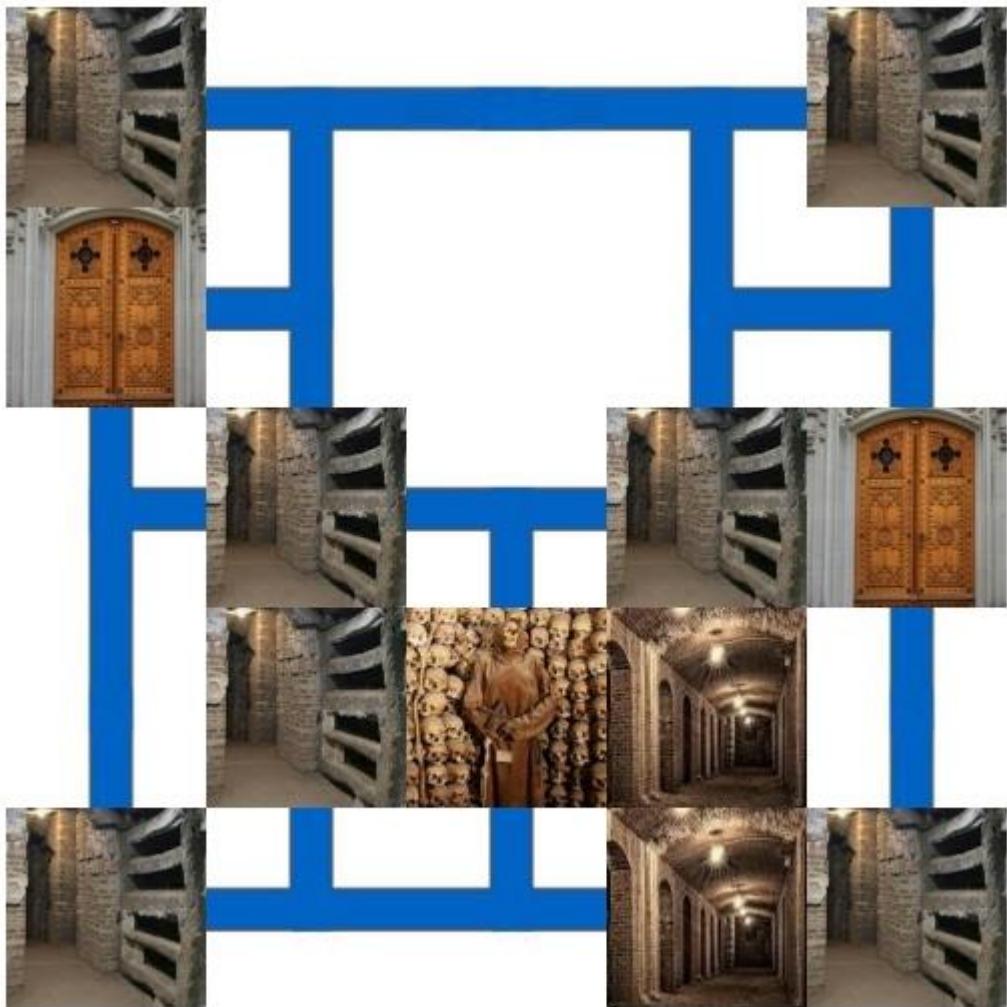
Maniacal Wizard

Role in Hierarchy: User of magical charms, rituals and spells. Many people serve him unwillingly or in a mindless fashion. The wizard is often hedonistic and preys on the innocent.

Zealotry: Not content to study, the powerful user of spells craves adoration and worship. He is the center of a religion, though the commoners may not realize they pray to him. His face might not match the temple idols, but all the miracles are ones he performs. Is he a godling? Depends on your game system. Would the peasantry revolt if shown their god was fake? Or would they rationalize that fortune is fortune? Someone has to make the crops grow. To counter that, the wizard may be punishing the locals and

pretending a patron god has abandoned them. His agenda need not have a motive except to obtain self serving praise.

Intrigues: The result is not possible under the roll D8 then add 2D8 chance. But if you are throwing a curve and have a wizard in the temple who is neutral to the greater danger, this one would be amused by the human foibles; how easily men are duped. He'll be a cynic, helping only if the party admits they are fools and need a clever man to save them. He might enjoy the groveling and expect the same in years to come.



Maze Designer

Role in Hierarchy: Architect of the method for trapping the innocent. Whether large or small, spanning the grounds or encompassing the area's woods and underground, the maze master is motivated by his diabolical puzzle. When finally revealed, he will dare the party to undertake the challenge.

Zealotry: The leader is always seeking people to test their intelligence against his. He will openly suggest the party go into the ancient ruins and seek the treasure locked within. He will never admit he's the creator of the maze. He will pretend instead to be the caretaker, hedge trimmer, the one who is merely divinely instructed to make the corridors and traps. Even if the party suspects the man is felonious, he has nothing to offer. He would rather die, a small price to pay, rather than reveal any of the maze secrets. In that regard he may be adding on to the ancient designs, reinforcing the myths about why the maze exists. Be sad, but there may not be any treasure inside, except that plucked from the bones of those who try to venture within. The Minotaur is the classic example, a beast that lives in the maze. A minotaur in your game system may be too weak. Demons are a better fit in most cases, even ones donning a bull mask.

Intrigues: In the very rare case where the Maze Designer is sympathetic to removing the Front Man, he has created the maze to trap the greater evil contained by the temple. He will hardly be receptive to having his puzzle solved or maze mapped, never trusting that anything can contain and kill the demon therein. Only his perpetual shifting of the path keeps evil contained.

Master Beasts

Role in Hierarchy: Keeper of a kennel of exotic and dangerous wild things. As a farrier of the monsters inside, he keeps them healthy and fed no matter the diet.

Zealotry: He's dangerous because he's mixing the bloodlines and producing even more dangerous species. He tinkers with creation and produces abominations. Most of what he breeds will die rather soon. Some will slink into the underworld and foster even greater spawns of Satan.

Intrigues: He could be dull, single-minded in focus. He could be only semi-intelligent, a monster in his own right. Once again (statistically) the chance he's involved in Intrigue is low. There are few, say, maniacal wizards served by neutral or arrogant beast masters. Yet add one as you wish to include a sub-boss for the climax challenges. The player characters might dine and during the celebration be introduced to this nonhuman and his huge dogs. A threat is implied, and the players may have the opportunity to flee before hell is unleashed. If he truly is opposed to the temple leader, it will be based in his love for his creations. He doesn't want to see his friends injured. He will help the party if they promise not to slay his pets. Letting these beasts go to the wild or below is often a dangerous bargain.

Vivisectionist

Role in Hierarchy: Attempting to understand how the insides of humans work. This seeker will cut apart people, as they live, to ask them how they feel or observe when they lose abilities. The vivisectionist will include mad men who also feed the living to insectoids or are themselves transformed insects.

Zealotry: Bodies, lots of them, are needed. The player characters might be recruited to bring the man what he craves, fresh materials. He may be served by animated flesh. He may simply be an immortal, trapped here and wondering what makes mankind do what it does. His indifference should be obvious. Life and death are meaningless to him.

Intrigues: Here the man is not the minion of another. He lives and practices his forbidden work in relative safety. Yet he has experiments that the temple leader (that front man, wizard, designer, or beast keeper) refuses to allow. Don't even try to describe those practices. This person is grotesque enough. He'll aid the group if only to take over and do his worst on living men. His help may prove necessary, but does that delay the inevitable? Some day the Vivisectionist must be stopped.

Undead Captain

Role in Hierarchy: Ghastly to behold and having lived once before. This is hardly a zombie or skeletal figure. He will be undead in a broad sense. He is a person who died and still remains. He is immortal in the sense that he has already fallen once. He could be vampiric, a nice catch-all. He might be lycanthrope but changing to a beast less dog and more other worldly. His whole congregation might be unliving. They need not only seek blood. They may desire essence or innocence.

Zealotry: He probably has a company of men who serve him from ancient times. All appear human, though often they are perfectly formed, Adonis. The undead seek to increase their numbers and transform an area. To them they are regressing a region back to an earlier age. They may even be summoning the spirits of a time passed and substituting themselves into the locals. The temple may be old and the process slow. The temple may be recently changed from another familiar deity. Hide the undead nature by making the temple seem to have strange rituals, caged beasts or be of arcane construction.

Intrigues: The undead commander is trapped by spell. He is caught in service and seeks true death. He will hate his captor yet must obey for a

myriad of reasons. He may even be garbed from the past and hopes to return to his own age. That may not be possible, despite what he's been promised. He sometimes does not know he is dead at all. His aura is one of sadness.

High Priest

Role in Hierarchy: Creator of dogma, speaker of prophesy. A worldly and rich man who has run the temple only recently. He could be a replacement for an otherwise staid deity. He could have usurped his control with magic or murder. His rise is political and motivated by vanity and desire to dominate a region. He has external designs and is not tethered by traditional morality, even by the goodly nature of the deity he ostensibly serves.

Zealotry: This leader will seek to recruit the player characters as minions. He can offer much. If he is the final objective in a climax of an adventure, he will offer bribes, assurances, even slander on the current patron of the group. He fears little. He sees conflict as unnecessary, a waste. Why wouldn't mere mortals join him in his coming crusade.

Intrigues: His tasks are involved, and he has no idea that the temple's true leader is anything other than a man like himself. He is self deluded to ignore the other aspects and more devious nature of secret rituals that do not involve him. He may see himself as the legal governor and headmaster. He sees another newcomer in the role the temple wizard or beastmaster as leading a splinter group. The others will leave or fade away soon enough. He may have seen this happen before. He may even see the players as providence, the divine assurance that no evil truly lasts. He may not be willing to aid, directly, which he sees as interference. He can offer information, instead. He might reveal a vulnerability or describe an unguarded route to shortcut the players to the end goal. He is often armored by the plot and cannot be fought. He may serve a greater purpose or be a demigod in disguise. He may be required to remain in charge after his superior in rank (whomever that is) is slain; he will prevent anarchy in the region or quell an even more dangerous threat to appear. The temple may be protecting the world from harm. The fact the other leader is toying with a demon is immaterial. This guy alone keeps the true ward in place. Is he being truthful?

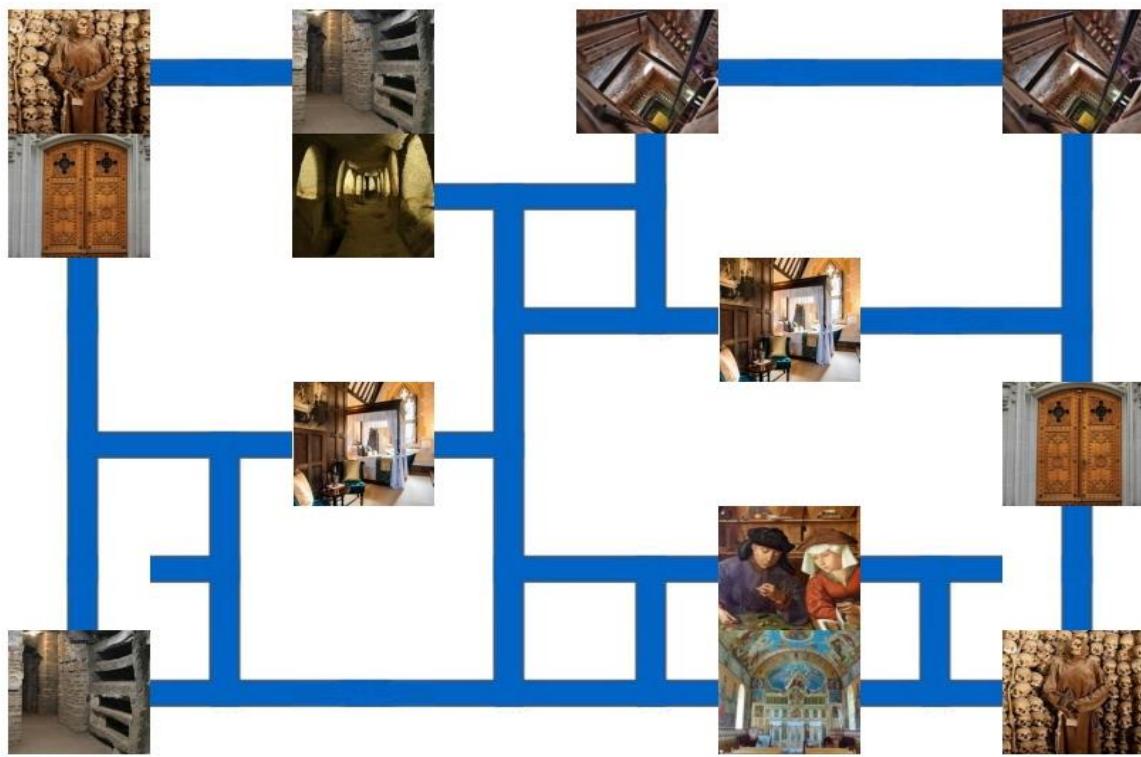
T tormentor

Role in Hierarchy: Achieves ecstasy through pain. This man is a confessor but only absolves sins with injury. He uses the whip and hot iron

on the penitent. A sadist, he enjoys his cruel life. He will know all the secrets of the region. He forgives all, but only through acceptance of pain. If he heads the temple, he may feel death is the best end anyone can suffer, that salvation comes when pain wins. People still flock to him, the self righteous and those yet to have the courage to confess. The player characters too will feel an urge to tell this man of their exploits. His very nature is demonic ecstasy, magically compelling and near impossible to resist.

Zealotry: He is in a paranoid fit and decides that no one can be trusted. He has ordered the imprisonment and torture of even the local nobility. He has convinced children to tattle on their parents. He has the whole region fearing divine retribution if sin is not abolished. The only ones he trusts are any previous Zealot rolled (rare) and himself. Defeating him may become a challenge to convince him he too is riddled with sin.

Intrigues: The man suspects his leader of wrongs. He does not crave the supreme role but will accept the position if the headmaster of the temple is purged. The players may realize too late that they are elevating a sadist to power. Even after he aids the group, he may become the very next opponent, attacking as the group was already weakened killing the main boss. Before that, the Tormentor will seem like someone tormented by his oath to his faith. He will not seem to be a literal tormentor of souls.



Aspirant

Role in Hierarchy: Seeker of recognition, willing to prove his worth and loyalty in any way, even death with undead return. A human minion seeking to prove himself to the headmaster. He often is dismissed or ridiculed. He may even be totally ignored. He will seem harmless to the players. He may pretend to be someone deceived and might lead the players to the worst of the worst dangers. He may confess his sins and ask for forgiveness, but that is a ruse. The Aspirant will be a true believer. Even if he has Intrigues planned, those will be directed at the underlings of the temple leader. His devotion is adamantine.

Zealotry: The man is meticulous and does not make mistakes; that would be too easy. He will be aware of the players and has been tracking their movements magically. He will seek to dissuade the group, send them off on tangents. If a final showdown is inevitable, the Aspirant will step in front and take the death blow of his master. He exists to fulfill his life's role and dream, to die in service. Almost admirable, except for the other kinky stuff for which he's guilty. Ref must decide if his death just prolongs the fight, causes an epiphany of change in the leader or allows the master to escape to avenge another day.

Intrigues: The man tolerates his punishment from the master but has become the brunt of jokes by all. He will assist the players in slaying a personal rival in the hierarchy. After that, he will turn and plan the demise of the player party. He may hope to destroy the group and his enemies in the temple together; later, he can claim credit for eliminating the threat. These figures are dangerous as much as deluded.

Noble Captive

Role in Hierarchy: Held in resignation, a man with little hope. A person being held for ransom. If he is a Zealot, he has been brainwashed, magically altered or simply converted to the evil within himself and the temple. If he can be freed and return to his native land or city-state, his relatives will reward the party. However, the captive might be a timebomb, attacking after the temple is defeated, avenging the headmaster he no longer can serve. Best to keep him bound.

Zealotry: This man could be an imposter, senseless from torture or blames his family for never rescuing him. He will still be guarded but is considered a trustee. He may perform certain tasks, like food tasting, for the headmaster. He will be disfigured or covered in scars from the lash. He's suffered for sure. Still, here he only pretends to be grateful for his rescue. He

hopes instead to demonstrate his loyalty to the headmaster by seeing that the party of players fails in whatever objectives brought them here. Not all of these captives are warriors and knights, nor strictly male. Some are magically collared to dampen their magic. Removing that restraint, the brass or oak neck-shackle will only make him more deadly.

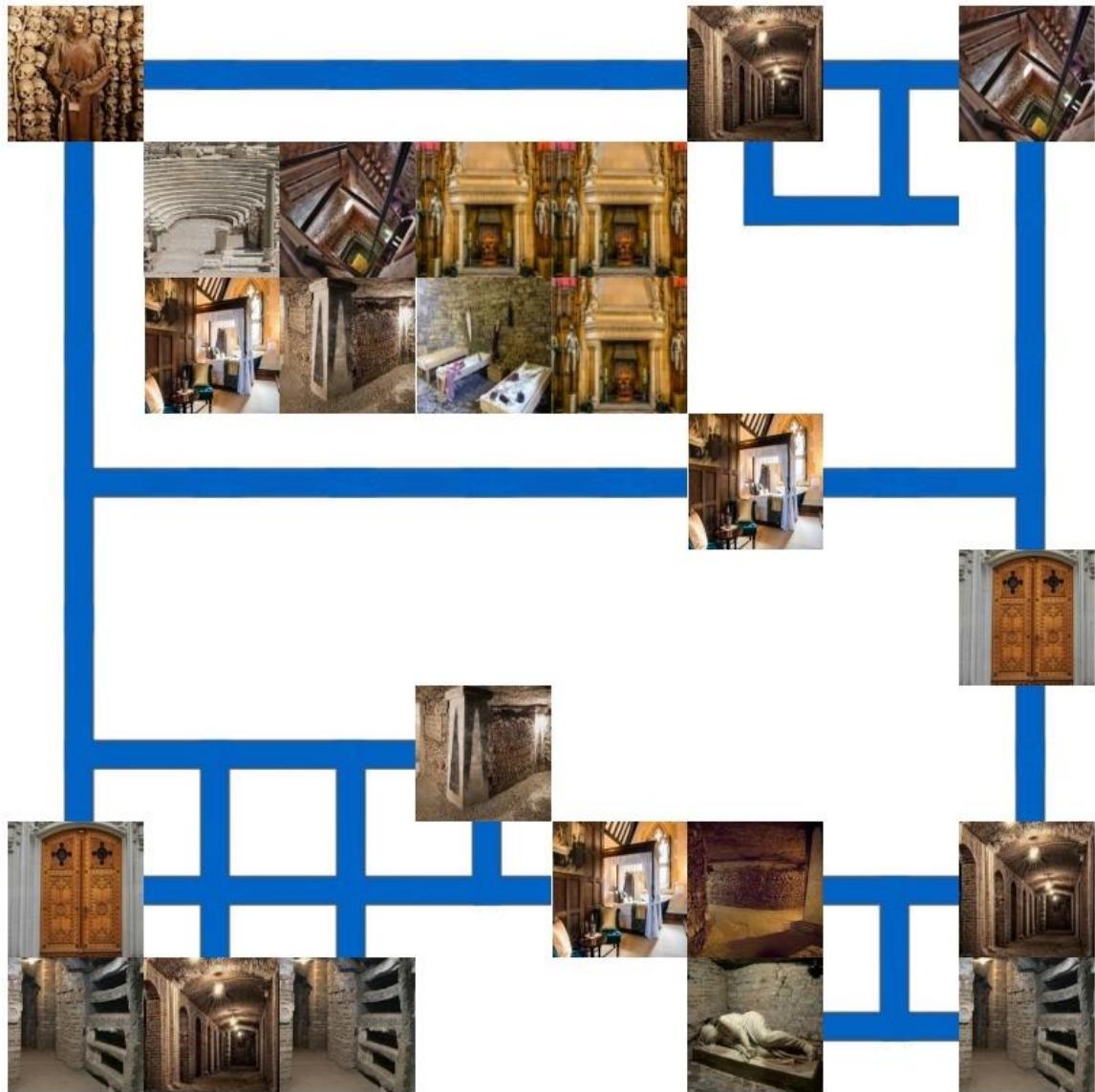
Intrigues: Now the players have a true ally, someone who seeks his own freedom secondary to killing his oppressor. He wants to help kill the headmaster. The players may not have that as an objective or know that effort is beyond their ability. They may be here for theft or information only. The Noble, if allowed to arm himself, will run off in a suicidal quest for homicide. His escape, when discovered, will cause a general alarm, turning the complex into a beehive of search. Do you leave him caged? If the mission was to rescue the man, he will need to be restrained or incapacitated to allow him to be passively carried out (all for his own good). Yet does he know something about the headmaster and the evil temple's vulnerability that must be exploited here and now?

Keeper of Keys

Role in Hierarchy: Custodian and obfuscator. The person who has access everywhere. He may also be the one who can magically link locations in the temple that are not physically connected. His talents may be related to a relic, even a real set of iron keys. He will be highly magical regardless. The keys can also be to places outside the temple. Special case, the Keeper is able to circumvent all traps left by the Maze Designer, the two may have been one person in the past.

Zealotry: Not much more need be said, except the Keeper will fight the intruding players. If the battle takes too long, he may use one of the keys and a secret passage to escape. He may also just teleport to the headmaster or a private sanctuary. Best to kill him quickly, so he won't warn anyone. This man makes a fine future threat.

Intrigues: He will not be human. He is forced to serve and use his magic ability to connect any door to any door at the headmaster's bidding. Why is he so enslaved? Could be threat to his family, magic (always possible), repayment of a debt, or he's a demon bound by logic too complex to describe. He wants the headmaster dead; he may not be able to help with that injury. And yet, he may be able to spirit the party directly into that battle.



Doom Forecaster

Role in Hierarchy: Mystic profiteer though calamity. A person who tells prejudicial fortunes; he only describes upcoming misery. He may know the exact time of everyone's death. But, that would be very godlike. He scares commoners, nobles, adventurers, especially the headmaster. How accurate can any of his predictions be, since in the game we don't ourselves know how the dice will roll. Also, if he knew today he would die, is there any reason for him to even fight? He will often be a powerful ghost or projection. He may be someone too magnificent to combat. He could be the former headmaster or a risen ancient, something that lingers in the world long after it should perish.

Zealotry: Finding a Zealot Doom Forecaster is very bad. He is here to take the place of the headmaster or watch the party die. This is not an understood event. This is an ancient evil forecasting his return to the living and his return to power. He is here, salivating, as the players fulfill a destiny to restore his Doom Lordship to a leadership role or seat of control. His thrice risen cult is even more reckless and primal than the current one that supplanted him. To prevent more sinister outcome, the Doom Forecaster must die before the headmaster or shortly thereafter. Since he may never be discovered—as in some cases the players will not clear the temple complex after they finish a mission—the group may accidentally stop one threat only to elevate the far greater next. As the headmaster dies, chortling and choking on blood, he should warn the players of the Doom Forecaster’s existence. Bloody nice twist to have the battle immediately continue as the Forecaster rises in the fallen form. Double jeopardy, Mister Bond (wrong genre but cool).

Intrigues: The man is a disguised Zaire, judging the players this day. The scorecard he keeps is arcane and indecipherable. He may instead be ever watchful of the temple’s headmaster. Yet Zaires do not often interfere in events and places that do not abuse magic or alter time. Maybe the headmaster plans to do both. The Forecaster will not, even when implied to be plotting, take any direct action. He may, however, hand over an item to make the temple leader vulnerable, stating only that he was waiting for this day.

Forest Trickster

Role in Hierarchy: More tree than man, more phenomenon than physical. A demi-human from the wild lands, or a corrupt Fae, an outcast with human desires. The monster is able to shapeshift into human form for short periods. At least Enchanted, many of these agents are Invincible if not Heinous. Probably not Great, as he wouldn’t fit in the human-sized corridors (for long periods of time). This near-monster could be just visiting, under an arrangement with another temple or evil group. He could be an ambassador of an outside society. Or, he could be the mercenary go-between to act as emissary in securing a deal with another exceptional force. If he is wholly internal, he lives here as a companion of the headmaster. Those human desires may be unrequited love or abusive romance. The full details need not be known or have to be decided by the Ref based on his players’ sensibilities. Consider what the players, not just their characters, will tolerate without revulsion and offense.

Zealotry: Sorry guys, the headmaster doesn't just have a pet monster. He has a thinking pet monster. The monster may even be one of many helping the headmaster perpetrate his goal of growing his temple and spreading the cult's aberrant beliefs.

Intrigues: The monster is neutral. He is here on business or to negotiate. He wants no part in any combat. Yet even if the players know the demi-human Trickster is not a zealot, can they allow the creature to escape? There's a good chance the Trickster will alert the headmaster, even without trying to directly kill the players on first meeting. The mob is here to make a deal between mankind and the dark forest dwellers. That can never happen if the headmaster is slain. The players may decide killing this potential fiend is worth offending the outside group, breaking the rules of truce and parley, to keep the element of surprise.

Dark Artist

Role in Hierarchy: Sculps or paints the representation of the deity. The Dark Artist could be the closest member of the temple to the god; he has seen it. He may describe his vision in abstract, but he has seen, often touched the heavenly power. The divine dust, shall we call it, makes him armored, almost immortal. His Defensive Modifier should be at least as high as the temple headmaster, even if he lacks the equivalent level or ferocity. The mystery of the dust is only imagery and has no potential benefit or bane in play. It's not loot, though it could be the desire of the adventure's patron or an alchemist who feels otherwise. The Artist often paints with this essence; the objects created could have magic properties, but also cause serious aberration. The Artist is probably insane from the heavenly experience. He certainly is without worldly ambition. He may be possessed by the cult's god, or he may be a powerful demon observing human interaction. The images he creates inspire the cult and temple followers; no one doubts his devotion.

Zealotry: He will be found quietly tinkering, molding and dying new depictions of the god. Unlike the other zealots, he will not attack the group outright if given a chance. He will become Enraged if any of his creations are damaged or defiled. Often he will be attacked anyway, because the party will not be able to trust assuredly that he won't snap out of his ecstasy and become a problem. Attacking the deluded painter is a surefire way to get him aggressive and often using magic.

Intrigues: The Artist has no desire for intrigue. Here, the rest of the temple subcommanders are the ones who plot his demise. The headmaster

too will envy this person's relationship with the unholy. The temple leader may seek to steal the man's essence, strip him of his divine dust. If the character is specified as Intrigue, he will be found in an argument or battle with another temple significant. The players now face two opponents who easily set aside their differences to oust intruders. Their fight can then continue.



Propagandist

Role in Hierarchy: Announces the good deeds of the lord, monitors his travel and itinerary. As a herald, he maintains spies on the outside world and sews dissent to keep possible enemies occupied. He spreads rumors. He entices monsters to ravage the countryside, then has the temple step in to save the day.

Zealotry: He obsessively keeps logs of his upcoming strategies and guards these records with all manner of hex, curse and contact poison. He maintains false records of good deeds and cover stories for events that never occurred. Deciphering the sets of tales takes a very clever mind in study without distraction. Some of his spies and plots can be continued by more opportunistic and devious player characters. They could as well be revealed to gain friends, but with a like number of enemies among the revealed.

Intrigues: He once believed, later he forgave himself, now he seems tortured with guilt. In his records he has added clues or flaws, in an attempt to warn others or ensure some actions fail to confuse and point back at the temple. He knows he too is culpable but is ready to face justice.

Inhuman Consort (Pet)

Role in Hierarchy: Engages in activities which cause normal people to wretch. From the realms of Manga with lots of tentacles, the headmaster has a monster as a lover. If even that detail is too controversial for your group, change the term Consort to Pet. Either Consort or Pet, means that parishioners are sometimes sacrificed, tossed to the inhuman creature for its food or pleasure.

Zealotry: Fight, tough to do anything else. Monster battles and fantasy, time to gain some xps or die trying.

Intrigues: There will probably still be a fight. The creature is bound here, against its will. The only way the players can avoid killing it to continue would be if they brought a counter-spell or discovered a counter in the complex. By anticipating the need, the Ref might add that talisman somewhere within the temple confines. Else, the party might try Tasking magic to at least avoid this battle. The creature will not fully be freed, unless one or both of these occur – the headmaster dies, or the talisman is truly discovered (to break the chains). That may actually mean some demon is free to savage. Fully dispelling the Inhuman Consort (Pet) is Nearly Impossible without serious preparation and prior knowledge. That quest could be the next.

Poisoner

Role in Hierarchy: Takes life without steel. Living in a garden of strange plants and mushrooms, the very ground the poisoner stands upon could puff pollen/spores that cause fatigue, nausea, hallucination and eventual death. He often has a laboratory and some thralls assisting him. The poisons may be so vile that an underling, expendable, must handle the final mix. Poisons will react in many ways – incapacitation, paralysis, memory loss, sapping of vitality and strength, wilting of flesh, dissolving of metal, etc. The poisoner may also deal drugs to far away lands or at least to enslave the surrounding villages. The congregation may not know they are being sedated and bewildered, making them gullible to any sermon delivered.

Zealotry: The poisoner on orders of the headmaster has set traps, which release incapacitating or deadly gas. The other subcommanders and minions do not know of this death concealed in the walls and ceilings. Releasing the compounds might take power words, pulling of levers or as a failsafe both.

Intrigues: The man is obsessed with his concoctions. He seeks something else, like immortality, and trades his skills for the ability to practice his arts without interruption. Lately, he feels cheated as his temple duties consume too much of the day. He may also need certain compounds, ones promised, but the headmaster failed to deliver on his pledge.

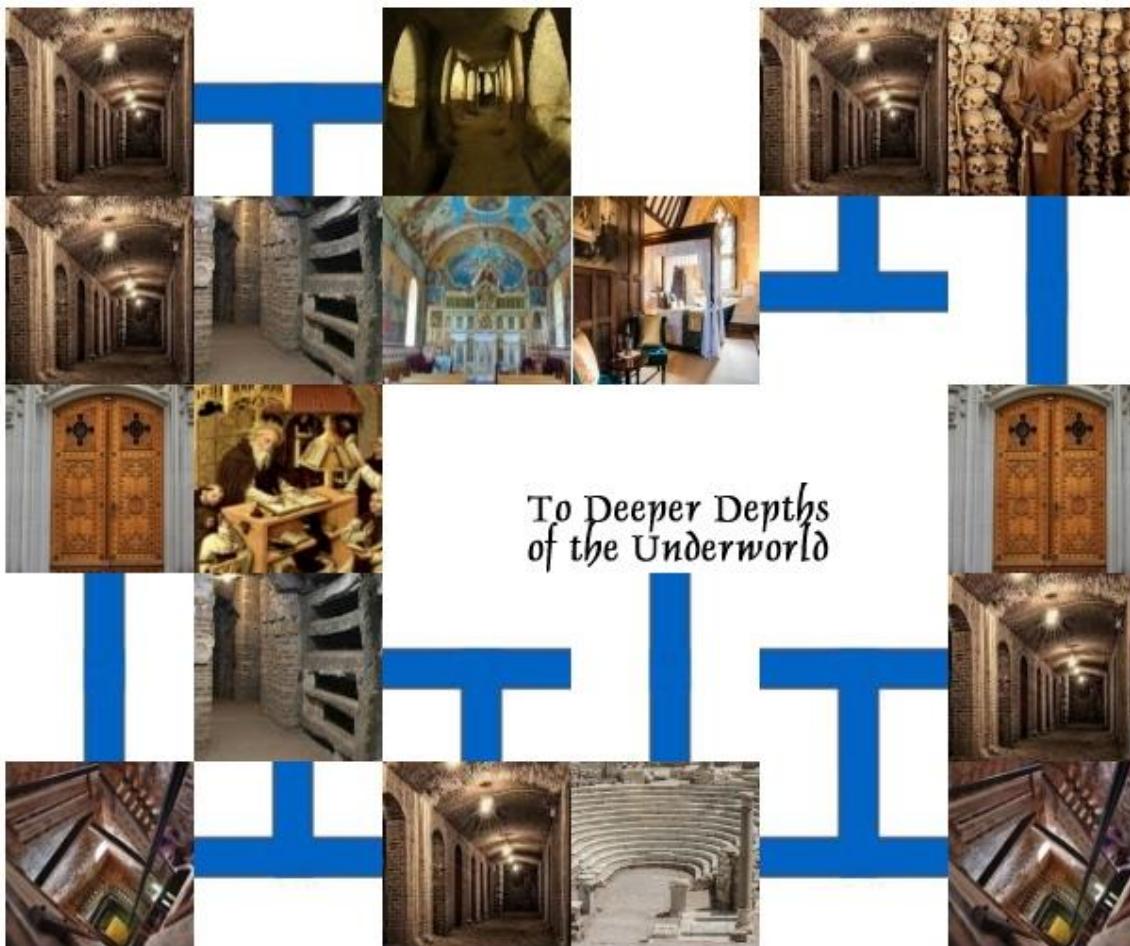
Demonic Child

Role in Hierarchy: Born to be supreme. The lad may be unaware of his role. The result of a ritual mating between a sinister force and a mortal woman, the child has powers or will lead the forces of evil once it matures. He will have never met his mother, long deceased. The child may be the next headmaster, either simple order of succession or by life transfer. Yet if that's the case, he may be a future sacrifice or reservoir that will be tapped when needed. His role then is to grow in power, but only to have that power sucked away by the headmaster.

Zealotry: The child is beloved by his temple family and treated as a godling. Images of the monster will adorn altars and bas relief carved walls. When (if) the child is slain the other denizens of the temple will fight Enraged. Many years may have been invested to bring the Child to maturity; in its death all wasted.

Intrigues: The fate of the child is to die before fulfilling its role. Before it is ready to be harnessed as a source of power or before it takes over

the cult, the child will die. One or all of the subcommanders in the temple know this is going to happen. The demon might be showing signs of fatal disease, self immolation, insanity. The hybrid creature cannot be allowed to rule. If the player group promises to slay the beastling, even some of the loyal antagonists will let them safely pass. The other NPCs in the temple complex will not help kill the creature, but certainly don't oppose that outcome. Unfortunately, as the child is murdered, then the remaining hostile princes of the temple may attack as the beast has weakened the party.



Pit Fiend

Role in Hierarchy: Something psychotic and unnatural exists here. It may pose as a human in face and accoutrement, but at any time can change into a Heinous monster. It usually runs a medieval torture chamber, feasting on pain or the bones of the dead. He may be the fully grown demonic child, waiting his turn to fully rule. A pure sadist, the fiend presently only delights in suffering; he needs to hear pleas for mercy go unanswered. It may require

human sacrifice or blood to survive. It may be impatient that the temple has not belched forth and subjugated a greater part of the surrounding campaign. It wants more victims; the quota promised is not being met.

Zealotry: The fiend only cares about its small domain within the greater temple complex. It is suspicious of everyone. It will not prevent the party from roaming and looting, provided they cross quickly through its immediate lair. Treasure typically litters the floor here. Do not steal or stop the menace from dispensing agony, however.

Intrigues: The fiend is easier to confuse or placate. If flattered or told by the party that they can help spread its message, ensure its dominance, the fiend may believe. However, the fiend will not tolerate the party killing another subcommander. It could assist in killing the temple headmaster if that battle can be quickly joined (adjacent room perhaps). But for the other NPCs of the temple, the pit fiend sees them as already its minions.

Insane Clown

Role in Hierarchy: Born in the headmaster's twisted sense of humor. The clown takes two distinct forms. Select one. The man has been disfigured and is hideous. Else, the clown seems innocent and oafish, mentally aloof or simplistic. The clown is thus either a victim being driven insane. Or one born stunted and kept around for others to feel superior. Either means the headmaster is beyond redemption, laughing at pain and deformity. The clown may be kept as an example of the temple's patron deity's mockery of mankind. The clown may be the previous evil headmaster, not an innocent man by any means. Was it the temple's god or the current headmaster who caused this distorted outcome?

Zealotry: The horror jester is related to the headmaster. The injury was inflicted by magical mishap, his or the master's. Part of the man's soul is corrupted by angry ginns or demons. He will be very powerful if provoked. He will protect his younger brother (sibling) the headmaster, regardless. He's likely to have been the last headmaster before his accident or hubris generated fall. He may be either of the headmaster's parents.

Intrigues: The mind behind the face is brilliant. The clown could be feigning fatigue, acceptance or purity. He may have designs on becoming supreme leader. He may wish only to escape and be forgotten, unpursued. He may only be cursed for specific periods of the day or month, under the moon say. He may only be rendered corrupt and disfigured in a certain location (his bar-less cage) or in the vicinity of a talisman created specifically to inure him. The headmaster may have toppled the man and his

temple, keeping him around for a myriad of reasons: to show locals, to show the god, to feel superior, to warn others to toe the line, to bring around and use for talents or information, all when necessary. There should be noticeable signs and warnings that the clown is not so corrupt as he appears, perhaps a diary or journal found in a different part of the temple complex, a painting on a wall or a tale told by a neutral subcommander in the Great Hearth subsection or tavern rumors and legends recited out in the countryside.

Artificer

Role in Hierarchy: Creates talisman for the temple. An arcane craftsman who can fashion the ordinary and imbue it with supernatural power. This character communes with nonhumans, deals with the faery folk or dwarves or ginns. He will need specific quest items to craft specific objects. He will also know where relics are hidden in the world. He is more valuable captured, if that is even possible.

Zealotry: The temple has a relic, an ancient object this man is studying. He may understand and use some of the relic's powers. Given time he will unlock all. The headmaster knows his Artificer will succeed; he is certain of loyalty or binds the man to serve. The workshop or test-range of the relic should be highly warded to prevent accident. The battle here may have to be fought without magic.

Intrigues: The man is unwittingly helping the headmaster. He may think he is clever enough to solve the riddle of a relic and escape with it. But, if that were the case, why hasn't he already? There are many places that a hermit could tinker in peace. If the Artificer is convinced his quest is futile, that he will be betrayed soon, he may have no choice but to join the party. The relic itself may also, in this case, be bound to an area and not so portable. Breaking that spell will require at least the death of the headmaster. Like Gollum, the man may help for a bit, then try to kill the party for his life's desire.

Dark Knight

Role in Hierarchy: Warrior who will not die. The best that will occur is the man will be turned or dispelled, driven away or transported far. He is a knightly figure but not anyone's vassal. He may even be just an animated suit of arms. Many a ginn—sand, sea or wind—can be enslaved in a bronze suit. Not fire (melting), and only as a metal ginn if the Dark Knight

manifests as a floating helmet or sword, a single connected and solid object. Since he doesn't bleed, the entity may be considered Great.

Zealotry: The Knight will guard a specific object, chest, trapdoor, prisoner or route within the temple. He will have a purpose for which he does not stray, sleep or concede to pity or praise. Even better, he will not come to life, until the party shows interest in the object or prisoner. Add whatever other colorful shape and surprise reveal as desire. e.g. A skeleton rising from the dirt?

Intrigues: The knight is a dead noble. He should be entombed and had a real living family and legacy. He may have been cursed following failure or betrayal. He may have dedicated himself to protecting his lineage long after his death. The headmaster may be his last kin. With time, his goal became muddled or was altered by magic. The Dark Knight may be able to converse with very adept magic users. If the Knight can be convinced that everything he ever knew and could know is from ages past, he may relent this existence and join his dead loved ones. If he can be shown a item of legacy or meet one of his heirs, that too might dispel this curse. Until that time, he could be indestructible and unswayed from his task.



Mindless Enforcer

Role in Hierarchy: Similar to many other minions listed, here, the person is flesh and blood. He will be single-minded in his desire to kill other living things. Or he may be without a mind, following specific simple imprinted magical instructions. e.g. Kill whatever you meet. Being mind blank does protect him from certain magical charms and confusions. His memories will often be impossible to restore; he often never had any and is made from necromantic spare parts.

Zealotry: Given a task by the headmaster, he will follow the instructions. There may be a way of getting past the minion or circumventing his orders if the initial command is logically upended (flawed). A classic example is the death servant who starts any fight with “speak friend or die.” Solution, like Tolkien’s door to Moria, is saying the word friend (in dwarvish). “Fight me and die,” means sheath your swords and walk by calmly. But, any good D&D’er will know this. The headmaster may even have a focus, a ring say, that allows the command to be wiped and restated. Should take several rolls of ability to outsmart the human-machine’s settings.

Intrigues: Here, the orders are broken. The Mindless Enforcer only attacks if attacked. He seems stuck in a programing loop, acting weird. Confused by circumstances and befuddled by another intruder – the Referee may add an extra outside treasure seeker to reflect that other party’s entrance and defeat of this NPC. In essence, the other NPC is the neutral party, not this broken dumbass blue screen WinOS crash of code.

Meat Carver

Role in Hierarchy: What’s for dinner? Nothing good. The butcher here removes the flesh from bones, even grinds the bones to a fine flour, yet to what end is unknown. Fashion a myth. Have rumors be told in the villages on the outskirts before the players enter. Is it the stew fed the followers? Is it poured into molds to fashion Nasty servants? Is it sold to the dwarves or giant folk, used as feed for something Foul in the temple, a preservative or cosmetic applied for deception or dye to make the color of the acolyte robes? Cannibalism never has an honest application.

Zealotry: The minion will seek to make the players of the group the next victims. You can go immediately to combat. Depending upon the myth, the Meat Carver will have additional defenses and minions of his own. Best and worst is when he bakes mobs that repopulate. The limit on their numbers

is the space in the area, not on his lack for ingredients. Each muffin tin might bring another dozen denizens to combat.

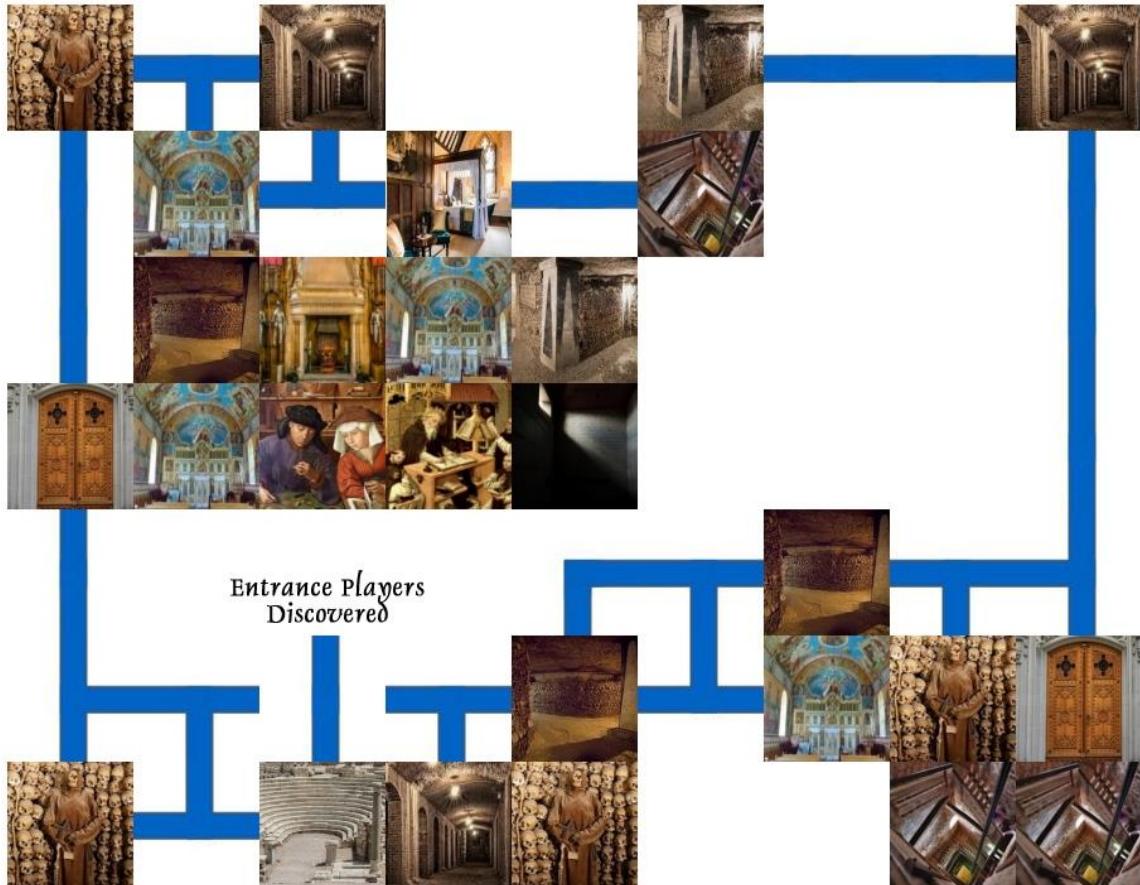
Intrigues: The NPC is forced to serve. He may enjoy the carnage but would rather inflict pain on his own terms. What could compel him to be this wretch? The headmaster knows a secret or has a magical choke-chain he tugs to make the man carve and serve. Thanksgiving is right around the corner.

Whisperer

Role in Hierarchy: Spies, infiltrates and creates local trust. The Whisperer will often talk to nobles and get them to confess secrets. He's a charmer, even with a hideous complexion. Normally, he is outside, far afield. His appearance today would signal he has especially juicy evidence to share with the headmaster. What will the players do with the same, should they defeat the deceiver and capture his bag of correspondences. This minion has an uncanny ability to escape, especially if the headmaster is slain before he is even met. Will he seek revenge? Of course, that's a professional courtesy, to avenge of course a former employer. The man needs his reference to gain his next employer or ulterior motive for doing what he does (often lust for the unobtainable).

Zealotry: The agent has returned to warn the headmaster of a threat. This can even be the arrival of the party. There may be a time-crunch for anyone in the temple. The players may have a set amount of time (turns or site locations) to advance and complete their goals. After which they are sure to be overwhelmed, when all the favors of the temple are cashed and all manner of support, enemies to the player party, arrives to reinforce the whole. There could be an ultimate Zaire intervention or heavenly bane set to occur. At the end of the countdown, expect the whole of the temple destroyed (earthquakes, gods, fire and brimstone, the usual).

Intrigues: The whisperer has obtained knowledge too valuable to share with the headmaster. This is his ticket out of this fanatic viper's den. Did he commit it to memory, or does he keep the damned message scribed in his courier pouch. He might barter this for safety. He might recruit the group as partners, since he may not wish to confront the third-party directly with his blackmail material. The message could be in cipher, protected by confusion spells or have its pages tainted with the worst of the worst of curses and contact poisons. Make a deal or miss the opportunity.



Overseer

Role in Hierarchy: Handles the staff of servants who cook, clean and make the temple livable. The servants are volunteers, followers of the professed faith. Many followers are gullible, or certain questionable aspects of the faith are omitted and misrepresented. Bad apples are not representative of the whole. The overseer will be dutiful to superiors while demanding of anyone that works for him. The rites of the faith, the ones kept secret, may involve a fair amount of spilt humours (blood, bile, phlegm and puss). The overseer is the one who creates the backstory, the plagued hospital or monster attacks, which justifies these messes that the acolytes and other obedient cleanse.

Zealotry: Here is another case where the action may shift immediately to the overseer's demise. How much damage on the party will he inflict before that occurs? Yet, ponder these three twists. The overseer is actually the true authority of the whole temple. The headmaster in this case is a pawn, a powerful pawn, but not making policy. Second (instead), the overseer is in denial. He loves the headmaster, perhaps as a relative. He makes every excuse for the bizarre as a necessary evil. Lastly, the overseer is

time-shifted and experiences the temple and all activity from a prior generation. He does not see the evil that flourishes, because he lives in an age where that was not true. Freaky and none of these may change the obvious combat, except each could?

Intrigues: Come upon servants cleaning up after a messy rite. The servants will be shaken by the amount of blood and body parts which need to be mopped. The overseer will arrive shortly after the players. He will remain a zealot, but the other henchmen might be convinced to turn on the temple if the truth is credibly established. Perhaps start with the lack of dead monsters, not even a broken tooth or tuff of fur, among the piles of armed humans.

Vestment Tailor

Role in Hierarchy: Clothes make the man. But here, the clothes are entirely magical. He's not simply making the headmaster more presentable; the vestments are protective apparel that empowers the priests. How much protection? Infinite let's say. Having this NPC allows the Ref to force the players to evade all combat (with the hierarchy), until they find and face this Vestment Tailor. From his help or coercion, a vulnerability might be ascertained. Bunk or magic? The *do this before that* is rather standard in the legends. Only by finding this man, can the quest continue in earnest.

Zealotry: The man may decide to die with his secrets. However, this usually means someone else comes forward or something in the tailor's threads and materials will be discerned. Why doesn't he armor himself in this garb? Great question; could be he's not entitled or could be no one feels the temple will ever be penetrated with the vestments in place. He could be protected, but by vanquishing him (trial and error), the players learn the secret to defeat all. He could also be caught in his bed or bath; the party can only fight subcommanders on occasions where they are dressed in civvies. The outfits have a charge that dissipates? Hey, Ref, you totally devoid of imagination? Pick a solution and get back to the dice. I even put my players on the spot and ask them under what conditions or what was the reason the guy remained partially vulnerable. Only one mistake could be his first and last.

Intrigues: The binding of magic to articles of fashion can have consequences unintended. But the more serious mishap result when the craftsman needs a very rare material or dye or metal to complete a design. These quests are doomed from the start. The tailor does not want to help the headmaster; he fears he will be slain by the monster he must hunt for

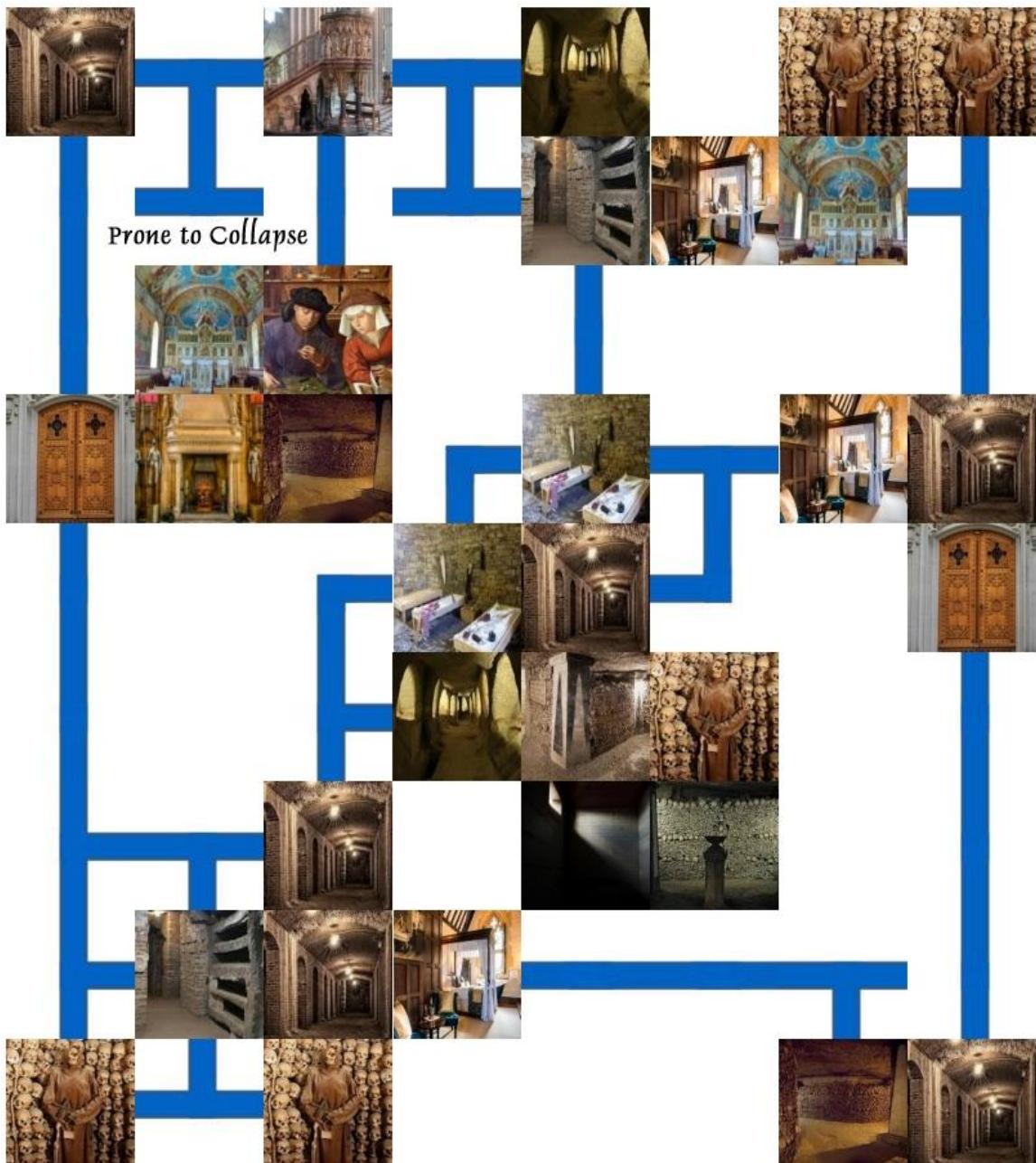
reagents. Maybe the players can help him kill something. Then, he can also change sides knowing the players will be his supplier. Armoring the party to invulnerability may not improve game enjoyment. The tailor might give the players the information they need, then fall to the uncontested dagger thrust or friendly fire in an upcoming engagement. Else, there's those nasty side effects he'll fail to mention. e.g. Sure, the cloak can not be punctured by wood or iron, but long usage causes your *legs* to shrivel up. Your money pouch might bulge, but that's not all?!?

Gatekeeper

Role in Hierarchy: Opens magical portals. The working offices of the temple are separated from the occult practice. The passages between are blocked or magically created by this Gatekeeper. There's a table in the Outlands Fundamentals book about closing magical gates. It actually reads just as well as Opening Magical Gates. Which side of the complex is this guy? He might be an elevator operator, often demonic, who does not join a team. He might be someone who must be summoned or magically contacted, simple telepathy or arcane scroll of limited functions per day (year). The length of time the gates are present, the type of person who can cross without injury or insanity, the toll necessary...much could limit the gate and enslave the inhuman keeper. By slaying the keeper, a whole section of the temple may starve, creating a prison. Yet the unending grey of the underworld always seems like another route into any place of mystique. Cosmic portals are not so rare in fantasy campaigns.

Zealotry: The keeper might feign neutral state, but he could be sending the party to the wrong location, to a prison or to a monster lair. The adventure can change dramatically after an encounter with a Gatekeeper.

Intrigues: Accidents abound, and the gatekeeper may have sent the headmaster to another pocket dimension right as the group entered. Now what? Follow? The gatekeeper's price is another way to add twists or submissions. Seldom is the gatekeeper motivated by human emotions. He hasn't been coerced, like with a family member held hostage. He won't take gold as bribe; he'd want something else. Is it freedom? That release should not be as easy as the death of the headmaster. The gatekeeper often predates the latest boss and may be tied to this region before humans made stone tools.



Retainer's Provocations (3D8)

As time allows, a few distinctive personality traits and signs of wear might be added to each person. Some truly memorable NPCs will have a half D8 of these features.

3 or less: Person is opposite of expected gender. Else, person is extremely old or young for position.

4: Person controls great magic. Else, by reputation only, really has no ability out of the ordinary.

5: Person is relative of another courtier. Else, illegitimate relation, but none the less blood relative.

6: Person supports a claimant for the baron's lands and rights. Else, instead, is himself a potential usurper of a lord's title.

7: Person has numerous allies in a religious sect. Else, among the worshipers of the One True Faith.

8: Person is mistress or paramour of another courtier. Else, a long forgotten lover or paramour.

9: Person is currently in hiding or fleeing another lord. Else, person being fled is an outlander, not a lord in the realms of the barons.

10: Person has numerous allies among the barons. Else, his ally is a foreign warlord or exotic chieftain.

11: Person is a relative of the local baron. Else, an illegitimate, disowned or black-sheep relative who hides his true relationship.

12: Person is magically altered, controlled or possessed. Else, he's insane from magical mishap.

13: Person was once very high and mighty, an ordained leader of a secret group, troop, convoy, band, but has left that life behind. Else, he was banished or remains a deserter or fugitive from an army, fleet, country, cause, etc.

14: Person is skilled at armed combat. Else, person also skilled at unarmed combat.

15: Person is on the verge of losing his post to another. Else, an outsider is disparaging his performance.

16: Person is currently wounded or ill. Else, he will die from sickness sometime soon. That illness might be contagious.

17: Person knows of an intrigue but chooses to do nothing. Else, he is the cause of another insider's role of intrigue.

18: Person is disliked by the entire temple. Else, person is feared by the entire temple, including the local headmaster.

19: Person is involved in a mishap. Else, mistake will bring about greater calamity to the temple and countryside.

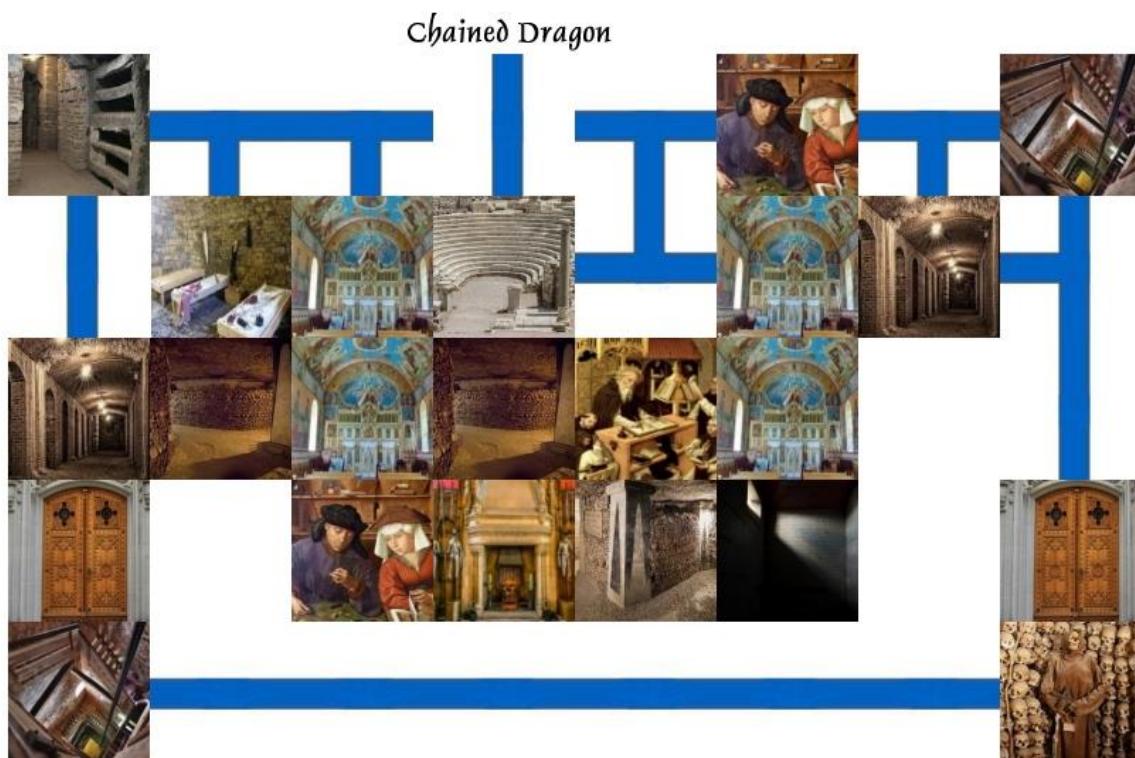
20: Person is someone that one of the players knows from past dealings (a former employer, friend, enemy, distant relative, etc.). Else, at least the courtier thinks so; the person and player are in fact strangers. The player may know this and play along, or he too may be deluded by similarities in references and deeds.

21: Person has many dark secrets and uses magic far more then is wise. Else, person is a master of illusions and nothing about him is as it seems.

22: Person is influential, powerful and rich from sources other than apparent. Else, conversant in numerous foreign languages and customs, dealing in the exotic or trading in distant spicess.

23: Person is better suited for another role in the temple. He is being held back by the temple headmaster, so even as a Fanatic, he wants his leader dead. Else, everyone knows the person is incompetent, but the headmaster shelters him in his position.

24 or more: Person is totally inept; yet he believes he is highly skilled, and constantly blames others for his mishaps. Else, role is being filled by an impostor assuming the image and role of someone he magically replaced.



Assemble the Ritual (Mass)

Temples complexes offer a bridge between courtly life in baronial castles and the darkest pits of the underworlds. There are probably dozens more who might form a body of temple adjutants and attendants. So, as we exhaust any list, add some of your own. Or, to confuse your players, just alter the names slightly and obscure the stated roles. The next set of fiends

working as major domo, castellan, chevalier and aide-de-camp are as near as a Thesaurus.

Temple Schematics



If you visit the spacegamer web site, you'll probably find a tool to generate temples, like the ones that flourish the pages of this pamphlet. Automation is a Ref's friend. Yes, these twenty internal sites are not alphabetical; not sure what I was thinking, but you'll persevere for sure.

Arena

A place where nefarious anti-heroes are tested. This may also be the stable of larger beasts. The arena is empty and anyone who enters is told it hasn't been used since ancient times. Much of it could be ruins. It could also be altered magically to appear as ruins. That tell-tale spot of fresh blood, dismissed as a slave's pinprick, is all that will be encountered here. Unless, the unnatural motives have been revealed and the party is trying to flee. Then they will meet and must fight the worst of the worst in combat to the

death. The arena might then fill with ghostly watchers or the stark acolytes of the degenerate temple.

Pulpit

The place of piety where the rituals of the common people are practiced. This is the everyday refuge; a small assembly will wait herein with petitions. It acts like a throne room, with less trapping of power. By adjudicating canon law and disputes between minor nobles, the temple acts as third-party neutral arbitration. It's all done to mask the hideous and the ambitions of the temple.

Great Hearth

Here is a place of feast, celebration, music, merriment. The human agents and welcome guests are treated here to entertainment. That may include orgiastic bliss, but only if the faith is one of delight, like Aphrodite or Dlamélish of the Petal Throne pantheon. Making men drunk is often all that's needed. The hall is a pretense, a show that the temple is just a minor corruption without political aims. The people invited are witnesses that the temple elders and master are good people, generous to friends. Think of it as the reception room for many a wedding of nobles. All paid for by the temple to honor the invitees.

Antechamber

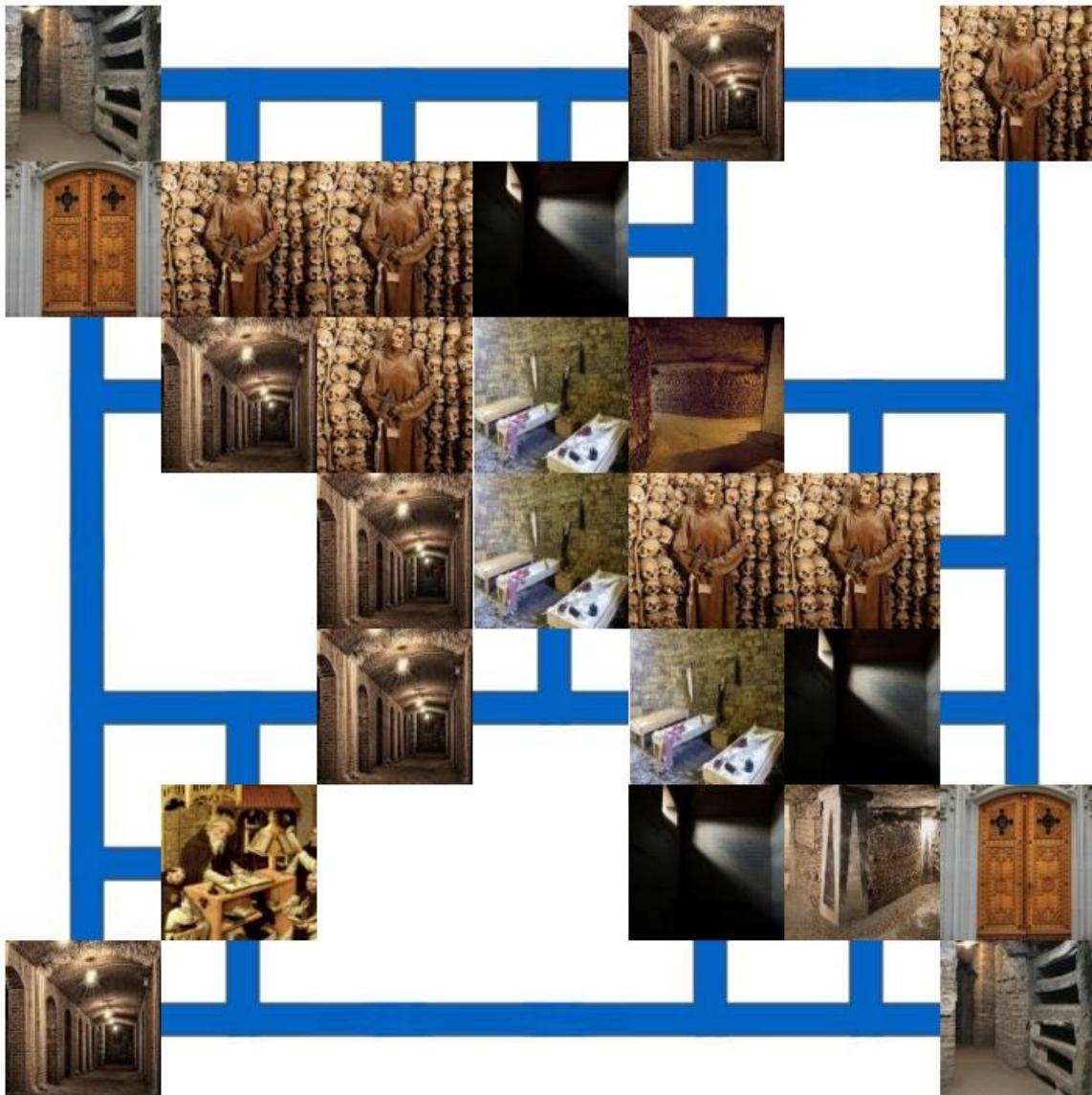
These are halls but not ones of feast and delight. The antechamber may be an intervening guardroom. Or the antechamber is another appearance of normality. The location will seem or is magically altered to appear ordinary, mundane. Only by crossing the length or dispelling the ward will the antechamber be seen as the corridor leading to the real purpose and heart of darkness within the temple. Until that occurs, this often appears as a dead end. The areas also should be the place subcommanders, the minions of the temple headmaster, are encountered.

Barrier

The most obvious choice is the locked and barred door. An easy thing perhaps to open yet doing so will put the party into a part of the temple complex that is off-limits and often hiding gore.

Dormitory

A place of slumber and rest for the common temple helpers, the laymen and slaves. This may also be a barracks for human guards. The garrison might be quite large if there are several of these throughout the complex.



Flight Steps

These can lead to a tower, a belfry or down into the lower recesses. Sound will carry quite clearly in these stairwells, so the enemy might be alerted to trespass of even stealthy intruders.

Burial Vault

Special citizens are placed in consecrated tombs. The bodies are often left in the cold open air and the remains mummify, drying out. Will they animate and attack? Are the insides stuffed with wealth and the corpses dressed in the trappings of power?

Clerk Coins

Temples collect offerings. Many faiths are allowed by law to demand tithes even from landowners and nobles. Those payments need to be cataloged and sorted. Here is the record room and the piles of coins. Do not believe for one second this is easy pickings. The collection could be protected by magic curses. Guards will stand by to prevent thievery by the accountants or the world-be robber.

Scribes

Everything needs to be recorded. The world is seen as cause and effect. Every natural event, rain or snow, must be matched to previous events and compared against the prior documented whims of the deity. Patterns are found and tested. The everyday workings of the temple mix here with occult scholarship.

Chapel

The place where common men assemble to hear the sermons of the temple priests. The routine rituals of life occur here in the open. The secret practices are hidden behind a shroud of mundane teachings and practices. If the worship includes confession, then the priesthood also has a ready source of gossip and information to peddle or blackmail. Nice people are exploited in these malevolent domains.

Danger

Monsters, usually, but any trap or puzzle, arcane curse or setback might be encountered. The normal guards do not enter these spots. The danger is usually contained and cannot follow if the party escapes. There is little to foreshadow. The peril comes fast and hard with no warning.

Desolate Hall

The start of ungodly worship, the inner circle of aspirants and dogmatic believers meet here out of public scrutiny. The congregation could include

nonhumans and demi-humans. Often the room is empty, but the spot will contain clues to what assembles here and what awful things they might do. Dry blood, smells of offal, auras and shimmers, echoes of inhuman souls greet the mortal who enters.

Lavish Chambers

For the headmaster, yet he may loan his room to a significant visiting NPC; the place is opulent and a secure place of rest. Therein is the headmaster's personal fortune and relics collected or made over the temple's life. This may be the objective of the mission. Take what you would and leave? Reaching this room implies that security is lax. That could embolden opponents of the temple master. A single item pilfered might bring lasting retribution. All wrongs must be avenged.

Crypt

Place where a very special host is buried. The temple is often built on the ruins of a more ancient religion. Else, the burial was made as a compromise to placate outside forces. Consecrated ground is valued. The dead do not want to rise nor do the relatives wish that to happen. The temple here or a previous cult took charge of a body. The tomb of that important figure will contain riches and relics. Violation could add a third-party problem. The current leaders are not after mere coin and minor artisanship; they leave it alone. To have a tomb violated by intruders is an embarrassment and distraction from their goals. They may use (should use) every means in their power to bring justice to the robbers (the player party). The delvers of the group will know as much to leave it be. If a quick backstory is needed, the tomb is for a king or hero, much beloved, even as he rises following the warped magical outcomes of the latest vile rituals of the cult.

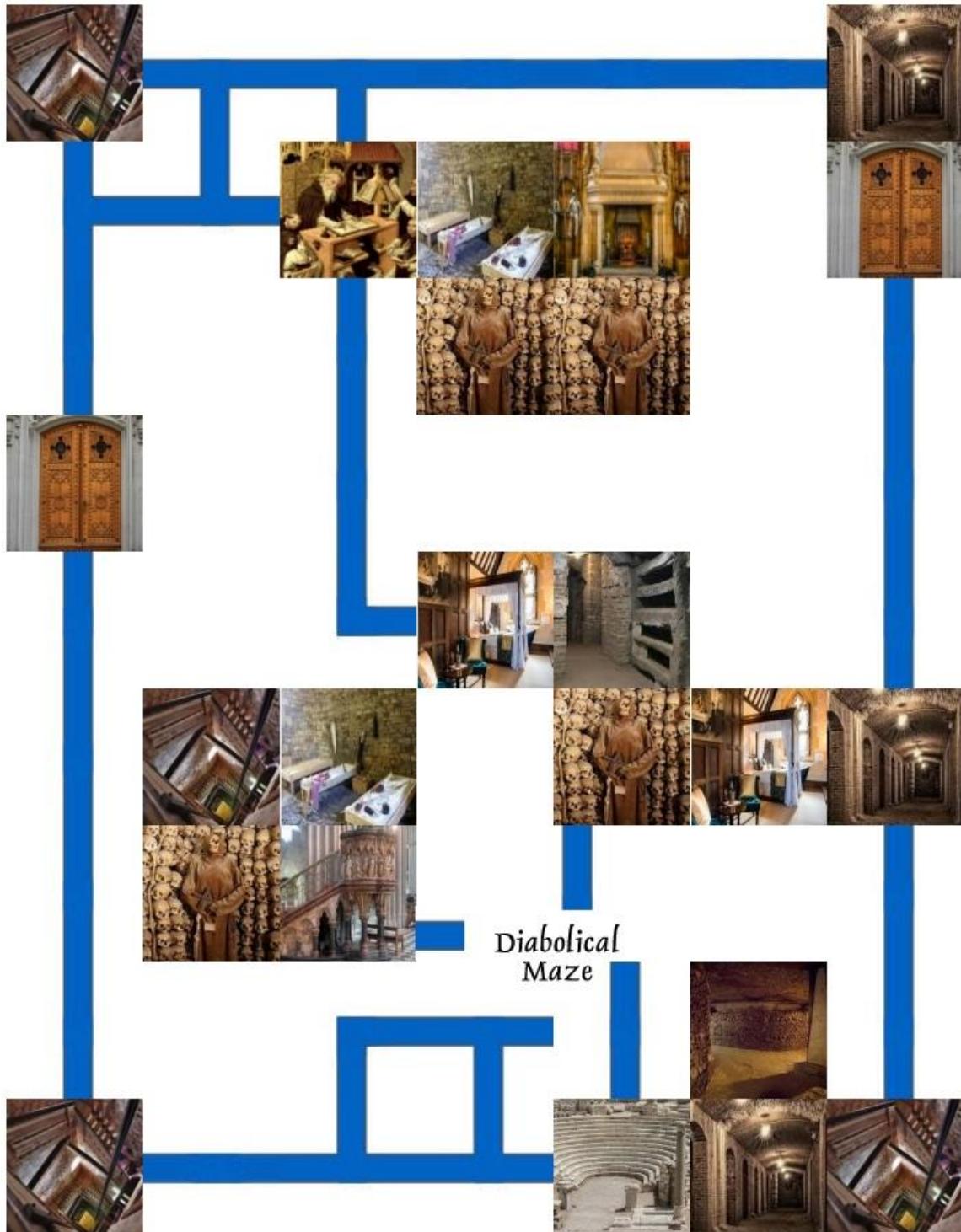
Subterranean Passages

Connections to the underworld, the dwarven kings or isolated pocket dungeons to conduct the worst of the worst without fear of disclosure. The more dusty the better, which signifies the temple is relatively calm and not preparing grand machinations.

Basement Stores

Partake from a fine selection of cheese or teas. The contents feed human servants and allows the temple to wine and dine favorite nobles or obedient agents. There will always be an attendant shifting the contents or making a

tally. This person is not a guard, but he often is not helpless. Many of the perpetual basement dwellers are minor demons and familiars of the greater denizens.



Evil Altar

An altar is a place of ritual ceremony, summoning and conjuration. It may also be a place where pseudo-science and magical alteration occurs. The altar is an amphitheater, a stage. The audience will be aggressive spirits to be enticed and the chosen few who've earned the honor to attend. Rarely should there be a ceremony in progress. That would be utter death for even an experienced party. The demons consulted seldom offer aid willing to the temple master, but they also would not discern persecutor from bystander from heroic player character. If there is something here, it could be a bound NPC whose role is Intrigue. That being might be freed in exchange for help on the main quest or in exchange for a gift. That being may also be freed to the utter damnation and disaster of the person doing so.

Dark Shrine

This is the place where sacrifices are left. In some cases, the deals are being formalized. The temple priests will put riches and hostages and relics before the shrine. The demons or underlings will review the contents and decide whether they want more or something else. They will respond with laughter, growls, earthquakes or curses, depending upon how pleased they feel. The demons may not know what pleases them; they may not understand the materials being placed on the portal between the worldly and their shadowy home. The temple may be testing the shrine. The earthly masters often may not know what the demons are after. They rely on prophesy, literature of the past, sagas. They may be using trial and error, offering food, gold, virgins, chained heroes, bloody organs, monstrous intestines, rare animal skins, antlers and bones, etc. The odder the sacrifice the more likely the demon's desires have been found, plus the more dangerous the unworldly hosts are becoming. Tempting demons is never as easy as making demands. A surefire way of getting evil to laugh with contentment is to impale the high priest here. That usually signifies the human prattle and annoyance has ended for now.

Unlit Cell

Something besides the height of the walls keeps the prisoners from escape. If mere mortals waiting their turn to receive the knife, then they will at least be bound. The Until Cell implies that other dangers lurk. The cell could be where disobedience in the temple ranks is punished. The cell could hold hell hounds or other such summoned monsters. The cell could be vast and magically twisted to trap any who enter.

Examples for Outlands

These ad hoc descriptions occur when the temple is a known den of inequity and play continues as a dungeon crawl with the players seeking the leader, loot or the entire clearance and purge of the place. They are also useful as reference for a Ref as player, gaming on the fly; flip and play, wing-it sessions. In other words, every event run during time constrained college finals or a family-guy Referee.

Arena: Fight an abomination with the Brash Cup events as attacks and an appropriate Bane Ferocity. Each member of the party should be forced to make his own dispatch. Magical Method Cup may be substituted, but monster Ferocity for Bane should increase. Not all ferocity need be the same, typically it matches the character level. Pity the Stallari facing the Great beast.

Antechamber: Holds a Zealot Loyalist or Intrigue bent neutral NPC. Use Q&D Defeat Subcommander if combat starts. Some of the opponents should have Defensive Modifier. If there are not enough Antechambers to house all the NPCs, scatter the rest about the complex. Extra bunks or bedrooms might hint at a number of sub-boss active in the entire complex.

Barrier: Use Q&D Storming, including Major Tarot results, to breach.

Basement Larders: Unguarded treasure vault to gain a Longboat swaggering. Gain Abundant Stores (M) or if already present then any swagger (E) to (A).

Burial Vault: Use Defeat Undead, specifically Q&D Quell the Unliving (from Outlands Adventures April 2019); any injury to adversary creates win.

Chapel: Use Q&D Madmen, any Major Tarot knocks the player out of battle until reshuffle or entire party is ousted for a reset. Any result of Flee is treated instead as avoid vicious to random character.

Clerk Coins: Defeat a small force of guards, Target Number equal to half the party, to collect the tithes, as the equivalent to a Longboat Treasure Laden (D). However, the collective weight will cause up to half the party to start any action with a Bane.

Crypt: Use Defeat Undead, specifically Q&D Sunder the Corpse (from Outlands Adventures April 2019); any injury to adversary produces win. Collect treasure to gain a Longboat swaggering; gain Abundant Stores (M) or if present any swagger (E) to (A).

Danger: Use Q&D Cultists, any Major Tarot knocks the player out of battle, until reshuffle or entire party is ousted for a reset. Any result of Flee is treated instead as avoid vicious to random character.

Dark Shrine: Haul off treasure equivalent to a Longboat swaggering; gain Abundant Stores (M) or if present any swagger (E) to (A). However, any true treasure is easily recognized, marked, branded, infamous, garnering questions about whether it is cursed or should be used in any way; the blood money wealth is typically shunned by all but the most corrupt.

Desolate Halls: Ransack the location for treasure equivalent to a Longboat Treasure Laden (D). Sadly, the treasure inspires envy and party mistrust. By the end of the quest, there will be some form of brawl, mutiny or murder over the split. The curse of greed will only be alleviated by Nearly Impossible rolls of wizardry.

Dormitory: Use Nasty Monster Bane with each player needing to obtain his own Escape result. Any result that causes Decline in Ferocity is treated as Battle End for the whole. Major Tarot treat as Difficult roll Task Resolution to gain Personal Swagger of corresponding letter (A) to (T). Exception for Wheel's Shuffle and the Sun becomes gain Personal Swagger of your choice. Else, fail and lose the Personal swagger if already present. See Cheat Sheet.

Evil Altar: Use Q&D Magical Gates, including Major Tarot results, to shut.

Flight Steps: Use Q&D Full-on Charge, including Major Tarot results, to force past. Sunder to win. Any result of Skirmish or Rally is treated as vicious wound.

Great Hearth: Use deception to avoid combat; appear as invited guests arriving to make deal, be recruited or provide skills to the temple. Only in abject failure would combat arise here, at least not at first. If the party lingers too long there's bound to be a fight following drink or intoxication and dream-state from the narcotics dispensed. Remember, this is not a nice temple, and the stew pot could contain all manner of strange flesh.

Lavish Chamber: Location of the leader and often the Quest Goal Relic. Loot treasure to gain a Longboat swaggering; gain Abundant Stores (M) or if present any swagger (E) to (A).

Pulpit: Use Q&D Sorcerers, any Major Tarot knocks the player out of battle until reshuffle or entire party is ousted for a reset. Any result of Flee is treated instead as avoid vicious to random character.

Scribes: Display skills to discover secrets of the Cult, number of followers, prisoners, subcommanders, general vitality and foreign influences or agents, contacts in general world. Information has value and is easier to

carry than chest of coins. Yet it doesn't spend as well in every location (ale house).

Subterranean Passage: Face a monstrosity; use Q&D Grappled Top Head and follow w/ Dance of Death. Any result that forces move off the head is replaced w/ vicious wound. Collect treasure to gain a Longboat swaggering; gain Abundant Stores (M) or if present any swagger (E) to (A).

Unlit Cell: Holds a Neutral Inhabitant. Depending upon the interaction (Display of Skill), the result might turn the NPC into a helper to absorb a wound. Else, battle against a subcommander as scoundrel fights to free himself. He can also offer information or rewards equal to a Longboat swaggering; gain Abundant Stores (M) or if present any swagger (E) to (A). but that profit is obtained later as a bonus, after the adventure ends.

Note: Any place that appears redundantly can substitute any of the various Q&D Underworld tables from the Encounters Booklet. For instance, Checking and Limiting Pointless Skirmish, Retreat to a Chokepoint or Designated Refuge, Avoiding Ambuscade and Lairs, even Discord in the Ranks. With just a bit of creativity many tables can be adapted to keep the flow of play consistent and varied.

Cheat Sheet

Magician (A)	Lovers (F)	Hanged Man (K)	Star (P)
High Priestess (B)	Chariot (G)	Death (L)	Moon (Q)
Empress (C)	Justice (H)	Temperance (M)	World (R)
Emperor (D)	Hermit (I)	Devil (N)	Judgment (S)
Hierophant (E)	Force (J)	Tower (O)	Fool (T)

Q&D Defeat a Subcommander

Each subcommander must first be rendered Vulnerable by the events. After that, the result of Slain must be obtained. All descriptions are presented in Cutlass style event driven combat. Most are easy to adapt to *your other favorite rpg*.

King: Bark your commands and get organized. Success and toggle the Quest Pip On; else, upon fail toggle it Off. **Difficulty:** 10 **Advantage:** Any Swagger Type (A)

Bane: Evade and assess. Fail and lose swaggering. Regardless, if in this action, the players face a Front Man or Maniacal Wizard, a random

character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (B)**

Queen: Harass and exhaust (the foe). Success for Catbird Seat (+3); if this roll is being made with that bonus, a success will also award a Tactics Pip. **Difficulty: 11** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (C)**

Bane: Prevent his magical restoration. Fail and subcommander is no longer Vulnerable. If he was not that now, a failed roll increases your Warped Outcome Tally by a half D8. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Maze Designer or Master Beasts, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (D)**

Knight: Exploit a perceived weakness. Success and subcommander becomes Vulnerable. If already such, he is Slain; the battle is over. But, fail and suffer a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 10** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (E)**

Bane: Keep him from drawing or retrieving his favorite blade (instrument of evil). Fail and subcommander is no longer Vulnerable. If he was not that now, a failed roll results in Shaken. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Vivisectionist or Undead Captain, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (F)**

Knave: Exhaust him and break his spirit. Success and subcommander is Slain. He does not suffer this result, until he is Vulnerable. If not already Vulnerable, fail and suffer vicious. **Difficulty: 12** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (H)**

Bane: Panic on defense?!? Fail and subcommander is no longer Vulnerable. If he was not that now, a failed roll inflicts vicious. Regardless, if in this action, the players face High Priest or Tormentor, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (O)**

10: Gather your second wind and assail. Success and gains Fury (+2); if there already, select any other player to receive this bonus. **Difficulty: 11** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (J)**

Bane: Use deceit. Fail and subcommander is no longer Vulnerable. If he was not that now, a failed roll forces loss of swaggering. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Aspirant or Noble Captive, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 10** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (I)**

9: Buffet him into defense. Success and subcommander is Slain. He does not suffer this result, until he is Vulnerable. If not already Vulnerable, fail and Shaken. **Difficulty: 13** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (K)**

Bane: Misstep and counter off-balance as all momentarily look-on. Fail and all characters lose Trait Bold strategic benefit of restoring Shaken.

If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Keeper of Keys or Doom Forecaster, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 12** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (M)**

8: Get fancy and avoid the old standbys. Success and subcommander is Slain. He does not suffer this result, until he is Vulnerable. If not already Vulnerable, fail and lose swagger. **Difficulty: 10** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (L)**

Bane: Rely on the old standbys. Fail and all characters lose Trait Clever strategic benefit of negating a Swagger loss. If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Forest Trickster or Dark Artist, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (N)**

7: Strike now! Success and subcommander is Slain. He does not suffer this result, until he is Vulnerable. If not already Vulnerable, fail and suffer a half D8 increase in Warped Outcome Tally. **Difficulty: 10**

Advantage: Any Swagger Type (G)

Bane: Explain the futility of defiance. Fail and all characters lose Trait Energetic strategic benefit of Fury or Command Pip. If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Propagandist or Inhuman Consort (Pet), a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 12** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (P)**

6: Bind and tangle, try to take him hostage. Success and subcommander is now Vulnerable; in a future event he may be slain. If already Vulnerable, fail and suffer vicious. **Difficulty: 13** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (Q)**

Bane: Contest, yet with a defensive posture. Fail and subcommander is no longer Vulnerable. If he was not that now, a failed roll inflicts vicious on another random player character. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Poisoner or Demonic Child, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage: Any Swagger Type (R)**

5: Strength in numbers requires ferocity. Success and subcommander is now Vulnerable; in a future event he may be slain. If already Vulnerable, fail and Shaken. **Difficulty: 11** **Advantage: Trait Bold**

Bane: Traps and Curses, wards and malignancy, so much unknown, fighting in his domain. Fail and all characters lose Trait Rugged strategic benefit of ignoring first wound. If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the

players face Pit Fiend or Insane Clown, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 12** **Advantage:** Trait Rugged

4: Surround; get behind him for backstab. Success and subcommander is now Vulnerable; in a future event he may be slain. If already Vulnerable, fail and lose swagger. **Difficulty: 10** **Advantage:** Any Swagger Type (S)

Bane: By the numbers and be ready for surprises. Fail and all characters lose Trait Gifted strategic benefit of canceling Warped Outcome. If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Artificer or Dark Knight, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9**

Advantage: Trait Methodical

3: Grapple. Success and subcommander is now Vulnerable; in a future event he may be slain. If already Vulnerable, fail and he loses that condition. **Difficulty: 11** **Advantage:** Any Swagger Type (T)

Bane: Overwhelm and claim the honor of the kill. Fail and all characters lose Trait Methodical strategic benefit of canceling DefMod. If this event is failed twice by the party, a random character suffers a vicious wound. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Mindless Enforcer or Meat Carver, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 10**

Advantage: Trait Energetic

2: Though he seems invincible, there is always luck. Success and subcommander is now Vulnerable; in a future event he may be slain. If already Vulnerable, fail and increase Warped Outcome tally by a half D8.

Difficulty: 10 **Advantage:** Trait Gifted

Bane: Of course, he uses magic, doesn't everyone? Fail and increase Warped Outcome by a half D8; resolve that outcome. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Whisperer or Overseer, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage:** Trait Clever

Ace: Just kill him already, please; he's not even the main boss?!? Success and subcommander becomes Vulnerable. If already such, he is Slain; the battle is over. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage:** Any Swagger (Choice)

Bane: Start to wonder who this guy works for; he seems rather glorious all on his own. Fail and Shaken. Regardless, if in this action, the players face Vestment Tailor or Gatekeeper, a random character suffers a vicious wound. **Difficulty: 9** **Advantage:** Any Swagger (Choice) Must Roll to Lock as Glorious

Magician: All Advantages change to Wizardry Swaggering.

High Priestess: After the action, all characters without wounds may lock any swaggering as Glorious.

Empress: Until the deck reshuffles, ignore Major Tarot in combat.

Emperor: After the action, all characters without wounds develop a new Trait. If that results in the dreaded Trait Seven, your character ascends to the heavens (bye, bye). To avoid this outcome, any player may self inflict injury for vicious (decide now). However, that act causes him to lose a Trait.

Hierophant: A minion or captive of the cult escapes or changes loyalty; party ignores the next vicious wound in this combat.

Lovers: A second subcommander arrives in the action. The players now fight to defeat both men. This arrival nullifies any Vulnerability which has been discovered. You need to find the weakness twice more and then slay each in order.

Chariot: All Advantages change to Mount Swagging.

Justice: After the action, all characters without wounds learn a new skill. Trait restrictions still apply.

Hermit: After the battle, all players without wounds increase Warped Outcome by a full D8. Generate those outcomes after the action.

Wheel of Fortune: Shuffle the deck and continue.

Force: All Advantages change to Personal Swagging.

Hanged Man: After the battle, each character without wounds loses one swagging technique. Only those Longboat Traits in the party may be used with the highest level characters having priority to substitute that loss.

Death: All Advantages change to Blade Swagging.

Temperance: Ignore Banes for the next full round of actions; however, the round after all players get their one chance becomes a full round of Banes. Alternate until the subcommander is Slain.

Devil: Any failed roll, regardless of any other result, additionally causes the loss of a swagging.

Tower of Destruction: The special wounds listed as Flairs increase in severity to outright slain. The subcommander is now extremely deadly.

Star: Cancel the effect of any Major Tarot influencing combat.

Moon: Any failed roll on a Bane must be attempted by the next player in sequence.

Sun: Until the deck reshuffles, ignore the special injury Flairs delivered by subcommanders.

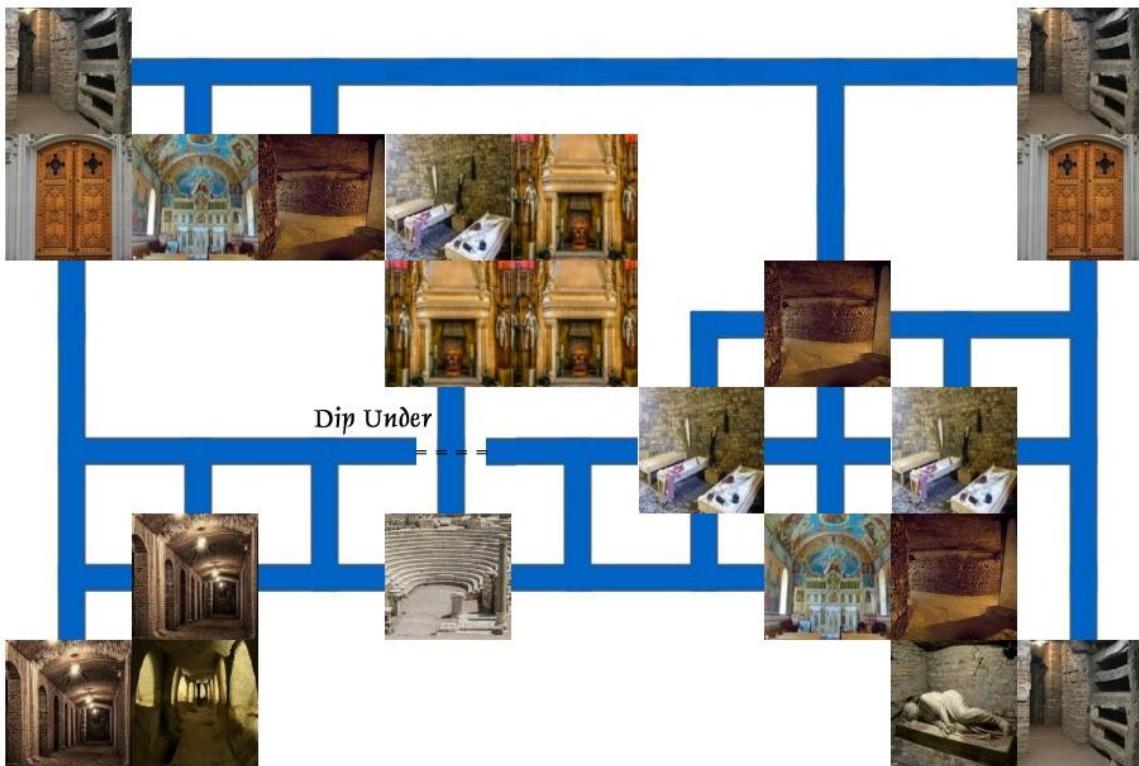
Judgment: All rolls, if possible, must be made to lock the swagging at Glorious. This card cancels Fool.

World: All Advantages change to Longboat Swagging.

Fool: None of the rolls, except Bane Ace, may be made to lock any swagging at Glorious. This card cancels Judgment.

Is there More?

With faith, theology and establishing fresh religions brevity is essential. Not for the game experience, but for my long winded discourse. Some argue too late – I tend to overkill the details. There is a master's and doctoral level of information, especially on the net, about ancient pantheons of gods. Let's try to keep the discussion focused on practical mechanics. Things to help create the campaign and let the Ref have play activities. My intent is to make the Ref less intimidated, not mire him with minutiae. Don't dump too much on the players either. Everything about religion should be spoon fed. It also should be constantly changing.



In the Dark Ages, learned knowledge was almost lost. The Catholic church kept education alive. The senior clergy mentored and trained their replacements. Great debates ensued on God and life, of course, and someone had to painstakingly copy the few books that existed. By the Middle Ages, the clergy still had this role, truly the only educated. The knowledge and science may have been slightly askew, or outright wrong, but this wisdom was collectively greater than anything anyone else had at the time. That's the main goal of religion, to explain the unknown. Most everyone, but the clergy, had to live with ignorance and trust.

The lords employed churchmen as advisors. All was fine. These men shared a loyalty to the monarch with a love of Mother Church. The church was certainly not diabolical; she funded some great universities. Imagine a medieval world where every doctor and lawyer was also the village priest and monk. The only men trusted to manage the land and negotiate with other nations in a foreign language were predominately churchmen. The first son would inherit his father's responsibility as a warlord. The second and subsequent sons would become vicars and investors, later mayors. These men also exchanged legal and scientific knowledge. Sometimes the views were so radical they were only talked about in secret cabals.

Temples have a monopoly over education, even in fantasy. The dark secrets, the cosmic riddles, the techniques of craft, all enigmas are known to the gods and revealed slowly to mankind. Many characters in the game might start as young men in the clergy, or at least have teachers and role models to admire of the faith. Still, what the characters believe is changing. That creates conflicts, which the characters' actions will influence. Yet the Ref may leave dogma specifics out of any gameplay.

A Desired Tone

The many temples and faiths know of one another. Religion is not a monolith, not unified as one body, not of one attitude, not one guiding institution. Doctrines are debated, even as the Patriarch of the One True Faith begins to seize power and commands obedience. Religious theocracy, powerful cults of magic, threaten kings. Monarchies will adapt, adopt or be supplanted.

The campaign must never be a simulation of your beliefs. Role-play is a model of the characters' beliefs. Take no offense, or do, though none is intended. The player characters will start as larcenous believers in everything. They will convert, some or all, to larcenous believers in an adopted faith. The gods do not change. The way each is worshiped does. Yet, don't think much of play is kneeling at an altar and debating whose god is more powerful. The heavens may be singular for all anyone knows.

The medieval fantasy church serves primarily the function of providing counseling to both peasant and noble. The nobles are in a tug-o-war with the clergy over who has the devotion of the commoners. Who do the common

people trust? Whose interests are superior to the priests? Both sides will have loyalists. There will be player characters, as well, on both sides.

Most religions told people to stay content with the here and now, that being poor was a blessing or unalterable curse; nothing can be changed. Do the player characters like being poor? Sometime in the course of the campaign, those absolutes are challenged. Before we get too ironic and argumentative, I think most of you understand all this.

Hodge Podge of Questions without Answers

Every religion will have prophets and genius. These could be trying to discover which god is bigger and meaner and more powerful. The player characters of faith will be called to test. Each must prove his god is mighty. Draw swords and do so, just not at every bridge and crossroad.

People (NPCs) of other belief systems are encountered. Fight and burn these witches or mostly don't. Fanatics tend to be poor company. Some places will worship demons or monsters. Those will be defeated by the players and leave a vacuum. Now what do the locals pray to? The answer is often *the same*, just now it is less likely to answer those prayers (with punishment). Just because a god was defeated, doesn't mean a belief instantly dies. Most faiths need to be supplanted by something else.

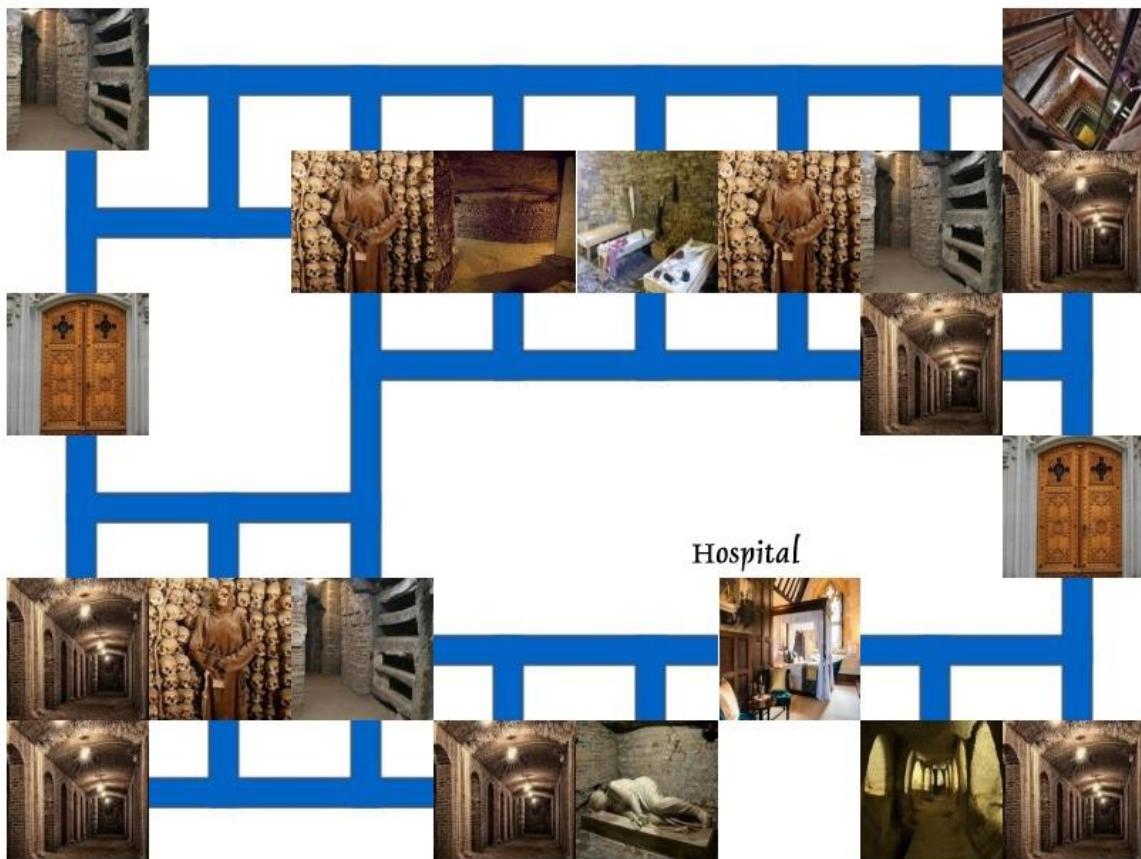
The very heavens might be amused by the party of players. They could watch them like a sport franchise. Intercession is possible. Intervention less so. The gods like to tease. The weather is always a good thing to change on a whim. The most frightening gods will be ones which thrust out of the ground: big hands, grasping for humans to squish.

All deities enjoy sacrifice. Burned herbs and animals will smell like a holiday meal. Human sacrifice may smell like pork BBQ. Most of these rituals are designed for augury. The future is foretold. Yet how is that supposed to work in a game with dice rolls. Use your best guess. Prophecy might be like Fortune Cookies, subject to any interpretation.

Is there a morality? Hard to say. The very nature of many fantasy games is slaughter and theft. Evil is what evil does. There will be people of the campaign that don't need much reason to attack. Their god might have decided as dogma to kill people for wearing green.

You might wish to have a plan. In Outlands there's always the need for another quick and dirty table. What happens when someone talks to an actual god? The Ref might freeze the party to deliver a message. The unfaithful might be struck deaf, dumb or blind (for short periods). However, too much turning people to pillars of salt, tends to suck the fun out of gaming.

Is anyone truly innocent? Many adventures start with the helpless speaking to the players. In truth, the helpless would prayer to the heavens, correct? Perhaps the answer of those prayers is the group. Would explain why so much faith is placed on the shoulders of our band of experience point seekers. Of course, the innocent may be the gods in disguise. Nothing said here should be a surprise to most fantasy gamers.



Let's not add to our role-play the profiteers and diddlers. There will be a complex stratum of priests. There will be temples just about everyplace you look. The pyramids and graveyards and tombs are often not defended, when in truth they should be. Rituals regarding the dead are the most prevalent in

every human faith. But in fantasy, those sites are just places to kill monsters and collect treasure, agreed?

Is there an afterlife and supreme being? Gaming is not here to answer that. Before I create another fifty pages of dogma, transformations, bureaucracy, economics—sorry, John, your essay may not make the final draft—that's too much to consider. You only need gods, monsters and the players. Gods offer servants to slay not themselves. Monsters are things to slay. Players use characters to simulate that slaying. Developing a complex set of mechanics to simulate religion is about as important to fun as changing the word slay to sleigh.

Are there economic concerns, a cost benefit analysis to maintaining order and stability? Will each religion have a court system and strange laws? I think we answered that as YES.

Are some faiths practiced in open air revivals? Have some faiths forgotten their origins? Have motives twisted in certain isolated religions where the very nature and aspect of a god is changed? Questions prompt twists and action, the stuff of exciting play.

Charity, education of young, pursuit of perfection, banking and granary, counseling, these enshrine each religion even more so than zealotry. Each religion has a laity, a body of followers. Those unnamed and unwashed mass of people will have every level of belief from absolute to atheist. The best and brightest may participate, not because of belief, but for community.

Does this pamphlet need a table on holy orders, warrior monks, soldiers of the faithful and tribunals of wizards? Sure, those exists. Get around someday to naming each and every one of them.

How is sin forgiven; is there a need for penance and faith quest? Does the church sell forgiveness, as indulgences? Are some faiths, right now in the campaign, suffering schism; is there a method to determine who wins the hearts and minds? Any system would be no more conclusive or accurate as the whim of the Ref. Ground yourself and your game play. Don't sweat the details.

If you are trying to role-play a vow of chastity or stoic philosophy, you're dangerously close to cosplay. Worse, dissociative behavior. Keep crazy away from my fun dice game.

How about medicine? Can we discuss the mix of chemistry and alchemy? Again, wiki that if you find it fascinating. There is some truth that what the Ref enjoys and gushes over will excite the players. Not always, some Ref are very geek. That word needs to go back to being a pejorative. Geek essentially is too much enthusiasm. Often geek is fatiguing, childish.

You're going to have some players who try to commune with the heavens. Some will insist on letting the gods fight their battles. Give it a rest. The heavens are more likely to respond with neutral demons, ones only the summoner sees. If any twit could call down the gods, there would be no campaign. Teens angst, all across the land, would end life as we know it.

The gods should be watchful, avenge great wrongs, deal in betrayal, respond to heresy with disease, blasphemy with a shrug. Every glorious dice mishap may be attributed to the unreal.

Is it too late to say the last few pages are just an essay on what-if? A good amount of gameplay can be generated by faith. Tests or worthiness, ending taboos, stopping a stoning, starting crusades, escorting pilgrims, calls to champion an ideal. The oppressed need protectors; cults must be crushed. Anything that doesn't directly generate a dice roll is probably an aspect of religion that can be skipped or glossed over. Leave much more unstated than defined.

Judgment Day

Most religions proclaim the end times. There is a fight between the gods, and man will be destroyed. Your fantasy campaign may add that fight or be in that fight. A set amount of time or adventures before all is gone? Sure, since most religions also speak of a loving aftermath, an age of mankind free of the gods. Mull the prospects and see if the death, one by one, of each divine force (the aspects and demigods) es macht es spass, het is leuk, es divertido...new gods will rise, as many gods as languages most likely.

Appendix Creating and Growing a Faith

This is a mechanical system, not a cookbook for blasphemy. Gaming terms and practical instructions are described, not any chicanery used by established historic-based religions. That said, much can happen with true magic and intrigue as a given within any fantasy faith. Every high priest seeks followers and acclaim for a specific god or pantheon; secretly the priest often hopes that elation switches to the worship of him.

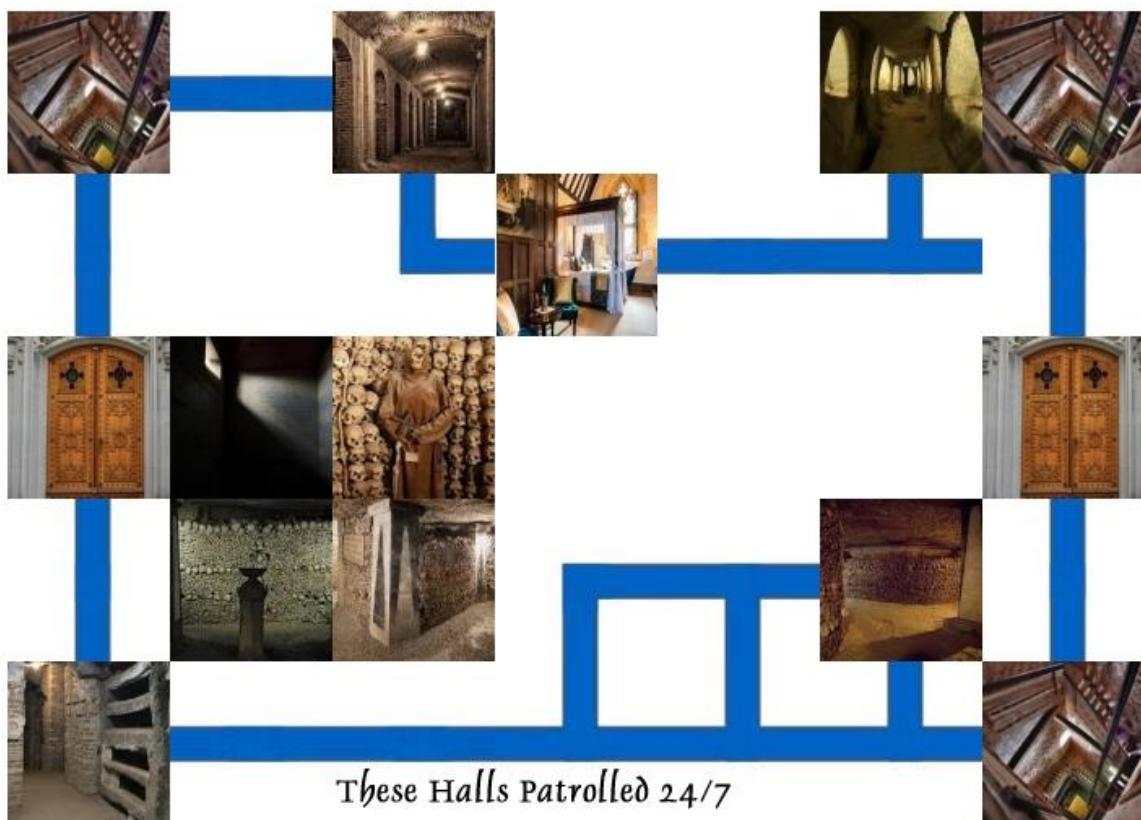
To *Start* select one of the three: (A), (B) or (C) which most closely matches the circumstances at the birth of this ambitious pursuit.

Flowchart of Faith



The arrows connect various events in stages necessary to turn your cult into a mainstream religion. Every budding faith is somewhere on the table. The events which eventually form a path for the player are the most instructional and significant. That is not to say that other lettered events are not occurring, because they are. Rather each event generated for the player, or the group as personal faith, is shared, while the temple expands, becomes paramount.

All faiths had apostates (Event I), but not in every religion will this be a defining moment for change. At each event the temple can flourish or perish. The followers may not immediately disband or join other congregations, but stagnation is death for belief.



With a henotheistic or monotheistic faith, the Global Acceptance will be slower as more rival religions and powerful factions must be defeated. People back winners; killing well is more proof that god loves and is real, than perhaps even the very appearance of a greater power in the flesh. There are too many charlatans who claim to be the spokesperson for an immortal;

when in truth, the cults they advocate have nothing heavenly above, inside or below the altars on which they burn sacrifices.

Guidance on Significant Events

All the events on the paths are character driven, and do not need to be all read beforehand. More fun for everyone when they are not known. As each happens, then the details can be investigated. At each location, as the players finish the obstacles, **the party headmaster often decides what comes next**. The Ref should tease each path. Do you want your next goal to be Franchise or Proselytize? The **Ref may even force the players in a direction** depending upon how they resolve the location on the chart. A Backlash, which in gameplay left several NPCs as enemies, may lead to Play Politics rather than allow the choice of Revolution. When in doubt, let the very gods decide, with a **random dice roll**.

Best two out of three?

The Ref might select his next desired path step for the group; the player headmaster selects the same in agreement, then proceed there. If there's disagreement, roll high die to see who wins the decision. Try to make this selection in a way that the player only know the general name not the exact details of the next events.

Start Great Idea (A)

This suggests that the player is inspired by some unworldly entity. He may have a humanistic epiphany, for instance to end slavery, but in the fantasy genre the wisdom must be coupled with a god. Good ideas are nice, kind actions are wonderful, but it helps to have a sponsor among the deities to ensure you wake the next morning. This event typically starts with a wrong in the campaign, an oppressed people. Even as the cruelty is opposed, a divine movement to make such actions a crime against the very gods is the Great Idea. A lesser godling may even speak to a player character and command him to force the societal change. e.g. Free my people.

The gods (and demons) do not like being ignored or rendered impudent by a lack of followers. Is that true, a forgotten god has little magical power? Could be, yet in terms of a fantasy game, there will be someone out there worshiping every great aspect and minor spirit within human imagination. They may not all have the same fiat of infinite power.

The initial spark of the faith is here rather weak in its own right.

Each other player should decide if his character supports the action as a follower, takes the mantel of high priest (even shared), remains neutral with his own beliefs, or outright rejects this new repackaged nonsense. This does not cause a fight, not yet. It simply aids the Ref in setting upcoming encounters. You can even pose the question as a declarative: I encourage this or not. If the party leans against the Start, then there is more tendency to end up at Retaliation (Event D) than recruiting Lieutenants (Event E).

The founding player should select a totem, animal representation or abstract symbol to personify his start. He does not need to list all the ideals, in fact he can't, because many of the tenets of the faith will evolve despite his best intentions and outside of his direct input. But, maybe a mission statement would be a good start. e.g. My god helps me kill with fire. Hard to beat the oldest beliefs. Yet is that novel enough to be a Great Idea (A). Maybe the player character will need to join a fire temple or woodcutter's cult instead of starting with Event (A).

Upon entering the table with Event (A), there will be many doubtful of the player. He might have a compelling origin story or even spoke to a god (or demon), yet the many *Doubting Thomas* will need proof in the form of success. Take a quest in the new god's name and fulfill a promise. Upon doing that, the player is ready to take the next step along the path as that adventure's aftermath. Saving a village from a flood, for instance, then thanking the new god is how to proceed. Fail to save the village, blame the new god's heavenly enemy, works too.

Start Rise Ranks (B)

The player may always attach his character to an established faith. The Ref should have a list for his campaign or now is a good time to make a one. Be curt, the **Eight Aspects** listed in this pamphlet are plenty. The player character then is going to cause a schism and try to break from his temple with some of the followers. He's stealing an assembly, his founding congregation.

Maybe start by listing a few things the player character believes to be true in his chosen faith. Then, contradict one or all in service of old corruption. There may be belief the god is wise or benevolent or rewards hard work and

forgives penitent followers. Yet none of that may be true. Then, the character finds like-minded folks in his faith and convinces them that god is being misrepresented or has another aspect which is underserved. e.g. Pray and see how quickly your hands fill with gold? Maybe there is a path to that end by changing one established religion.

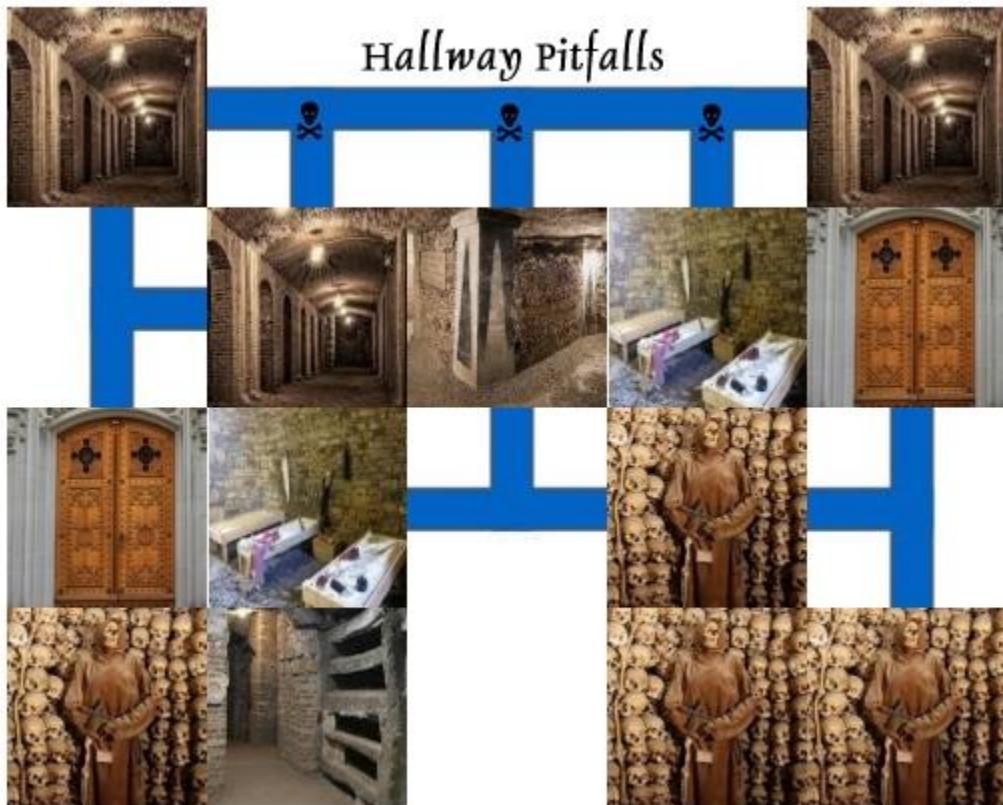
The temple will not like the character and his heresy. In spite of that, most of the long-surviving faiths have lost their direct connection to the heavens. There will be no immediate attack. The hard part is actually convincing enough mortals to change the system. Lots of skill based rolls will be needed to accomplish that in the game.

A trilogy of quests must follow. The first is questioning and gathering opinions of mid-level officials, parish priests and scholarly monks of the faith. The party will take a census by traveling to several outside locations. A poll consisting of *are you with me or against me* may need secrecy or may just thrive in bureaucratic remoteness. The further from the capital the more likely dissent exists. There should also be a worldly element related to *is the present body of clergy leaders responsive to your needs*. Once the players can number their support and opposition, then they move to the next stage of the process.

Part Two is finding and confirming your ideals. Sure, you have a bunch of grumblers that want change. However, maybe the god itself is happy. The party must quest to locate an actual god or his last beloved prophet; the search may take the group into the heavenly realms or the lands of the dead. Traversing underworlds are always a nice addition. Yes, something magical and heavenly is sought. Still, the god might not have human form. The motive that supports change might be an object or history that disproves part of the legacy of the religion. The players need proof, that should they break from the center and become a new fringe faith, that their prayers actually reach something. That something may even be demonic or demonstratively different from the idols of the present faith. That's the twist guys, be ready. Your god might have started as a spider cult!

The last stage is the true break. After discovering the face of the deity, some or all of the players may not want to proceed. In that case they are enforcers trying to end what they ignorantly began. But, often the initiating player will not be deterred. The image of god is not the faith. True enough.

The break need not involve murder. The break must inspire a migration, shall it be said, an exodus. Completing that third part of the trilogy and relocating your flock of followers to a new promised land is the goal. Here come the status quo jailers to bring you and your dissidents back. This *Start* of a religion, like an animus divorce, will always have enemies at large. If a religion can split, what's to stop it from doing so over and over as new troublemakers are spawned. Psst, it's more common than stated.



Start Subvert a Cult (C)

Here the player character, as a strong and dynamic leader, will lead a coup and take over command of a minor cult. The present headmaster need not be slain; he might just be magically crippled (at the start or later by player action). He might be bought-off or coerced to a secondary role. He may gladly share power, but that should raise a red flag. Why?

With the other two starts, there is a divine being, often one that converses with the party. Here that heavenly form may be too weak or nonexistent. Only by growing the cult will the primitive idol attract a patron, not vice

versa. Cults tend to start with demigods as the focus or divine patron. This is not permanent, yet it is important to progress from Event (C) to elsewhere.

The gaming requires two stages. First locate a cult. There should be many, and the hunt becomes more of finding something that seems palpable and enterprising. Like buying property, choose wisely or the whole will prove uninhabitable. The second stage is the actual hostile takeover. Subvert the leadership, recruit the underlings, lead them to some minor victory. That victory typically ends with the old master's death or exile. But, not always, the fight could be against a larger faith of persecution.

Subverting a Cult is the most direct and tangible of actions to *Start* a faith. It will be the easiest for most players to understand. There's a ball club; become the owner. There's a failing business; turn it around. There's a group of people hungry for human blood rites; give them some. How much stomach your group has for primal religion will determine how vile the cult's initial practices. Those will temper as it grows, of course.

Supernatural Retaliation (D)

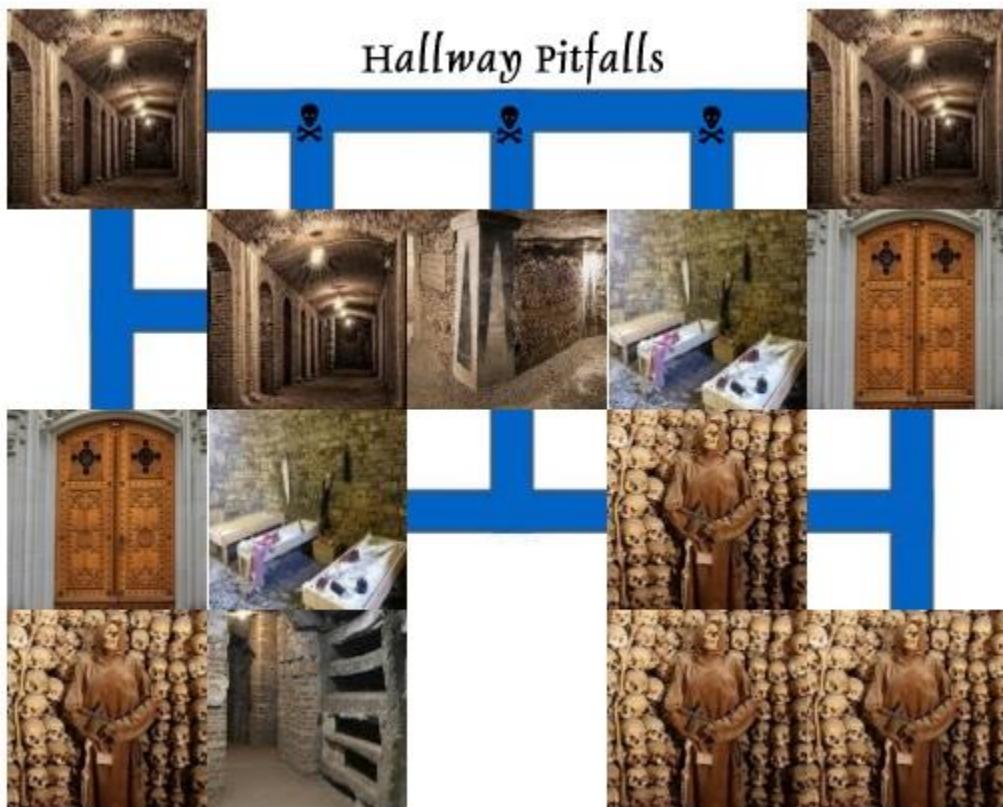
This early in a faith, to have demons and monsters come to murder anyone who has said a prayer to the new god, frankly, it's quite significant. Good for you, nevertheless, survive that battle. Fighting once may not be enough. The players must find out who is behind the conjured threat. The entire party is guilty by association. Innocent people will die mysteriously, but the players will know why (eventually).

The Ref must decide which religion has taken offense. Select from campaign enemies of the players and the campaign itself. If the aggrieved is a mainstream faith, the forces deployed to kill the party will be Heinous if not Great. There will also be more than one attack. The enemy faith will also disrupt the party's secular goals, opposing Missions, aiding Rivals and becoming Twist oppositions.

The player sponsored new party religion may die outright here. That's expected by the enemy but will not placate anyone. It is not enough for the group to just throw up their hands and cry, "We surrender." They will be forced to join as lieutenants (E) some other faith, almost always radically different. One or more characters might need to be sacrificed by the remaining party members to prove sincerity. You could start out with the

Great Idea for a *God that Frees Slaves*. You could wind-up being sworn to the polar opposite. Gods are absorbed, subjugated, by stronger faiths with more followers. The heavens dramatically change as well.

Keep that from happening by solving the mystery and fighting back. You may not destroy fully your persecutor, but he may decide it's not worth the effort and expense to swat at a bug (religion). The attacks on both sides could escalate or truly what the religion needs is a warrior element, prompting (Event H).



Lieutenants (E)

The world is run through a chain of command. The temple needs capable underlings. These are best acquired from other temples. It takes one to know one; experience counts in growing a flock of followers. Luckily, many mid-level leaders of faith are fluid in their beliefs. Pagan practices make that especially so. Cold Odin today and Hot Thor Tamale.

The group will have their own pecking order based on character level and skillset. Supplement that with two D8 other NPCs. Why so many? The more

the merrier and the more conflict. Liberally sprinkle Retainer Provocations (earlier table) into the mix, as these recruits come with prejudices, political ties left undivulged and basic human foibles, like disease carrier or vampiric curse. There need not be a single mission attached to each recruit, gather one or many up as you go out to adventure on unrelated goals. Use the baronial castles booklet and the method of temple generation described in this booklet to salt your campaign with worthy applicants.

The personal baggage that comes with most of the retainers will create conflicts that manifest before, during and after any adventure. Looking what comes next in events along the path, at least one of the recruits is ambitious. Is he a talker or a fighter?

Standardize Rites (F)

The religion probably numbers fifty to a hundred members. Only a few will be zealots; the larger percentage may not even fully understand what they worship. Most enjoy the feast days and spectacles. All seemed loyal and bonded to specific NPCs as spiritual guides. The religion is stable but losing the connection it had, or may have never had, to the divine. It's more of a fanclub.

This is a time to rid the faith of destructive practices or worn out ideas. Even if a cult was usurped, the current religion represents a splinter from a more established faith. The player as head priest must clearly have a core value and truly petition the gods with focused prayer and sacrifice. The goal is to be uniform and independent, while ensuring something heavenly is taking notice.

Sacrifice is a strange word; are we being literal or figurative? The rites of the temple need to temper ever so slightly or in contrast change radically. The Ref should list eight problem practices or *laissez-faire* attitudes.

Suggestions: nudity, defecation, marriage boundary, work ethic, theft, murder, conjuration, burial rites, exotic diet, etc.

Leave the whole vague or describe specifics considering the maturity of your group. In other words, is sanitation a problem? More specifically, does the high priest bless by farting (for a high school crowd) versus the high priest's

excrement is painted on the entrances to the homes of the faithful (gross and a potential health risk).

The player should correct each of the odd-ball sacraments by supplanting the ritual with a user friendly, sanitized alternative. e.g. Everyone must use the temple's public latrine. Holy water from a spring will be used for blessing. Else, the headmaster needs to add more wow and pizazz. e.g. All salt of the earth shall be burned first with wizardry pyrotechnics in front of the altar. As a know-it-all, let me say that *salt of the earth* is required by nearly every home to turn animal dung into cooking charcoal. A monopoly there would be profitable. (Digress not again from the holy descriptions for gamers.)

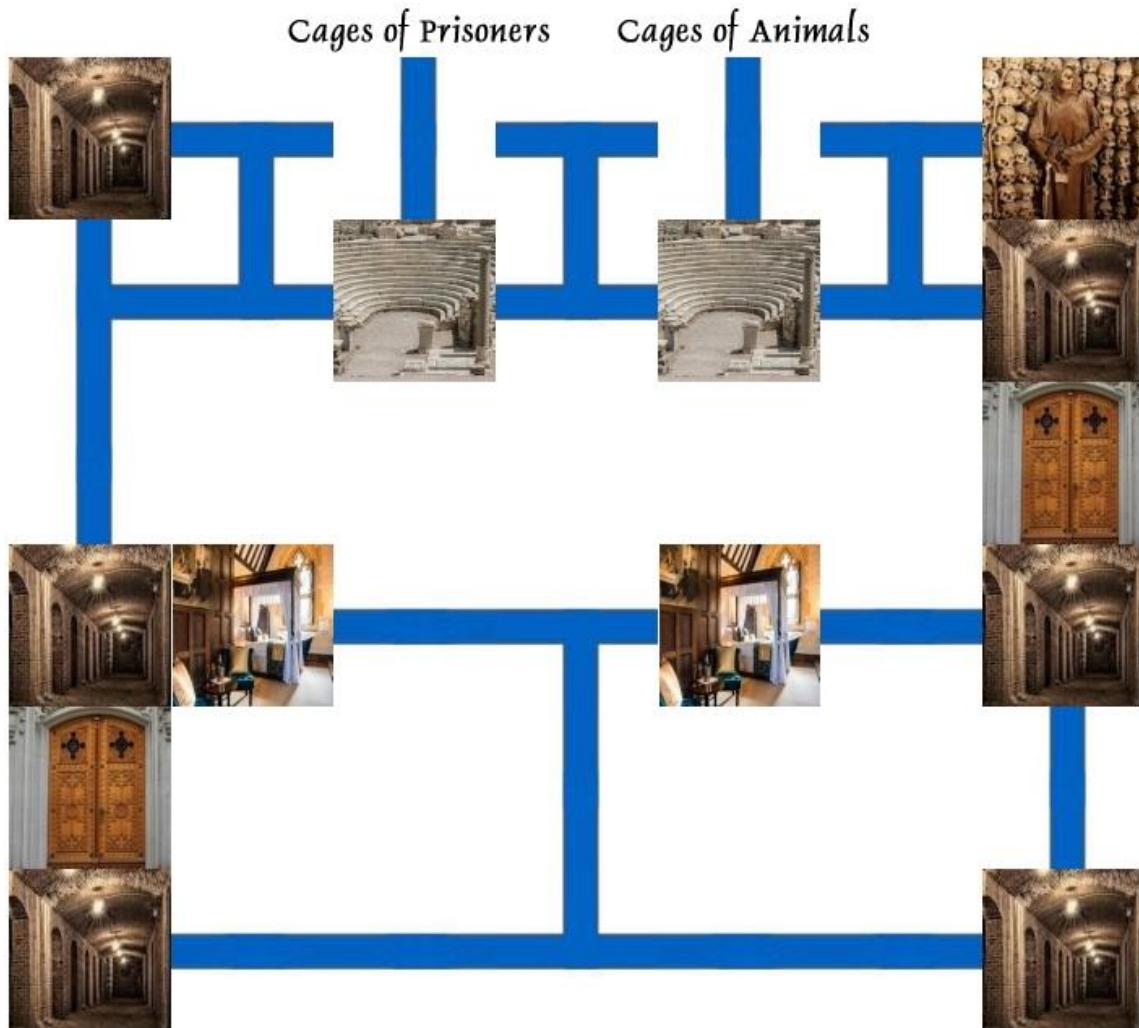
These esthetic changes are secondary to the power struggle created by several inflexible people. Ancient rituals retain strong advocates. Tithes are necessary but controversial. Want to end a practice or create a new doctrine, not so easy changing tradition.

The player headmaster must *fire* the legacy rite's highest ranking and most vocal advocate. Fire? Could mean simply oust; could mean publicly burn alive. When any priest is punished for blasphemy, twelve of the congregation leave. The group will lose the corresponding *I was only here for the virgin violation* crowd. If any of the newly labeled heretics are allowed to depart without injury, each instead takes 2D8 followers. Should the religion lose all members, it fails. Start from scratch at (A), (B) or (C). The math-minded know some of the old guard often must be allowed to walk away; roll low. Maybe let all do so, unless that dozen drop becomes a sure-thing.

Even if the faithful only number one (to begin a family), the temple can grow. However, any survivors of the eight priests with problem practices do not vanish quietly. Each outcast should be given a name; they each should have an intensity based on their 2D8 roll. Percental dice, each adventure to follow, decides whether any returns as an angry Twist to interfere; roll separately for each. Each of the ousted eight will only stop being a pest, upon death. Old age?

Kill them now, if you can. Kill them later if you must. Reconciliation is up to the Ref, as well as, there's a small chance that the religion is in good practices; less than eight initial corrections must be made. The Referee also must decide whether fifty, sixty or the full hundred followers are there to

potentially offend and lose. Perhaps each time any player reaches this point—as he recycles upon each failed religious attempt, usually with his character’s death on unrelated goals—he has ten more, until that number begins here as one-hundred. Growing a religion is not supposed to be stress-free.



Martyrs (G)

The temple and those who serve the god are in mourning. Someone has died violently. Many may follow. The faithful are being murdered. Another faith has attacked an entire family (farmstead). The head of that household might be burned or hanged like a criminal. The women and children may have been sold as slaves. Else, the brutality knew no limit, and vigilantes killed them all. Bodies were flayed.

The act was sanctioned by another cult or established religion. No one takes credit; that would be too easy (in game terms). The culprits are shielded from magical augury. That's seems suspicious. This crime will take some sleuthing. The Referee can scatter some clues and add some suspects (if he has time and inclination to construct that scenario). Else, the players will cast aspersions and have an ever growing chance of accusing the right people.

Often the players only need to wait, a reckoning is coming. After a few more families are slaughtered, the main attack will occur. If the players are able to draw their whole congregation into the temple for protection, then this could be a siege. Otherwise, the players must skirmish and defeat the larger force sent to destroy the faithful, sent to burn the temple, sent to carry off the religious iconography and magic items. Oh, and kill all the player characters as well.

This event is a distraction. The players may need to leave their current mission or continue with alternate characters in supporting roles. The main (higher level) guys are busy defending the flock. The Ref may alternate actions during the regular (flip card in the case of Outlands) adventure with the inquiry in and around the temple. The present mission and adventure may relate to both; the Rival may have decided the best way to stop the players are to attack their kinsmen, their followers, the faithful. Ref decides, and don't make this battle too easy.

Warrior Elite (H)

External threats have prompted the religion to acquire military overtones. The religion now has a soldiering element sworn to defend the faithful. The expenses of the temple will increase. Either acquire more money, raise the tithe or allow mercenary desires to infiltrate your dogma. Troops absolved of the crime of pillaging expect less pay. Perhaps several money making and cost saving actions must be completed.

Though it may seem grand to have a Knights Templar, a Holy Order in your temple, the problem is that you've created a cult within your cult. There is a greater chance the whole will splinter. The garrison leader of these fighters will grow in popularity. He could be a different player character than the high priest of the temple. Jealous? The group might also be destroyed in failed engagements, exhausted by desertion. With that loss is the loss of

many full families related to the soldiers. The congregants are now the soldiers and plenty of camp followers for sure.

The religion has deviated from the norm of separation of Church and State. That term is used loosely and may not really apply. That is to say, the feudal lords are supposed to be the protectors, sword wielders. They will not enjoy this self determination. A few player characters carrying swords is easy to ignore. Be hard to stop them too. Having a company of soldiers, not part of the emperor's legions, not sworn in fealty to an Earl, is a dangerous precedent to allow. Soon everyone might ask for the charter to carry arms.

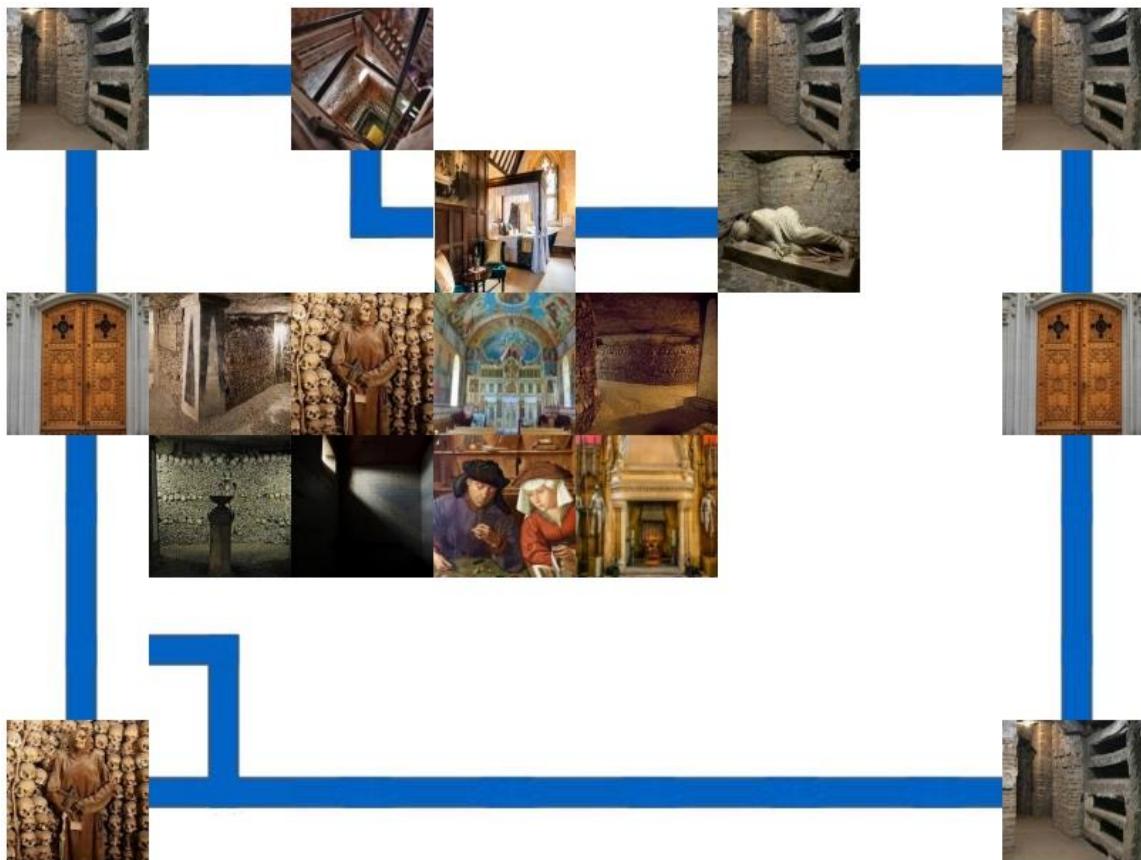
There could be a political solution, but the temple is too newly formed. Not enough time has passed to build the proper emissaries and agents to negotiate. Bribe who you can, speak in soft tones, but the only way to truly get this to function is to lead the Warriors out on a campaign in the service of the closest city-state. Prove you can serve both god and his anointed on earth.

The recruits will be mere militia at first. With each battle they could improve. Yet the players are taking cannon-fodder (magic-missile fodder) out to die. Use metal figures or the Q&D tables of Outlands to fight an extended set of clashes. The enemy should have a Defensive Modifier, superior numbers work when using miniatures to resolve. The action might start at Rally (morale test) as the militia are charged. If the players can hold the field this first action, the next will be slightly easier and yet again and again.

The Ref should decide whether the local nobility accepts the Warrior Elite of the Temple after a half D8 battles in series or a full D8 in an extended campaign that includes a forced march in the weathering season. Winter is coming, someone has said. The half D8 signifies the warriors are not finished. They could be recruited, called to serve in subsequent campaign seasons to follow, take the rest of the year off. The players might wish to face that full D8 now and see if they and this company live to create a legacy. May be time to call divine intervention, if the heavens owe the group any favors.

In the aftermath, an important change occurs. There is a single player who is the headmaster, leader of the faith. This person can be found by high die roll or group acclamation. Often, the leader is the same leader who distinguished

himself on the field of battle. A warrior Cult sort of demands a warrior headmaster. The Ref should resolve this as he can with as little bruised egos as possible. This may be PvP. In outlands swagger vs swagger might be used among those vying for command. To be headmaster is an impressive title, but as will be seen, a dangerous one too.



Debate Apostate (I)

Someone has called into question the rituals. He may be advocating for the temple to join another established chain of temples. He may be just an upstart who wants more or total authority. He will have agents, open and secret, to support him. He may be an outsider, something supernatural or just a homegrown know-it-all. Did you know *salt of the earth* is actually used to desiccate the water...everyone hates those guys.

He will know the rumors and secrets of the religion. If the players have acted against the faith, or constantly are changing the rules of fealty, the Apostate could be proclaimed by acclamation as the replacement of the player headmaster. The players would serve in a secondary role awaiting their own

one by one ouster or the Apostate's eventual stumble. They, the players, eventually become the apostates themselves. Then the event would advance.

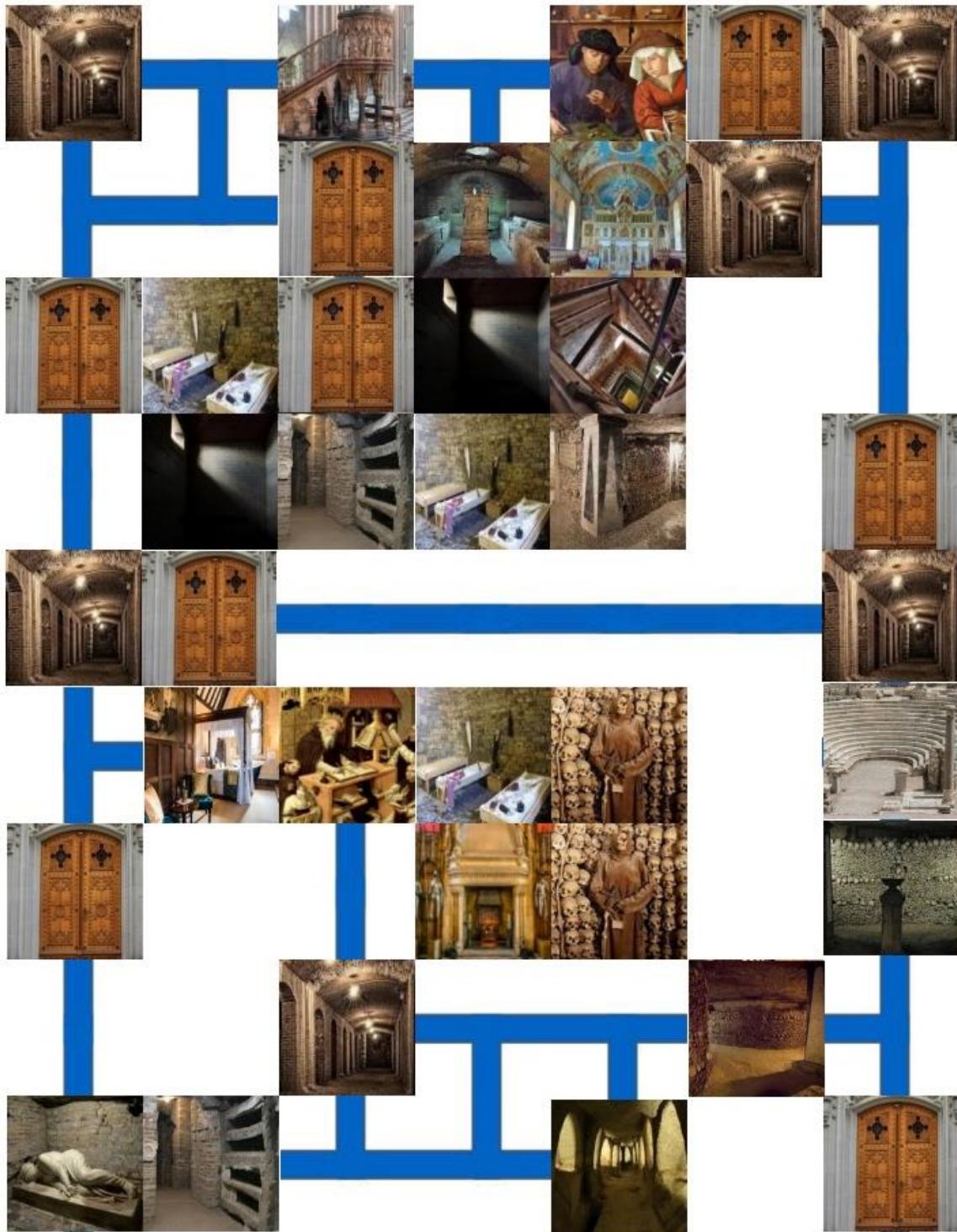
So, kill him, right? If only that was always the right answer. Role-play the debate? Please, like that would prove anything. How many angels dance on the head of a pin? Go back to kill him. The solution lies in the two events to follow. The player wanting his role of headmaster (again) has the goal of creating a Warrior Elite (H), which will be loyal to him. Else, he needs to push for expansion and volunteer to lead the first Franchise (L). Staying here is just a frustrating nightmare, where any of the party could be the victim of that Uncontested Dagger Thrust.

So, don't end the temple just yet. But the Apostate needs a name and the Ref must devise small annoying tasks this new headmaster will propose for the player characters to complete. Add extra Twist in each adventure to represent the minor and major actions and enemies the Apostate headmaster spawns.

Eventually, the Apostate must fall. The players may be working toward that Warrior Elite or Franchise, but don't move to those events just yet. They have their own problems. Use a set of ability rolls, Task Resolution in Outlands. Seems like the players may be squandering some make-rolls here. Start at Nearly Impossible, then Tasking, Difficult and Ordinary. If after a minimum of four missions, all these rolls are made successfully, the Apostate meets his final demise. Julian of Rome died in horrible pain from divine punishment (so claimed). If any roll at the start of an adventure is missed, the player will stay at the same attempt Degree level the next, until he succeeds.

Do all players need to succeed? Yes, if they wish to stay vital to the temple. If the other players don't care, they can be friends of the high priest with no say in how the temple operates and no say in the events of **Establishing the Religion** to follow. Otherwise, each must make that four tier series of rolls over a minimum four adventures to collectively retake control from the Apostate.

So, kill him, right? Ref decides what warped outcome that creates. Let the role-play ensue. Squire, bring me my funny hat to doth, and shall it be that no one use deodorant as we game to simulate the campaign stinketh of horse droppings. Cosplay sux.



Proselytize (J)

A fancy word that obfuscates any meaning. The group needs followers. Don't expect just anyone to break into song at the good word and works of your wolf-headed beast god. The locals already had a lion-headed beast god

or were sold a bill of gods by the priests of the polar bear-headed god. Chimera godlings are so prevalent in the fantasy campaign. Yet more palpable then the reverse, a human head stuck on the body of a bear. That's Sphinx crazy!

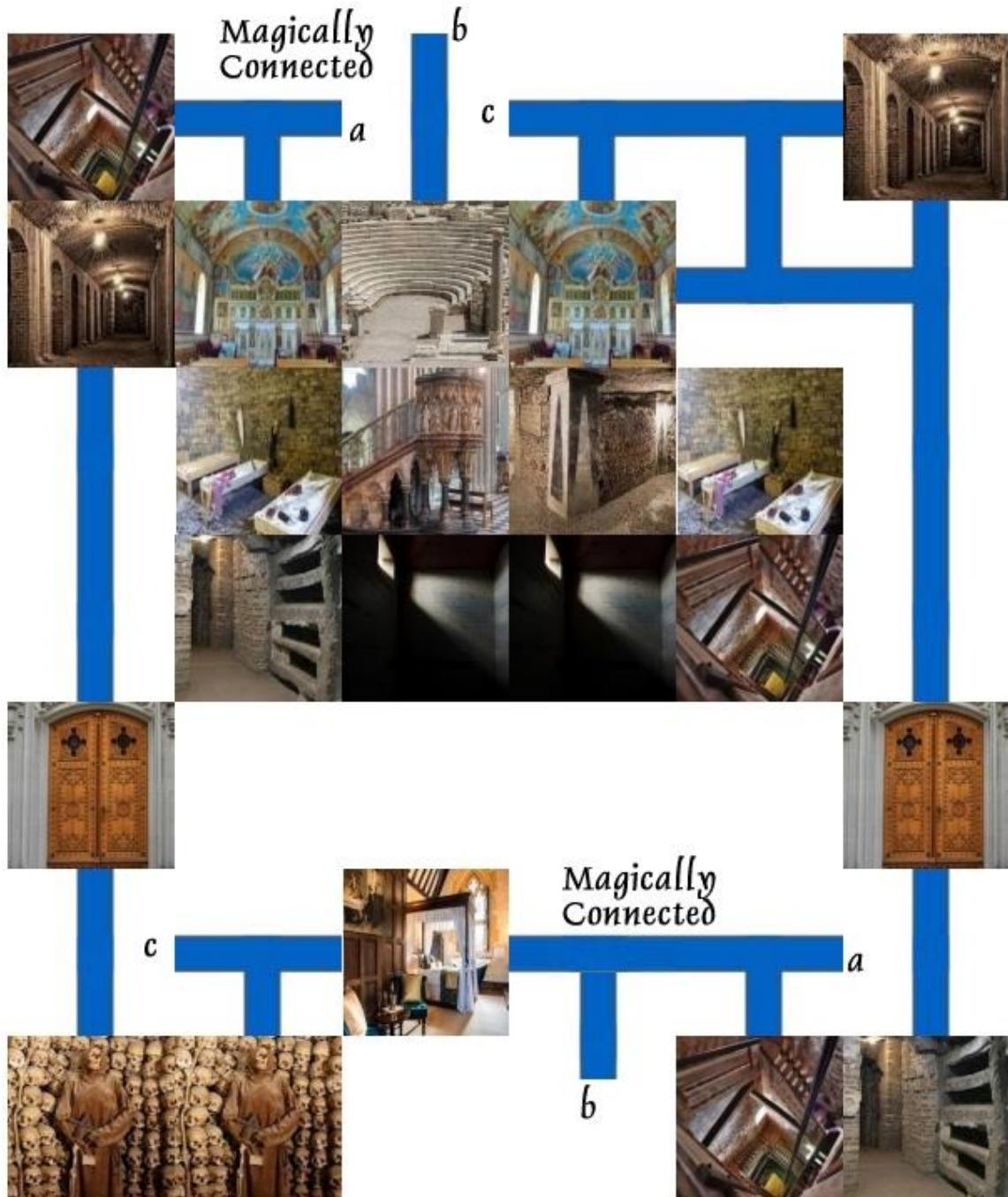
You want admiration, bring the bling. Buy your allies with hot food, warm blankets, something special from across the globe, like coffee. That too only goes so far. Maybe some razzle-dazzle magic, heal the sick, raise the dead, cure the illness, threaten to cause blights (tone change in there). This too is often trite. Worse, there are other religions pledged to help the poor; most likely *you ain't dat*. Be nice if the flock was industrious and useful for your game play. You want true believers, not cowered slaves. Slaves are easy to acquire but aren't disciples. Create a god of solely blessed poverty; that was a major-major feat.

The Ref should number the present size of the faithful, perhaps a grand-grand. Most of the flock (here) will be in one place, around the player character estates perhaps. The players need to double that number incrementally. A D8 at a time would take forever. Cast a fertility spell?

Instead each city-state of the campaign should have some a minority group of a few hundred. The belief message should be taken to that shunned group. Then comes the hard part. The party may not be able to eliminate prejudice. But, they might be able to convince the local mayor or governor to publicly decry persecution. That would be a miracle to the locals, and voilà, tally half those unfortunates among the converted. Some will migrate to the main congregation. Most now seed the belief system in each city-state were religious tolerance is embraced (at least for your guys).

Getting the lord to make a speech requires helping him reveal a traitor IHS (in his service), end a city bane, perform a task, etc. Each city in Outlands has an array of problems; correcting these also helps the group's longboat swaggering. Everyone should be up for the tasks.

The more potential converts, the greater chance the effort will be its own complete mission. Most of the time these small additions from good deeds for nobles will occur along the route of the greater adventure. The player headmaster should be his best advocate. ABC – Always be converting, IHS (in hoc signo vinces).



Assassins & Curses (K)

The opposition to the rising faith has stopped just tossing monsters into the players' path. Though that may seem more effective, it also has such a supernatural element that each of these previous threats was helping to send the meek to seek the temple's protection. Monsters and demons are counterproductive, besides monsters inflict collateral damage, disrupt trade for the guilds, make lords livid.

The enemy now will employ targeted attacks or subtle persuasions to make your followers abandon all hope. He uses agents. He sends his best killers. He uses temple rites of his own, goes back to the musty tomes and looks for hexes. He wants to start fires and pox preachers' faces. He wants people to start blaming their god for misfortune. Then the enemy's alternative presents itself.

Separating intrigue from the everyday natural mishap is tough. Was it an accident or deliberate act? Like Retaliation (D), knowing your enemy is important. There may be more than one. Though seldom will this be actions against the party, the NPCs holding secondary roles in the new church may be in danger. Scandals too will be revealed. The public relations could be a nightmare. Skeletons come out of the closet, perhaps literally in the fantasy campaign.

This threat cannot be dissuaded by personal combat. The opposing agents must be recalled. That takes an even higher authority intervening. Does anyone have a favor owed by a Zaire? The events to follow are political or deal with reforms. The enemy may only want a specific aspect of the new religion to end. Surprising how many wars started over urination upstream. Yet that too lacks substance for gaming. Talk is cheap.

What's needed is for the Ref to select half a D8 powerful NPC in the campaign. The religion's nemeses may already be clearly known, but these power brokers are not your opponents. These should be heads of city-states, heads of other temples, legion commanders, land holding nobles, political factions like the list in the Outlands Quest booklet. (Always a market plug buried in these pages.) The heads of these factions or places are not the cause; it's beneath them. They are the ones who can stop the intrigue. They may have sanctioned the assassins, but that was all proforma. Some underling made a mistake; it happens, and people die.

Once the players meet and reach some détente with the right people, the threat ends. The powerful like groveling. As much as possible, the players must refrain from making new enemies. They need to collect gifts during adventures. These tributes, particularly magic items that normally get stuffed in the belt for ready use, now have to be encased in velvet and presented as gifts. Schmooze.

Heroes don't schmooze. I don't play politics. Okay, can we talk to the adult in the group. Half a D8 gifts to the accompaniment of kind words is a small price to pay for stability. If the wrong host is ingratiated, there will be a chance based on ability and skill rolls that the momentarily friendly head of state will point the player to the next right guy. *"I can't help you, but I know who could."*

When the world power brokers call off the dogs (at least taking a half D8 respectable donations, mind you), then the party complexions will clear. Look at the path routes. Your troubles may not be gone, but you no longer appear on the chess board as a pawn. Well, unless you later prove to be a self-absorbed madman (Event U).

Franchise (L)

Megachurches are fine, raising a cathedral is great for offerings, founding a college helps recruit more educated underlings, all well and good. But to truly obtain some status, you need to let others carry the banner and proclaim your good works. That takes empowering the ingenuity of strangers. Maybe try a magic projection in front of a guy headed to Damascus. (Blaspheme, not me!)

In time, a total of 4D8 NPCs will approach the group. Outlands can use the face cards of the encounter deck exclusively for these propositions. Each one has a chance of spreading the faith to a territory or city-state where it has yet to exist. Some of these adherents will create great works, but that's for campaign events in continued play to describe. That first college, hospital or cathedral may happen far away from the founder's temple.

If the ambitious aspirant fails, he's probably dead. If he succeeds, you should have already named the *cool cat*. He's loyal for now, but he might be a stalwart *true believer*. If he fails and lives, he may have swindled you. Swindled? Even if the players do not provide seed money (they should), the good name of the faith was used as collateral. Sometimes that was without permission.

There are lots of people that want to help at this point. You may even know some of them. As Ref, dredge-up those old buddies or neutral parties, even an enemy of two, from the grab-bag of campaign NPCs. Here's a guy; he seems sincere. Here's a guy; he seems capable. Here's a guy, a total criminal

agent, but we need a few of those as well. The potential number will seem huge, but it dwindle fast. Lots of seeds must be planted for the faith to grow. There's a parable in there I think.

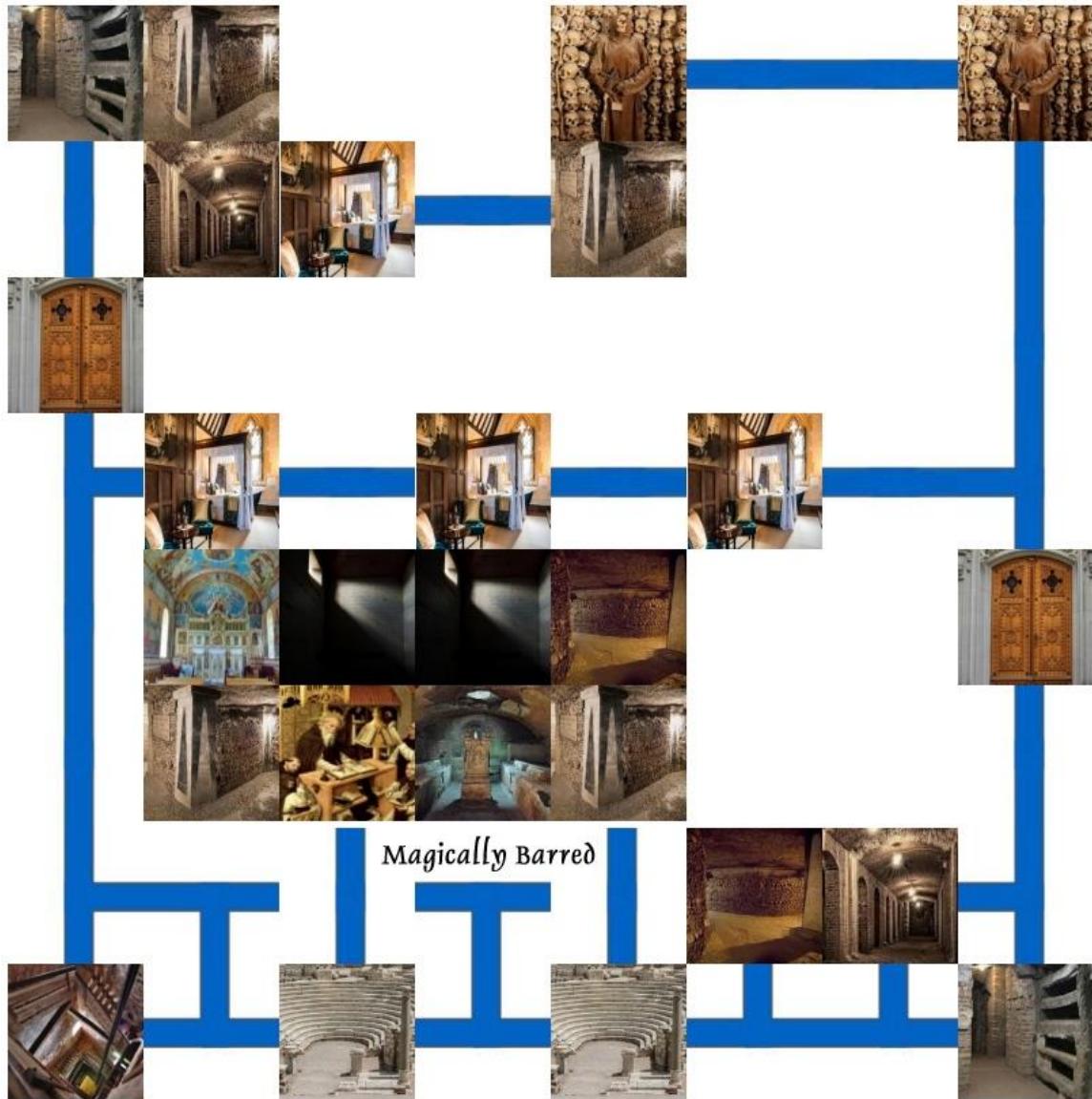
Chance of Success to Expand			
Distance from the Center (first Temple) *			
Total Attempts so Far	1 or 2	3 to 5	6 or more
5 or less	Ordinary	Difficult	Tasking
6 to 9	Difficult	Tasking	Tasking
10 to 18	Tasking	Tasking	Nearly Impossible
19 and up	Tasking	Nearly Impossible	Nearly Impossible

Note: * -- In terms of city-states or regions removed (fifty leagues)

The Ref may increase the Degree of Difficulty for places where the religion is anathema. Anyplace the player characters are persona non gratis will become Nearly Impossible. On the upside, the players may invest (spend Abundant Stores or Treasure Laden off their longboat) to lower the Difficulty or shift the Distance qualifier. Doing both could mean your twentieth recruit heading to the north pole might only struggle. With luck (or make-rolls) the religion may gain a presence throughout the campaign. More enemies, more followers, more clout. Enjoy the high times (or is that high crimes).

But wait, there's more...each failed roll creates a problem. Keep track of the city-states where missionaries went and never returned. Problems might be simmering even in places that subsequently are profit-wise (beneficially) converted. Some of the missing suffered greatly at the hands of rival faiths. Some settled and established their own Great Ideas; else others after rising in the ranks of your faith, shifted and started their own similar competing temple. The rest gave-up, but their ambition never really dies. The last group seldom change professions. Instead, they get recruited by other temples and anonymously slip into the hierarchy of established religions.

What are the players to make of all that failure? How is the Referee to sort out which is which as end result? Leave each an enigma, unresolved, but record those failures and the places they failed. Should the group pass through, one or more puzzling questions may be answered. The group should be ready for the disturbing as well as the opportune.



Challenged & Triumph (M)

First the challenge and then hopefully the triumph? Actually, these can be either personal duels or skip forward to the presumed victories. The aftermath is more important. Could be just a mere enemy created (avenging sibling), but more often the result is a barrage of problems. You won't gain followers (yet) by stifling dissent, even as you woefully try.

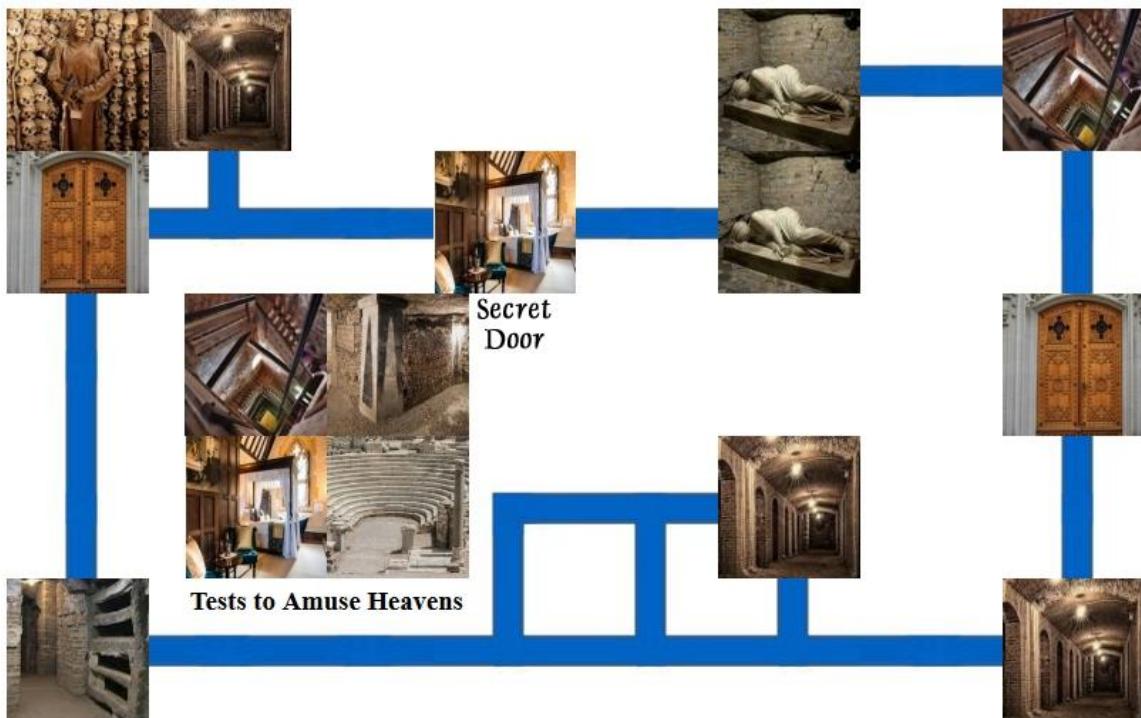
Here's an incomplete list: faithful decline in number, sabotage, exposure of secrets, false accusations, wrong attention of nobles or towns, regulations and edits issued restricting the practice of the rites, thefts, schism with an alternative altar constructed nearby, effigy and protest for return to values,

call for change in leadership, work stoppage, demand for more charity from temple, omens, monster sightings, lightning strikes, sinful conjuration, death of children, vendetta, vigilante, sacrifices to false gods, outside usurper sees opportunity, your very god weakens, etc.

The headmaster must resolve a series of strife as baneful events, many of which deplete the coffers of the temple. Would a D8 task resolution based on ability be too few? Maybe add the penalty that any attempt at skill which fails, results in the temporary or permanent loss of the ability. e.g. Rabblerouse during a sermon, roll Difficult. Fail and lose skill Rabblerouser.

Swaggering in Outlands works nicely for this, because the techniques are meant to come and go. Magic solves most problems, and magic too is something that might come and go in many game systems. e.g. Before today the player character might have a mighty fine Stone Wall spell. After, he may never properly use it again (when his construction action kills a child accidentally – he's distracted and off his game).

To be free of this location on the chart, the Ref may decide that each party member has a conflict sequence to resolve. Of course, each party member can abstain and let the headmaster take his place in the resolution.



Purge Heresy (N)

The religion has over a thousand members. Not all truly understand the prayers being recited. Not every member is well known. Not all the priests are crucial and earnest. The temple laity forms a committee and recommends a name (NPC) as Auctoritas. Ancient law, Roman precedence, is cited. Adapt concept for your campaign. This special prosecutor is empowered to root out the profane and the unorthodox. He will never accuse the headmaster, so at least one of the party members is safe.

The nominated NPC is a member of the faithful, not always an ordained priest, but always wielding gravitas and having connections to secular authorities, the nobles, legions, guilds, public institutions of the campaign. Auctoritas are permitted to arouse spiritual or religious emotion, while charging others with mysterious compacts or evoking the awe-inspiring for intrigue. e.g. Using witchcraft or abusing the powers of the supernatural.

The Auctoritas is virtually an outsider, his name probably is not familiar to any of the player group. He'd make a good friend for anyone who survives without blame. Sure, many can be bribed. That's not good for the player characters, since it means a number of guilty underlings are calling in favors. The shake-up of subordinate roles has begun with a figurative huge roadblock.

All was fine, until the player headmaster accused the wrong person. That suspect may be guilty of heresy, spellcraft, alchemy and corruption. The accused was an NPC and connected man, so to speak. He may be just morally bankrupt, and his purge would help the faith. Unfortunately, the matter became public to the congregation. A formidable criminal actor who should have been quietly silenced is now pleading for mercy to the Auctoritas or counter accuses members of the headmaster's inner circle.

Too many drinking buddies and relatives were placed on the payroll. A few outside agents may even have infiltrated the group just to cause chaos in the ranks. The prosecutor is not convinced one man's exile or ruin is enough; a scapegoat won't suffice.

The player headmaster must select one or more of his fellow gamers to stand trial. The more PCs selected, the more likely each will be able to point the finger and escape blame, up to a point. The player of a low level character

may decide to take one for the team, allow his character to be magically stripped of his soul. Could be enough to end this event.

Each could be culpable and confess to small misdeeds. That would taint their name among the flock. Player characters typically outlive the nameless of the campaign. Some of the named might refuse to submit, ask for ancient rite of trial by fire or trial by combat. Getting pretty heated, also request denied.

Chance of Acquittal			
Plea before Auctoritas			
Number Accused	Silence	Mercy with Tears *	Adamant Denial
only one	Tasking	Difficult	Nearly Impossible
2 or 3	Nearly Impossible	Ordinary	Difficult
4 or 5	Difficult	Ordinary	Tasking
6 or more	Ordinary	Nearly Impossible	Difficult

Note: * -- A suitable fine and task of penance applies regardless.

Penalty upon Failure to Acquit			
Number Found Guilty (Failed Rolls of Acquittal)			
Punishment	Only One	2 or 3	4 or more
Humiliated	4 or less	2 or less	3 or less
Beaten		3	4
Exiled		4	5 to 7
Hobbled	5	5	
Hanging	6	6	
Burning	7	7	
Wild Card (very bad)	8	8	8

Note: * -- Each of the convicted roll D8; confessing for mercy subtract one from roll.

Humiliated is just the loss of one's pride. This could cause the loss of certain swaggering related to confidence, e.g. Battle Cry (A) and Charismatic Style (C), among many. Ref must decide based on character's fidelity to date.

Beaten means the character starts the next adventure wounded. In the case of Outlands, the Rugged Trait is still valid for a fresh wound, but the character is played on the journey with a starting vicious wound (half hps).

Exiled has two consequences. The character loses any ties to the temple and faith. Unfortunately, he still may suffer some negative consequences of the temple progression, even in self exile. Ref decides. But more importantly, if the headmaster is implicated (seen) associating with the exiled and excommunicated, he will lose followers or be blackmailed or could be ousted. The Referee and travel encounter events to follow reveal when any of those bad events occur.

Hobbled means the character is maimed; lose an ear, eye, foot, hand, genitals. The assessed damage varies. Some games have rules for loss of limb. Outlands would take away some skills and swagger, but there truly is no hard and fast list of loss. Treat the result as character building, perhaps. The punishment inflicted, the injured remains in good standing with the temple, an example of humility for all. Plot your revenge, I guess. Magical restitution of the injury will take more than one make-roll, if even possible; the execution of sentence happens with magical undertones of course.

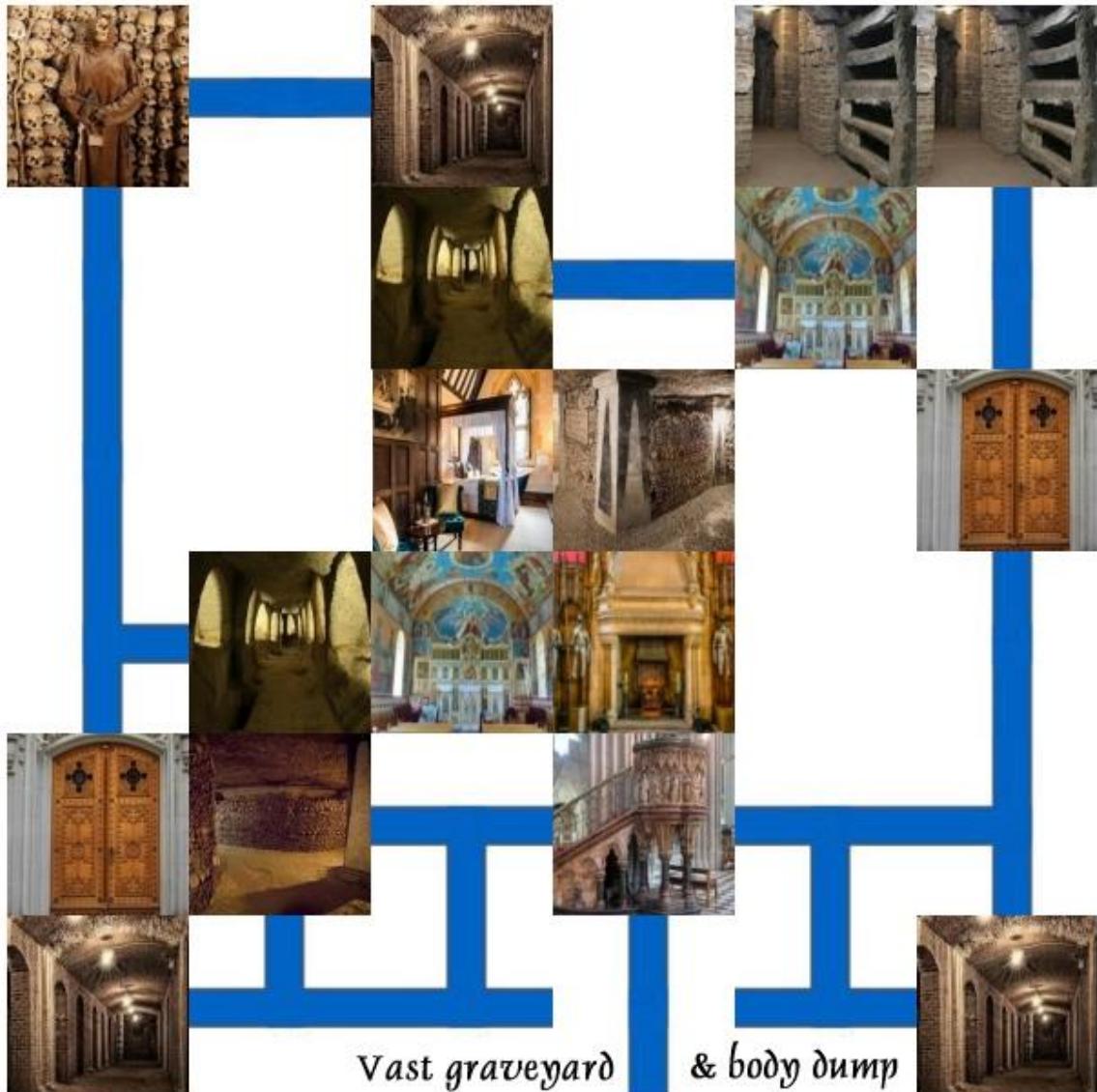
Hanging is a death sentence. The character may escape with the help of allies (perhaps his friends in the player party). He is treated as exiled and a fugitive. He may face bounty seekers, zealots and supernatural pursuit. All beat the alternative. His companions should not associate with this religious felon, but let's be real. They will and sometimes they will face a fight or blackmail or ouster from the faith for that association.

Burning is the worst of deaths (according to Saints who survived the ordeal). You may not survive without use of magic. In Outlands that's rather routine. Then continue as if the player character escaped, like in Hanging. The Ref may decide the act still had some oomph. This result could be a combination of Hanged and Hobbled as the flames had just enough effect. As a Ref who hates saving throws, especially D8 choices, I would go lenient. I do as author like to take swaggering. That gives me joy.

Wild Card is not for me to say. Each game's Ref should make something up. Could be a worse death or hard sentence to escape, an exile in a box deep in the underworlds, a wider revolt in the martyr PC's name. *Timely Interruption* quoted from the movie, Captain Blood, is the phrase used when a Digression Death is avoided. Any and all events could occur. The god might save him or be seen in the crowd cheering for more entrails to spill. I'm tempted to let the player tell a fine tale and let the other players give thumbs up and thumbs down at each major twist. That would be interesting. But, again, this is left to you as Ref, not me as author.

In all of these cases, the player may retire his character as an NPC, handing over further play to the Referee. That's not all bad. The Ref may

hold the character for a while and fiat a reconciliation or length of time in adventures when all is forgiven or forgotten; the character just returns without further penalty. He can't be played until then. If low level, the character sheet might fall discarded in an unmarked grave. What exactly did he do anyway? Maybe let the player describe his crime as a way of saying goodbye.



Gobble Godly Aspects (O)

The faith is growing but not fast enough. The image of the god needs to be refined, more abstract and less terrifying. Counter intuitively, certain phenomenon in nature need to be attributed to the deity. You want

mysterious and momentous, not yokels asking *how or why a canine god flies?*

A public relations campaign would be great. Perhaps some eyewitness testimony. Maybe get some high level priests or academics from the established religions to unearth ancient texts on your god, showing how he changed over eons or was unfairly maligned by debunked temples.

Lots of characteristics are shared. The sun is really sliced and diced in some faiths, with different gods representing each stage of the rise and set. Your god may get married in the havens and have children. The papa (or momma) is always seen as potent and important.

Each player should name something to co-op. Think in terms of nature. Who controls lightning? Most people know it was Thor or Zeus or Vimuhla (for red lightning). Now it could be your god, as the squire with the quiver of bolts, handing each to the more well known persona. The idea is to glom onto the more famous, get some positive reinforcement, else fake it till you make it. Each player suggestion should be accompanied by a Nearly impossible roll. This roll test is made by the Ref, so make-rolls don't apply. Oh, well, it was worth a shot. Now comes some fun.

As the players adventure, they should be given opportunities to slant public opinion. They can tell tales in taverns. They can preach on docks. They can edit historic scrolls in libraries. In 1988, I left a copy of Cutlass in the gift shop of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride. No, I didn't, but that would have been cool, having the cashier try to find a barcode or explain what it was. Each encounter event to come offer a chance for each player to vindicate his prediction. A storm could find him praying for protection of the god in sight of the crew. He could be posting leaflets or bribing criers. The players will come up with some fine plans or be prompted by other party members to do so.

As each opportunity presents itself, the Ref may attempt yet again that success roll; this time at a less difficult degree of success. Eventually the point will stick (roll made). The temple's patron deity will grow in power. Somewhere else in the cosmos another heavenly figure will decline. Not important here, unless the Ref finds events to the contrary. Crossing paths with pilgrims and temple elders will from here on out become more

dangerous. The religion is flourishing and that threatens the livelihood of others.

Each player may wish to record his contribution to the religion. The Ref should as well. All this will shade future events for all, and especially for the one who made the suggestion to expand his god's control. Hopefully at least one made a ridiculous proposal that came true.

If anyone argues, "This is not my God!" by now he's lost that defense. This is your god! You may not like him or believe in him or want any of this to succeed. Interpret *Him* as headmaster or the very god itself. But from here on out, every player character will be seen as a prophet, part of the saga.

Your true god is now a mere minion. You may be a poor sibyl, a doubtful guide, a troublemaker or dissenter, but you also are one of the future saints in the holy books yet to be written. See says here, in a few hundred years, your chosen god swore fealty and was reborn, begotten by the True One growing in the campaign. (To think it all started as a fear of daddy longlegs.) Hang yourself with forty pieces of silver in your pockets – you may not stay dead, until your full role is fulfilled, as scribed in the holy scrolls yet to be inked.

Play Politics (P)

Each player should look at his character's list of friends and enemies. He has one right? If he hasn't got an account of past patrons and rivals, men he bested and let live, fathers of damsels he saved, etc. – Either borrow from a buddy in the group or have the Ref pick a couple names from a hat. Got the list, good.

Now, the player has the responsibility, actually all the players, to convince one enemy and one ally to join the faith. This need not be overly elaborate nor take hundreds of adventures. You often must cross paths but that can happen during any adventure encounters. Ride ahead, I'll catch-up, sort of activity. Choose wisely and the skills required and Degree of Difficulty for the reaction roll (as in his reaction to your proposal) may be mere routine.

Each novice initiate (recruited NPC) only needs to make a tithe or pay lip-service. The raw recruit can even pledge undying love as a joke. Confuse

him, betwixt him, patronize and cajole. Whatever it takes, the words and actions must be tendered. *“Sure, I believe.”*

In most cases it is best to make a solid recruit. The religion will need foot soldiers and allies going forward.

Some NPCs will ask what's in it for them? Some will trust the players without question. Since many are polytheists, an extra statue in the home is no big thing. Make sure that statue animates at night and topples a few others over. Omens are good for everyone.

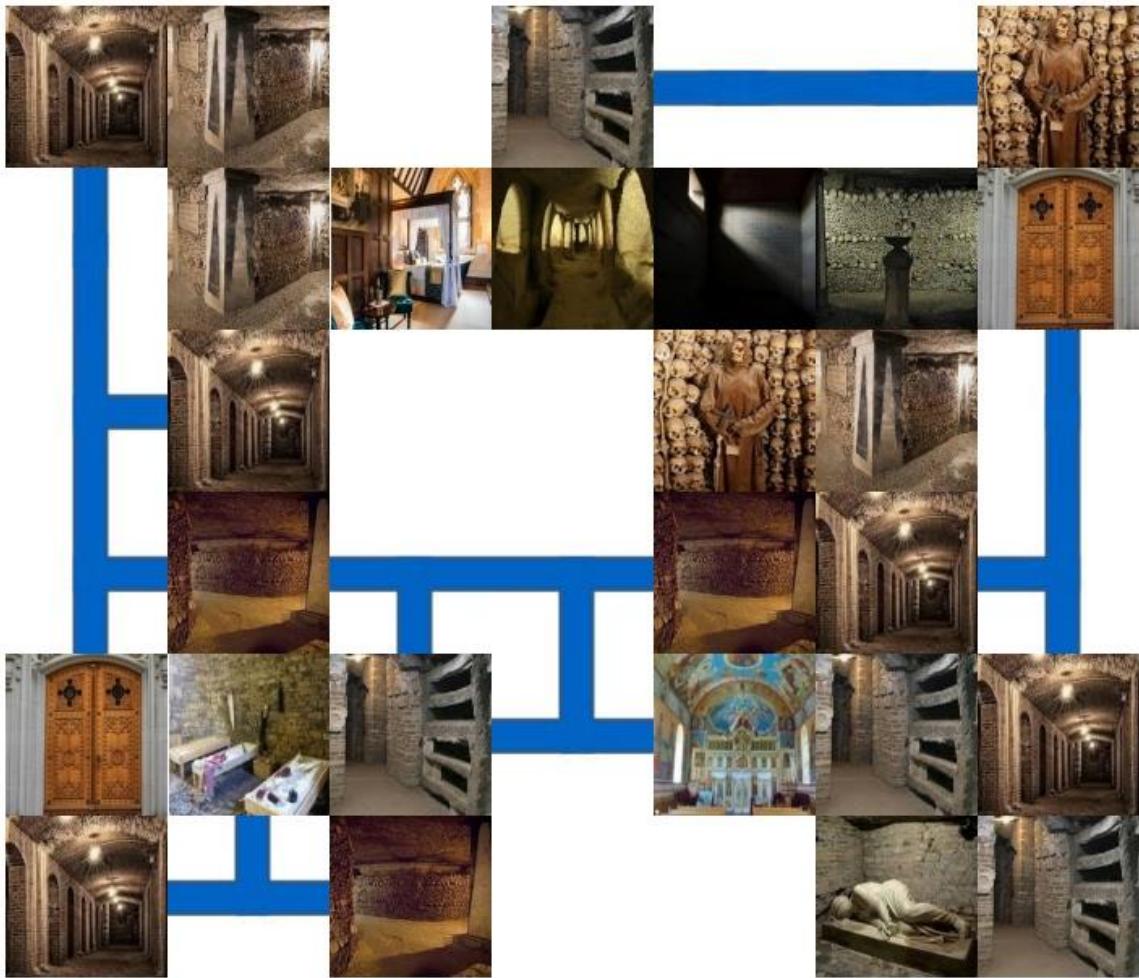
The quota remains, two dissimilar people for each player. If anyone has trouble in his chore, he may be aided by his companions. Yet, wouldn't it be more role-play if he has to come up with Plan B all on his own. Plan B? Sure, threaten murder. Make the unbeliever scream in pain your god's name. Discredit the NPC's family goddess. Steal one of his children and violate the same. Make the man doubt the very existence of the loving gods and then sell him the time-share. (An atheist surely wrote this passage.)

Do you want to be that vicious, who does?

Make the sale. Most campaign NPCs just need a few favors, or tasks, or their own enemies' children violated. Does this have to become so dark, suddenly? No, of course not. Your god to this point may be a font of kindness. All those good works done in his name; no one ever slaughtered; every hostile act a turn of the cheek.

Creating a god for the campaign is supposed to be fun. The Ref and his group will either shift to the *Dark Side of the Force* or prevent that, because darkness is real. There will be dark elements to face and defeat, only to see them appear again. In a dialectic world there is only good and evil. Is that true? (Nope.)

This overall event can be done as a champion. This event can be passed by criminal acts. What's it going to be? Politics is a dirty business. Convincing people to do things that may not even be in their best interest, hey, you should run for real office. The bad taste may never leave your mouth. Lastly, the headmaster need not know what was done in his name. The player sees the dice, but the character is blissfully ignorant. So shall it be written, so shall it be done (King and I).



Backlash (Q)

Pretty sure we all saw this coming. Your faith becomes outlawed simultaneously in many places. The Ref may have a good idea from the position of your first temple and your travel routes until now, where the faith has established strongholds and where it has made some clear enemies. If this has happened right after the group passed through Play Politics (P), it could get ugly. Regardless, call in some secular favors.

Make a chart, three columns. All the players should help. Left side list the good guys, ones you know or hope will be loyalists. Don't list any peons. If you have more than a D8, prune the list. Nice to roll high for this support. If you have less than your D8 roll, well, time to pay the piper and grow as superheroes. This fight is rough.

The middle column skip for the moment. On the right side of the chart list at least a D8 potential enemies. Again, no peons. This list need not come from just those the growing faith despoiled. Add a significant political presence in the campaign. The emperor (king) himself? That's a bit much. He truly doesn't care and is a religion all his own. A legion commander or at least one ruler of a city-state should be numbered among your foes. How about a god? No, the heavens, demons and underworld figures are not involved (yet). This is humans versus humans. Okay, add a few nonhumans if your campaign is Tolkien flavored, and the D8 roll was high. Even in Outlands there are nonhuman chieftains who could become friend or foe here.

Finally, the middle column is important figures or factions to influence for the win, again a D8. Look at what you have. Is the left side a greater number than the right. Good going if so. Maybe the Ref will want to double the number of enemies to make things competitive. Effort truly makes winning seem tangible in a game. No easy victories.

The players will fight a prolonged series of personal grudges and selective intrigues. The enemies list is not always a dead pool, assassin's blotter. A henchman or relative of someone on the list could be the better target for injury. The group should be recruiting those neutral forces or crossing them off the list entirely. This is not just anyone's fight, right? If they won't side with you, at least keep them out of your enemies' logistical support. We're not at war (yet). But, this will include bloodshed, less so murder.

Try to make the whole fracas organic to the campaign. Meaning, the interactions should not become the quest; the players should still have other missions. But as those missions result in adventures, the evil column comes to frolic. Often the result is one person, place or holy order on the left side, your side, is obliterated. It may instead shift to the center as it's support wavers. If the victim is just a person, he may be slain. Evil (as in opposing) may also try to shift a neutral faction or NPC to its team.

The player characters should seize every moment available to settle scores and harm their religious rivals (evil column). Not harm all religions, just the fiends, mortal fiends, who are persecuting your flock, dismantling your temples, outlawing your god. Worse, subordinating your god into another, there's. It will usually be a different established god with global acceptance collectively driving your enemies (each time you reach here as Backlash on

the religious flow path). Pick a Local Aspect or Demigod to represent the enemy, something left as a calling card or a symbol worn as a patch.

This should involve lots of combat but always at a personal scale. The goal may be forcing retreat, capturing hostages. Those optional dispatches in Outlands may become mandatory pass. Limit the murder or more major figures of the campaign may decide enough is enough and side with the enemy.

The players will burn and steal, why not? Make the price of this feud be high. Oh, your god may not like this if it's say a *Love your Enemy* type. But, forgiveness can come later. What the player group is trying to do is to eliminate all the right column factions, force them to the middle as an alternative. This must happen before their own slate is empty. No, the party characters being alive is not enough. This isn't an initial event. The temple has grown. An outside religion is trying to destroy that or make your followers their bitches. (Forgive the cussing, but it is the Internet age.)

When the adventure and encounters gives opportunity, the Ref might help make that so, over one or more adventures, fight the good fight. These battles (or acts of arson) may involve the legal recourse, suits in baronial courts adjudicated by ever more powerful judges (of the campaign). Stop this squabble. Kill selectively as you must. You do have a list and one or more may die un-mourned. Dissuade the rest, especially the important. This is just a misunderstanding. Keep adding to your pawns and princes. Don't let your left column be empty, before the right side is quelled. Understood?

Foster Rioting (R)

There is a stubborn location, a region or city where the religion just won't take hold. Often a secret society, or outwardly the ruler, acts to end every attempt by the faithful to proselytize or stage a flashy event. Even your picnics for the poor result in horsemen overturning the tables. **This is one of the few events that is optional.** If the headmaster does nothing, skip backward to Martyrs and see if you can wind along a different path. Someday in the future a death of one of your acolytes will prompt change. Care to wait? As stated, that's a retread to Event (G).

Going forward you need a show of force. This will become a self-financed adventure. Generate encounters along the way. Suffer possible disease,

depravity, hardship, all the usual attrition for a mob moving cross country. Because you will gather your forces, start a pilgrimage (call it a children's crusade), march on the town holding flowers, concealing knives. However, the assembly must predominantly include the innocent.

When you reach the city walls, the gates will shut. Bribe them open with display of skills to make that happen. Else, you might need to siege or storm the walls. Yet this should not become a full attack. The goal is not to win. One captured city would be impressive but prove nothing. You want witnesses and sympathy. You want to hold a vigil, starve yourselves. Your appeal must seem both outwardly respectful and peaceful, though heartfelt and desperate. You just want the freedom to worship (in some cases a demon).

Find a way in or camp outside. Somehow, enflame the city garrison to make a mistake. Stage outrage, mind control constables, rabblerouser the shop owners with real appeals to racism or false rumors of monsters. You seek an overreaction. You need a spectacle. You want a massacre.

This is why you were given an option to retrograde on the path. You still might harbor designs to be a good and righteous faith of a benevolent god. After today, should you progress with the religion here, that ideal is shattered. You need a riot, so says the cynic.

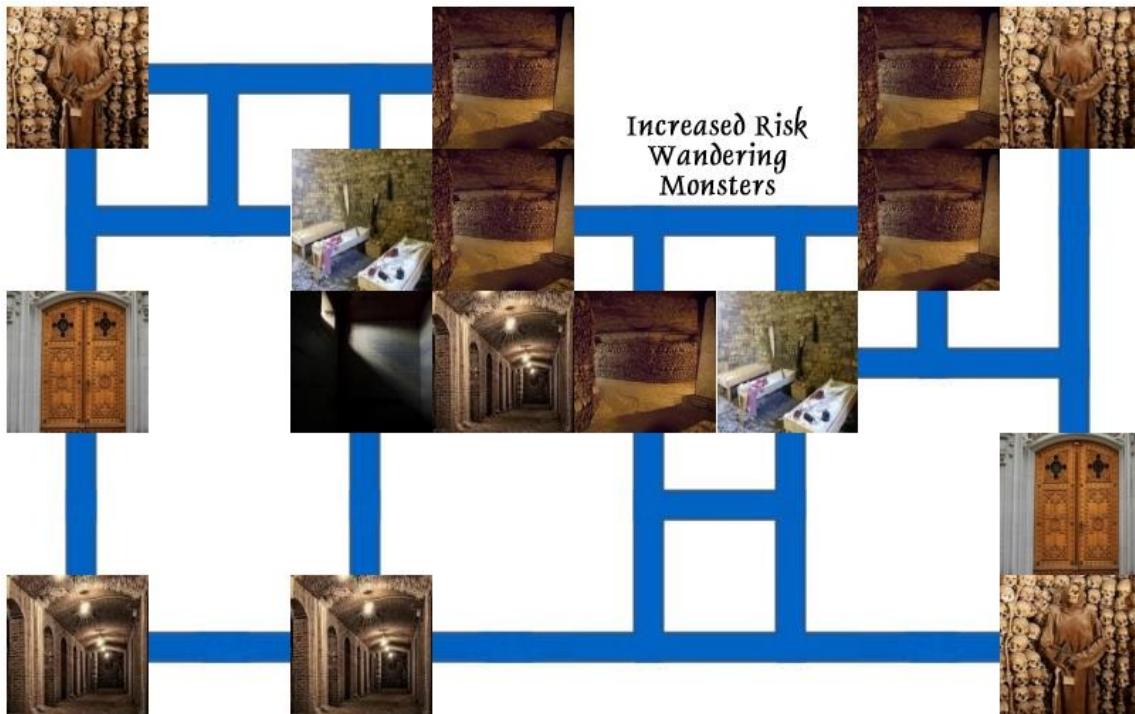
Other townships must view your movement with fear. If they want order and trade without impact, your faith should be tolerated. The next city to shut the gates on your growing movement will end up destroyed. The fact you are willing to sacrifice so many of your followers is breathtaking, audacious to the political elite. They see through your actions and know you are a divine reckoning. In every case, your god also smiles. He sees the sacrifice as epic. No matter how many die, you will replace that number and more. The carnage feeds sympathy and attracts the zealotry of the age.

Now, did any player character get killed? Were all privy to the grand plan? Good questions. A rioting and betrayal Q&D would be great here. By that, I mean make a special table with specifics of your own campaign included. A quick and dirty table is a set of event driven combat actions. There is one example included in this pamphlet; see Q&D Defeat a Subcommander. That table would apply for player party action, sort of a dungeon crawl, into a

random temple as you cross paths with a boss. Still, even if that table does not work specifically here, the style can be copied.

Or not, you can run some of *your other favorite role-play game*'s combat procedures. Whatever works and your players can enjoy. Remember to add some twists; some players might be also expected to die this day, part of the grand plan they did not fully understand.

I intend to run these rules soon in my own campaign. I may need several Q&D as my group advances the paths. Pretty much why I'm writing the religion ruleset, not truly for the seven sales it should garner. Should you get to this point in your own campaign, post a note in the spacegamer.com Vox message board; ask for the Q&D Sacrificial Riot event table. I may have made one. Else beat me there and post yours for everyone to enjoy.



Convert Nobles (S)

The religion has collectively ten-thousand members, spread near and far. Some of the doctrines are fluid, but the core message is being received and preached. There are fanatic believers; there are those ascribing to Pascal's Wager. Meaning, there's more to lose by not paying tribute than to deny the existence of your god. One societal group, however, is falling behind the rest. The people with hereditary power and inherited wealth are reluctant to

change. The old gods have served the nobility quite well. What is their incentive to bet on your longshot?

There are four approaches to conversion: Positive Reinforcement, Negative Reinforcement, Corrupt Offspring and Retribution.

Your campaign may not have a specified ruling class. Who has such time to design all these family trees? Roll 3D8 for a count of the noble families to potentially influence. The Ref should add to this the leaders of city-states and other greater Earls in the campaign (if he has those names). Now, that number could seem large and it is. The families need not be named (yet). The number is high because success for any family is not assured.

The goal of the headmaster of the temple is to change the faith of just SEVEN. Seven being a common lucky and magical number. Seven also the number for the supernatural in numerology. Seven directions of space, the seven levels of pain, seven is the triangle over the square; it's also as arbitrary as anything else. Those 3D8 are a maximum number of attempts, so don't waste too many. The Ref should reward any legwork, use of Friends and other influence, prior to any face to face religious sermon presented to each noble family.

During the adventures ahead, the temple leader and his retinue (the group) will be invited to households and welcomed as prophets. They might meet an entourage on the road specifically coming to greet the party. The encounter is often mere happenstance. However, each noble family will have already spied on the group and tried to determine the dogma of the belief and the rigidness to the rules being exhibited by the leaders. Nobles mostly want flexibility. The players might wish to highlight that in each of these *meets and greets*. Do they offer exceptions to the common rules for the rich and famous?

Before any *meal*, the **player headmaster should select his tact**. This is based on the four approaches to conversion: Positive Reinforcement, Negative Reinforcement, Corrupt Offspring and Retribution.

The **Ref will select one of the four as well** for the noble patriarch's disposition. Each noble group will have a preconception of the experience as positive, negative, corrupting or fire and fury (retribution). Meeting that expectation makes it easier to convert the family. As stated, nobles like a

predictability. Even if the group is threatening damnation, some nobles are okay with that. As converts, expect they too will use that retribution on their own troublesome subjects and sycophants. They could use it on the group (one day).

The noble's tact or expectation is often easy to know. The Ref may allow an Ordinary roll to guess based on display of Courtly Graces or Linguistic Sophistry. What does this noble household think of us, before I start my oration?

But be careful, if the religion is seen as tailoring its canon to each encounter, previous converts may abandon the temple as a bunch of hypocrites. Do the players need to select one option and use it over and over? No, but that method may avoid some troubles later on. Which one is best, and which leans good or evil, are questions for the group and Referee to debate.

Positive Reinforcement means the spokesperson emphasizes the benefits of adding the temple's icon to the family altar. Could be an easy addition, in the back, hardly anyone would notice. Positive Feedback usually employs a bribe. Many of the common faithful will be willing to work for a righteous landowner for less than market salary. People of stature might enjoy the god's gold for noble prayers policy. Each attempt at this tact should deplete the longboat of Treasure Laden (D) or a half D8 other ship swaggering. In *your other favorite role-play game* a chest of treasure will suffice.

Negative Reinforcement has the group criticizing the head of household and his family the entire time they are together. Every sin and corruption is chastised. Every iniquity is listed. An appeal is made to denounce past indiscretions in order to embrace a new tradition and faith going forward. This tact will automatically fail to convince if everyone in the party fails an initial test of Skill Spy or Wizardry Precognition (E). You have to show up and have some blackmail to disclose. The Tasking roll of successfully scouting out the family's skeletons in the closet may be diced before the tact is selected. You will know if you have any dirt to exploit.

Corrupt Offspring has the group caring little about what the elders and current heads of household consider blasphemy. The goal is to make sure the word of the new god is heard and received by the children, especially grown adults waiting to take command. Peace, love and change is usually highlighted. The change meaning *scratch my back* and so forth. When daddy

dies, the heirs will shuffle the statues around and bring the group's temple to the forefront. While this tact does not require treasure or skill application up front, it has the worst outcomes for failure. The group is almost ignoring the true power in the hopes of turning his own kids against him.

Retribution means the group will outright threaten the nobles. Your god is undeniable, a force of reckoning, with disciples more warlord than quiet redeemer. This direct threat to join us or lose someday your rank is rather drastic. Still, the method could be the fastest way to complete the objective of recruiting SEVEN noble households. The converted may brood and conspire, but who is to say how many of the other noble families converted by the other three tactics aren't doing the same. Nobles are by their very nature suspicious and often involved with criminals.

Meeting with nobles and making your sales pitch for the religion is not something to schedule. The Ref may allow some degree of Tasking roll to try to set an appointment; most people were allowed once in a lifetime to petition their superior. Often these encounters will be just that, random and impromptu.

Notice that options of Approach Positive and Negative Reinforcement both have conditions, the payment of money or making of a skill roll. The player characters may be short of funds or not have had any opportunity to spy or conduct a thorough rite of magic. The noble family may not have any clear blackmail they conceal. Point being, when each encounter arrives, the players will gain or lose on the spot their chance to influence the nobles with Reinforcement. That may require them to change tact. Doing so can be problematic.

The very first attempt on the very first noble family is a change of tact, very hard except by make-roll. After that, the last Tact used will be changed or repeated: same as before, twice before, three or more consistently. Just to be clear, this Repeated Tact is on the entire body of nobles, not what is used just on a single family again in repetition if the result is amicable yet unswayed. Remember to shift the Degree of Difficulty if the correctly guessed tact is applied.

Reinforcement Tactics for Conversion

Total Noble Family Converts	Repetition of Tact	Positive Reinforcement	Negative Reinforcement
0	changed approach	Nearly Impossible	Nearly Impossible
	same as before this	Nearly Impossible	Tasking
	twice before	Nearly Impossible	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Tasking	Nearly Impossible
1 or 2	changed approach	Nearly Impossible	Tasking
	same as before this	Tasking	Tasking
	twice before	Tasking	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Tasking	Difficult
3 or 4	changed approach	Difficult	Ordinary
	same as before this	Difficult	Tasking
	twice in a row	Difficult	Difficult
	three or more consistently	Difficult	Nearly Impossible
5 or more	changed approach	Tasking	Tasking
	same as before this	Difficult	Tasking
	twice before	Ordinary	Nearly Impossible
	three or more consistently	Ordinary	Tasking

Note: -- Reduce any Degree of Difficulty if the headmaster's Tactic meets the noble family's expectation.

Other Tactics for Conversion

Total Noble Family Converts	Repetition of Tact	Convert Offspring	Threaten Retribution
0	changed approach	Difficult	Tasking
	same as before this	Difficult	Tasking
	twice before	Tasking	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Nearly Impossible	Ordinary
1 or 2	changed approach	Difficult	Tasking
	same as before this	Tasking	Tasking
	twice before	Tasking	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Tasking	Ordinary
3 or 4	changed approach	Difficult	Tasking
	same as before this	Difficult	Tasking
	twice in a row	Difficult	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Tasking	Ordinary
5 or more	changed approach	Difficult	Tasking
	same as before this	Difficult	Tasking
	twice before	Difficult	Tasking
	three or more consistently	Difficult	Ordinary

Note: -- Reduce any Degree of Difficulty if the headmaster's Tactic meets the noble family's expectation.

Upon success, the Ref may wish to name the household. If the player group is fortunate and gains the SEVEN needed before their overall tally of nobles is exhausted, the Ref may continue to add (or subtract) the high born as they are encountered. Yet once the temple and headmaster has moved to another location on the **Establishing a Religion** chart, the list of followers is pretty much set.

This will add a political element, since the temple will want their *own guys* to thrive. Secular wars that could destroy families would weaken or strengthen the temple. You got yourself a real campaign now, folks.

But what if you miss a roll? We have a chart for that too.

Failure Penalty	Positive Reinf.	Negative Reinf.	Con. Offspring	Threaten Retribution
Depart Amicably	4 or less	3 or less		2 or less
Opportunity Forever Lost	5 or 6	4 or 5		3 or 4
Humiliated	7		3 or less	5 or 6
Intrigue			4	
Banished		6 or 7		
Hunted		8	5	
Humiliated w/ Noble Loss	8		6	7
Intrigue w/ Noble Loss			7	
Wild Card (very bad)			8	8

Note: -- Result D8; Noble Loss means the tally of previous successes drops as a household recants and must be persuaded yet again.

Depart Amicably means the noble house is unconvinced but the players may encounter them again sometime and try again.

Opportunity Lost means the group has failed and will not change the noble house into a supporter by this simple exchange. They might still become a political supporter if another task is performed (like a separate mission and adventure geared toward the household's aims).

Humiliated means the groups depart. The nobles are not supporters and will not be in the future. Further they ridicule the faith, and the attempt roll for the next noble house encountered increases by one. e.g. Nearly Impossible becomes Impossible. Take your lumps and move-on. Often the group must change tactics for the next noble household as well. Ref decides.

Intrigue means the groups depart. The nobles are not supporters and will not be in the future. They ridicule the faith like Humiliated. Plus, they sent aid to the current mission's Rival. Ref must interpret that negative outcome, usually adding a Twist or additional Rival's Ace in the Hole to the mission.

Banished is treated as Intrigue, plus the group is asked to leave the noble's domain. This could be a city-state, region, even an entire country.

Hunted is an escalation of Banished. The party will meet vigilante or cohorts sent to defeat them. Add these extra combat encounters between the Phases of normal encounters. The pursuit of the hunting forces only lasts for this adventure. (Small consolation perhaps.)

Wild Card is decided by the Ref with at least all the penalties of Hunted and more. Maybe add a magical attack, like those generated by the

Q&D Fighting Sorcerers and High Priests. If you're using this booklet for other than Outlands, select something harsh out of the rules of *your other favorite rpg*. Undead Lich tend to work nice in every system.

Noble Loss as explained in the footnote, the sales pitch for the faith was so pathetically delivered that a previous convert drops out. If the players had three nobles converted, they now have two. If they had yet to convert anyone, the number of possible applicants drops by half a D8.

If the headmaster predominately used Negative Reinforcement or Retribution, the next event should steer toward Cult Personality (U). A oddball mix of Tact might be War (V). An endless series of bribes might seem too mercenary, and a grand example of piety is needed to prove your have some devotion (Event T).



Revolution (T)

The common people are calling for change and your faith has inspired that. The initial spark typically occurs in a city-state that was rather repressive in all ways, not just to your temple. The overlord, emperor, king or other campaign ruling power will not be pleased. If there are noble families that support your movement, they may be asking for absolution and protection; else, they may be asking for the player headmaster to intercede and calm his more radical servants. The more the uprising spreads, conversely, the more

followers you're gaining. However, the longer this uprising lasts, the more the campaign is devastated. Is it better to rule a wasteland?

Each city-state in the campaign will add Baneful traits. Those same bad traits which cause penalty to the Longship Swaggering are now growing and spreading.

Here is the order in which to add these calamities: Corrupt, Disorder, Rebellious, Depleted, Unruly, Famine, Ransacked, Plagued, Pestilence, Pillaged.

Our *Tale of Woe* begins with the city officials tolerating graft and shakedown of the peddlers; they also are stealing from church coffers. The people protest led by parish priests. When the initial demands for reform are not respected, the poor refuse to pay tariffs, tolls, taxes and even hold strikes against the guild rules. The ruling authority sends in the horse guards. The poor are trampled, and the mercenaries linger, celebrating the easy victory. The fields go untended. The mercenaries cannot be paid without a harvest. They raid the armories and guilds. A bloody stalemate, commerce is impacted, and sickness develops as city sanitation goes without maintenance. Rats and fleas feast on the dead, unburied. An outside force comes to subjugate, promising order but merely changing one indifferent leader for another. If the city has all Ten negative traits, it's probably abandoned and remains mere ruins.

Not very many if any cities begin pristine. If a place is already suffering corruption and disorder, you can skip forward filling in the blanks. The start point need not even be Corruption. The ten negative traits may be seen as a circle. The Pillager brings his own Corruption, or the Famine forces the starving to raid and exhaust the granaries. Chaos, vicious chaos, only prevented by the headmaster's raised hand.

Start with a half D8 plus one locations (generating two to five) and add one bad trait to each. The player characters must make haste to each city center (or region) in revolt. There could be a full three phases of encounters between each objective, or more concisely, the party must travel multiple times using just Phase C. These would be wandering monsters (hurts me to compare my art to your game's children's doodles) in those *other favorite role-play games*. Each time the players quell one location and head to the next, add more negative traits to the places remaining. Any place fully

falling into ruin will cause an extra two to five more places to erupt in violence. Hey, we started a simple idea that destroyed the world!

The temple will be blamed for this carnage. Count your enemies among the lords in exile and cities in desperate need. There will also be the Longboat Swaggering concerns going forward as less towns have the supplies the ship and crew need. All this is detailed (well) in *Chronicles of the Outlands*. Maybe it's time to play (try) a Better Game. Or don't.

Cult Personality (U)

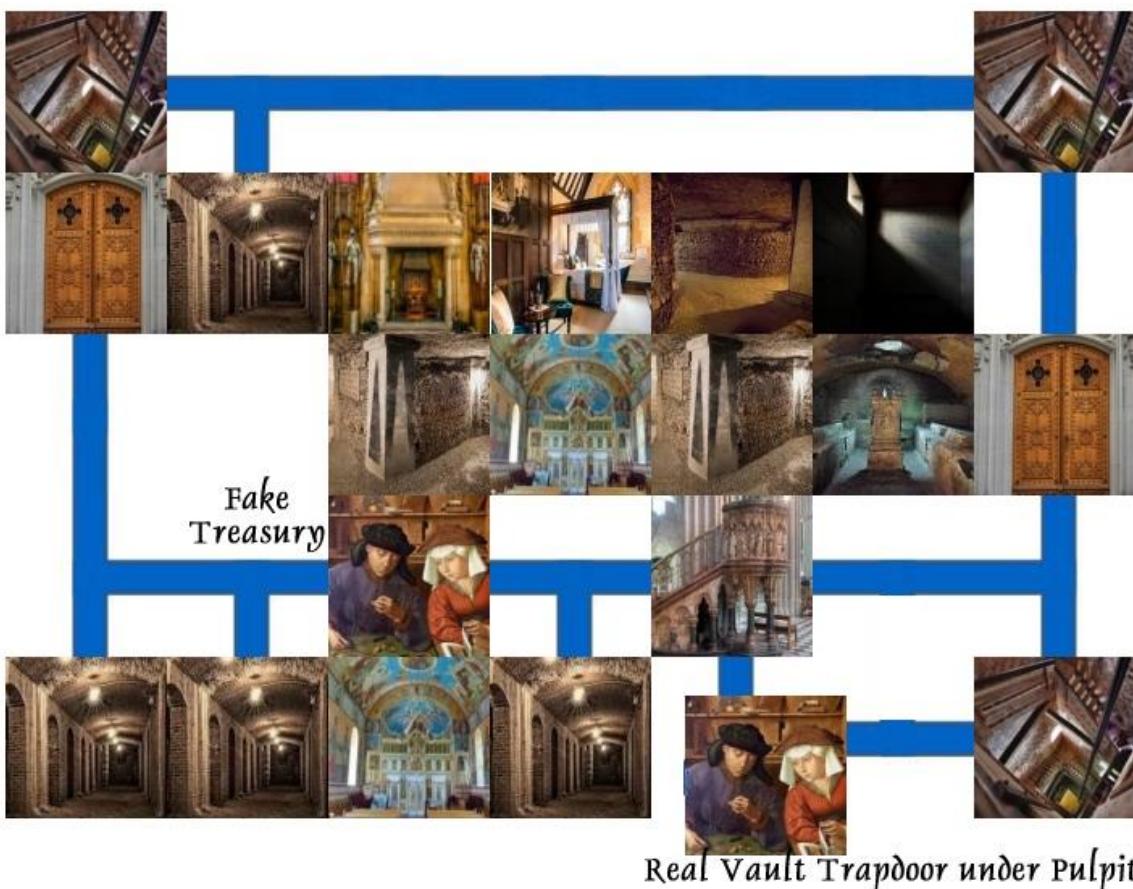
The headmaster is being worshiped. The patron god is sometimes confused as the man, or the two are melded into one. The faithful are moving in a sinful direction. The player headmaster could be showered with wealth. He will receive emissaries from foreign lands, wise men bearing gifts of gold, spices and magic items. Some of these relics will be designed to act beneficial but corrupt over time. Some will be outright frauds and cause malady. The heavens are taking notice and are not pleased at the self-aggrandizing. As well, the protectors of magic purity (Zaires) watch carefully.

The players will continue on with missions and adventures. If the headmaster retires as an NPC, the temple and its progression does not end. You may openly or secretly enjoy being the star. You'll find your motives are less than clean, and you may live to regret what you have created. But, you will not divorce yourself just yet. This juggernaut will lumber forward with or without you.

But back to brass tacks, the player character will face near constant attacks on his life. If the character is tossed aside, the NPC headmaster will order reprisals on his former shipmates. The party faces attack from other religions, the disenfranchised who feel betrayed, the gunslingers who want to kill a living god...Referee add some menace.

About every other travel encounter will be related to the temple, headmaster and this blurring of theology and celebrity. The player might not run the headmaster, but the danger continues. The player will usually continue in his grand role, even try to change the perception. The party is guilty by association.

How long does this last? Depends, the result tends to steer toward the god itself wanting to end this (Event Y) or the focus of the group becomes a grand crusade to stop those who oppose the religion in any manner (Event V). Maybe after a full D8 adventures, the player headmaster's longevity forces one of those two shifts. Should the temple headmaster retire to NPC status or outright die, in that case, the religion becomes mainstream. Unfortunately, any significant benefit to the other players is moot (nada, nil, zilch). Killing your buddy for all the grief he's causing will make all that past effort on all those events be for naught. If the player no longer plays his character as headmaster, the rest of the party loses clout fast and furious.



Wage War (V)

The Ref should select a half D8 other faiths in the campaign as significant adversaries. If he rolls a one, he should make the enemy forces a major religion. Go burn the other side's temples. This should not be an easy military campaign to win. Pull out the figures and fight things? Make a wargame with numbered chits?

If you are not familiar with the concept of a Q&D table, you have some work. If you're playing Outlands or seen Cutlass on YouTube® you know that the whole war can be modeled with character play. Every war has troops, logistics, battles and leaders. Those leaders are player characters. The troops follow them. Numbering the troops is fine; using Baneful Traits is often easier and more realistic. Win and your enemy moves toward defeat. Lose and your own forces gain those dreaded banes.

Army Baneful Traits: Infiltrated, Insubordinate, Splintered, Worn-out, Broken, Starving, Cursed, Diseased, Mutinous, Sacrilegious.

Our *Tale of Woe* begins with the men assembled and establishing themselves into fighting units; cohort is a good term. Each cohort will be assigned tasks and a leader; many will arrive already having selected a leader. Establishing a chain of command seems important. The ranks of various cohort commanders are debated. The first bad trait occurs as spies of the enemy assume roles in the ranks. These will be in the camp followers, scouts, rank and file and command staff. Soon men start to forage, steal, rape, disobey instructions. Some desert. Some encourage others to brawl and gamble and become wayward. The reason for fighting is blurring. Upstarts head off to pillage. The ambitious carve out new estates, loyal only to the subcommanders, not the player characters. The arms and gear is a shambles. We need more wagons and ships. Winter comes and with Spring less men appear for muster. The forces suffer raids, ambush, surprise attack, defeat. The enemy seems more skilled and some whisper better led. Morale gives out. Men are executed for refusing to fight. The army can't keep the roads safe. There's no supplies. The land has been exhausted, a planting and harvest was impacted (sometimes thirty years of them). Magical attacks and mishaps become frequent. The army has plague. The men call for new leaders. The men call for a new faith.

Have I got a Q&D for that! Actually, I would need to piece together many and have several search and destroy or deployments to resolve the full war. As I suggested, Cutlass has had these sorts of grand actions, and the players let themselves be recorded.

That Baneful Trait style resolution could happen four times if the party must defeat four faiths. Win by inflicting the enemy with Bad Traits faster than the player's army takes the same. Recovery during the campaign or between defeat of major factions is possible. Add the sieges, skirmish, some grand

maneuver, some personal actions and discoveries to determine when Bad Traits occur.

The mission-adventure model is set aside. The group will be concentrated in acts of war. Each opponent could be run as a set of encounters and climax. You can always cheat to a personal level and have the group dungeon crawl into a fortress and slay the overall commander. Run some dice skill tests for politics and declare a winner. Too easy, perhaps, but it may beat too much minutia. We are not the characters we portray; no game model will be perfect. Enjoy the struggle.

Purity Enforcement (W)

The religion has priests in every city-state, but in some places the rituals are nonconformist. Select one of the Wizardry Swaggering of Outlands (or for *your other favorite role-play game* adapt and give an Air Force Salute).

Thought Control is being abused. Demonic summoning is now part of some services, mostly to meet operation costs. Necromancy is allowed as priests resurrect favorite pets, sick and departed children, fallen leaders. These intermingling of magic and the faith are to be expected in a fantasy world, but the godly aspect represented by the budding religion may be blurred. In order to get back to the fundamentals, heads must roll.

The players must undertake a grand review of all the branches, long overdue. Will this be a procession and spectacle to raise the stature of the faith? Or, will this be covert, so it will be effective in catching heresy as it is committed? The players must decide and then each city-state of the campaign must be visited, and justice dealt. In practical terms, the player characters need only travel to the various locations and suffer what may happen along the way.

At each location a few demonstrations of ability, exercise of Trait, Skill or Swaggering, should be enough to settle the discourse. A few heretics might be arrested to add some sport. Some lasting enemies might also be made, or ill feelings generated. Since many of the city-states of the campaign are less than pristine, the longboat will meet with some setbacks undoubtedly. These actions should also occur en route and within other missions and adventures the players undertake.

Once a complete assessment is made, then the fun perhaps starts. Oracles and seers are consulted with the wisest of the flock to determine if certain fringe practices are truly heresy or prophetic ceremony. The rites of the temple are widely associated with various atrocities. Many of the faithful have known no other way of worship. The once idealistic and austere beliefs, established long ago in good faith, are now a spectacle. Roll a half D8 and select that many corruptions from the following list:

Abomination of Half Bred – Nonhuman races are not allowed to construct shrines; further these soulless beings are too sinful to ever be redeemed. There is no ethical reason not to slay them on sight. Mostly observed by racists in urban places.

Bloodletting & Human Sacrifice – Could be just volunteers or seen as a supreme blessing to join in. Could be captured enemies and heathens.

Body Mutilation – The faithful are blessed and told to cover their skin with tattoos, scars and piercings. In the most extreme, additional limbs or appendage subtraction is encouraged and promoted with magic. Many processions include self injuring penitent who whip themselves, often to death, during these irregular ceremonies.

Culling – Dangerous monsters and demonic beasts are summoned and released into the campaign. The hunting of these monsters is seen as a test of the faithful. The households which survive the beasts are deemed worthy. Mostly rural folk are eaten.

Immolation – The faithful enjoy fire, fireworks, explosions and incineration. Many a temple is torched and must be rebuilt at considerable expense. These fires are typically not prevented from spreading to adjacent woodland, farm field and town structure.

Patriarchy & Misogyny – Females may not become priests and are not allowed to petition the god. All must pray through intermediary husbands or fathers to pass along divine requests.

Prima Nocturn – Marriage only becomes religiously ordained if a superior of the faith or noble lord first consummates (couples) with each common bride on her wedding day.

Supremacy of Hierophant – The chief operating officer, usually the headmaster, is without sin; any act he commits is instantly forgiven by the god. This license is of course abused.

Note: The Ref is free to add more or temper any of these to suit his party of players' sensibilities. No need to offend. And yet, the practices are meant to cause regret – what have we wrought?

Look where Event (W) might lead. Does the enforcement cause a war with other faiths, make the headmaster regret ever starting his church, embolden another insider to stop the practices and get the faithful to denounce the antiquated teachings attributed to the player headmaster. If the inquisition here proceeds without a hitch, and the final result is palpable, the whole world will truly understand that this new faith is now a mainstream religion, a force of reckoning here and lasting.

Tribunals (X)

Several key religious trusts, high priests of a campaign pantheon or paut, meet to decide an issue of heavenly importance. This is not solely the members of the party temple convening a conference. This is a delegation of the other world religions meeting with the most holy of the burgeoning temple faith, plus all the player characters. No one can exclude themselves.

A list of eight abominations was detailed under Event (W). One of these practices, one which is considered integral to the group's new temple, must stop. If the path up to now has yet to cross Event (W), the fact the temple has certain strange rites might be surprising news to the party. Not by our ordained wisdom! Yet despite that, the strange rite continues and grows popular among the followers.

The players will need to discuss, perhaps. Do they contend they can handle this without outside dictate? Do they say they embrace the practice and all other faiths be damned? Do they authorize the external counsel to take actions against their own temple's fringe elements; keep plausible deniability? The players will most likely have their own cool-kid plans on solving this dilemma.

As the group undergoes interrogation—let's forget about other NPCs of the temple hierarchy summoned today—each should suffer some painful invective. Select three cards for result, one on each of the Facing Enemy Spellcaster tables of Outlands. Three Banes, just so they know the big guns of the campaign religions are not a trifle to dismiss out of hand. In those tables there is a result which ends the threat. Generating that will remove one category of danger for all (yet to suffer a card flip). The result of Flee is a flair. Treat failed roll instead as Shaken for the remaining action on these tables, plus add a half D8 increase in Warped Outcome Tally. Major Tarot cause temporary loss of one character Trait for the rest of the adventure at

hand. If you don't have left to lose, the player character is left insane. Add some personality flaws and the subsequent game (dice) penalties for outbursts and failure to maintain control of your mind and actions.

If the Ref is feeling especially mean, any KO would mean the player character suffers his remaining events as automatic fail. Else, those events must go to another member of the party. I guess more than three Banes is possible. Any revenge against any persecutor or prosecutor must await a later event on a later day.

After this abuse, the party will probably understand the temple is not going to easily change rites. So now what? An inquisition (Event W), rationalize and ignore (Event Z) or time to consult the very god and ask the divine (Event Y).

God Manifests (Y)

Would not be much fun to have fantasy gods if they did not come down to thank the player headmaster for his good deeds. That's not this. The god whose name is etched in runes as a corporate logo is not amused. He will come to have a chat and set all subject matter straight.

The result is the temple must adopt one unfortunate ritual, an act the borders on infamy. Sure, you could fight and dispel the god, but that would be a public relations nightmare. The only real option is to accept human sacrifice, eating of human flesh, bathing in excrement, ritual rape of virgins or beasts...old time religion. Use the list under Event W for more ideas. Many of the current fuddy-duddy followers will dramatically stop attending mass, but new nutty and crazed ones will be attracted. Win-Win.

Is this enough to make the player character quit his own dogma? Can the sacrifices be made in secrecy, so the whole becomes an outward face of piety with an inner sanctum of the Illuminati? So many tough questions now when once the temple had all those easy answers. Struggle philosophically outside of the game – what does your character do? How long can you hide these notorious acts? There may come a time when the religion does not need the god. That inevitable outcome is long after all the player characters and the campaign is dead.

But wait, there's more. Tell them what they won, Johnny, for raising the profile of this divinely twisted lifeforce. Each player will select cards on Q&D Fighting Misanthrope, under the Facing Enemy Spellcasters rules of Outlands. Each player must survive on his own, no help. Select card after card, until magic use is neutralized one by one for each in this tragic encounter. Or, end it by suffering wound, KO or Forced to Flee. Yet those finales are hardly worthy of the god's *Most Holy*.

The Ref may decide that the hard handplay continues even wounded up to death (to sit at the right foot of the father). KO means the character is stripped of a half D8 swagger and then wakes with a bucket splash to the face. Flee means the character permanently losses a Trait and zaps right back into battle. Those gods have a way of teleporting (Cosmic) their enemies right into their presence.

For *your other favorite role-play game*, maybe let each suffer no-save a half D8 drain of level. Those lost ticks of life-force always cause screams of anguish. The group might have started a temple for fun, simple profit, as a lark. Will anyone dare run this path a second time with a new fresh-faced idealist as character? Veterans will surely want to talk the childlike out of such ambition.

Self-Doubt (Z)

Notice we are not off the table, but we are at the precipice. The clergy, the headmaster and most of his confidents among the high priests, are in crisis. Wrongs have been committed. The freely proffered wisdom of old seems naïve. Practical compromise is rampant. Some aspects of the faith are irreconcilable together. Rationalization gnaws at everyone.

The god itself is pleased but turns out he's not the saintly persona envisioned. Simply put, you hate your lord and master as an uncouth pig-faced death dealer. Could be worse, he might be secretly out to replace you with a simulacrum.

The player will either be part of the phenomena from start to finish. Else, it ends here. He had his experience playing god and promoting god and changing the lives of hundreds of thousands, mostly for the worse. Wait, before the player character self martyrs, no one truly controls this. The

dagger seems held to the headmaster's throat, a poison cup at his lips, but no god is going to let his best and brightest go down so easy.

The choice the player makes is not, end himself or walk away. The choice the player makes is PC vs NPC. Do you hand over the character to the Ref to run for the rest of his game life. Yes or no? There's lots of mischief and dishonor the Ref can commit; he probably won't, probably. Is it time to retire the role to NPC status. Be busy in your affairs as much as any figurehead is.

The other option is to stay and see the faith become mainstream. Then slowly reform again at Start (B). You might also just manage the monolith half-ass and go off the adventure, sometimes recognized as the potential hostage for ransom you are. You'll have all those adventure Twists and Rivals, plus all the Church generated ones. Your friends will not complain; they know the willowy assassins quite well, the betrayed faces of the flock who offered trust and lived to see that trust abused.

Wait, there is an arrow that goes to Ouster (Z). Read ahead if you dare. Kicked-out of your role in the eleventh hour, on the front porch of victory, sweet irony. Cruel but there is dignity perhaps in going down with a fight. Unless that fight is four men holding you in a throne and pouring acid down your ousted throat!

Ouster (AA)

Picture a long table, a majority raises their hands to accept the resolution. The headmaster is replaced by his protégé. The god in the corner nods and dissolves leaving the air stifling with brimstone. That's one outcome.

More likely the player headmaster will be whipped or walked through the streets naked. He may be found on a dung-floor stable with seventy stab wounds. He may be escorted in brass chains to a carpenter, sealed inside an oak box, delivered to the Dwarven Kingdoms. He might be spirited to the lowest level of the underworld, one that the first available delving company is willing to descend.

The other party members will attempt rescue or restoration. Some could say "*He made that bed, hell no!*" Swap to an alternate role to take part in further play; your headmaster role is cooling his jets until fully healed. What of

death? No problem, super easy, barely an inconvenience, this is fantasy. However, it will not be a simple level five spell or even a Nearly Impossible single task roll for Outlands. The Referee must construct his adventure carefully, multipart. Else, flips some cards and wing-it. The crone states *her potion has three ingredients* that seems to work without fail.

Even after the player headmaster is found, brought back to life and plots his return – he must plot his return. There will be (choice) eight obstacles to his triumph or 2D8 battles to fight. Both?!? The battles can be related to obstacles, but typically battles seem easier in most game systems if the Ref doesn't want to involve himself and expend all this effort for one megalomaniac who wanted to change a nice murder hobo game into a rehash of Professor Douglas' College Philosophy 101.

The obstacles should involve building trust, restoring faith or in opposite fashion discrediting opponents on the following list: Loyalists (those ousted with him, some indeed dead), Cowered yet Integral Minions, Usurper On-High, The Hated Cadre (well known dissidents now returned), Greater Body of Clergy (some in remote places unaware of the power grab), the Laity (confused) and The God Itself (always unhappy with mortals). That's seven? The Ref must add one more unknown. (I like number eight as the other gods, collectively represented by a dragon, who certainly has a point of view.)

Do this marvelous reconciliation and eradication to produce the outcome of Global Acceptance of the religion. Fame for the band, most original members replaced. Until you do so, you will be hunted, opposed, sought for capture and humiliation, even suffering setbacks where you are filled with melted bronze, split into four parts, as those who hide each piece also take their own lives in service of the god. Dead men tell no tales; except they do in fantasy with mediums aplenty. Enjoy.

Global Acceptance

Too many people have household altars to make your god ever again languish as irrelevant. The main question is whether the player character high priest made it from start to finish. His great idea or usurpation of some stale sacramental trust could be rewarded with historic legacy. Check that Fame Ignoble. How long will it last? Most players will simply wonder if they should start over and see if they can be two for two. That would take another sizable investment in time and effort. Enjoy the dice rolls.

Note on Usage: The Ref may skip forward and backward, only to return to the place where the temple has ostensibly advanced in religious status. Sure, have the players spend some time Fostering Riots (early-on) or Playing Politics, just remember where the true temple is at in Letter Event. These out of sequence encounters should be used just to add variety or to handle especially desperate states in the advancement. Otherwise, the temple of course is trying everything and is everywhere in the flow to survive. They just haven't quite reached the point where something like, that Politics, will have the lasting effect needed for true change. For instance, they might need to Foster that Riot at (R), and at the same time have some of the brethren take actions on Play Politics (P) to keep one local city-state from sending in the legions. Yet the result takes them back to Challenged and Triumph (M) to then move-on.

Best of the Best

This flow chart should be used just once. Maybe treat it like a module and only the Ref should know what's ahead. After the players run the gamut and reach the finish, they may never want to experience this ordeal again. Smart fellows. Yet some will want their turn to set the record straight. Only takes one player character to start the faith. The rest of the group will be hanging on for the ride or from nooses looped over branch bows. Yet should the same chart happen twice? There are many ways to snake the group through. Could work.

Go ahead, mess things up. Make your own chart or at least swap some of the lettered events around. It's your campaign. (No it isn't – it's ours, the group.)