

# TRENCH CRUSADE

It is the year 1914, and Hell has literally broken loose. Not all of it. The greatest among the fallen angels, and powers older or as mightier than they, remain bound far from the mortal realm by ancient treaties with God. But ever since the Knights Templar committed the Act of Ultimate Heresy after the First Crusade captured Jerusalem, Hell's forces have marched unceasingly to defile God's creations.

Damned souls bound to their mutilated corpses clutch their disembodied heads, as they foretell Hell's final victory over heaven. Armies of heretics awed by the Archdevils' might maim, kill and burn in Hell's name. Swarms of vermin devour the very vitality from the land, spawning only aberrations. Warlocks wield soul-splintering power from afar while quasi-demonic champions carve through steel and flesh with contemptuous ease.

Yet not every human has knelt to Hell's advance. Much of mankind stands ready to slay the demon, whether in solemn duty or zealous penitence. Moving fortresses obliterate armies with unprecedented firepower. Alchemical masters unleash explosive concoctions or unique lifeforms on the battlefield. Pilgrims accompany their massive battle-shrines into glorious martyrdom, while assassins slit the throats of Hell's conspirators from the shadows.

God remains ever-distant. Yet His aid, awe-inspiring even at a distance or delivered by angelic proxy, remains with those who keep faith with Him. That His wrath can wipe cities from the map may prove the absence of more direct divine intervention to be testament to His forbearance, that the world may endure without breaking from exposure to holy immanence.

Life is harsh in the mortal realm. Militarised as a necessity, and oft tainted by death or desolation. But in Hell, there is truly only suffering. For the fallen angels loathe and hate God's creation as only a rightfully disowned child can hate their almighty parent, so much that the torment and distortion of souls is more than mere strategy. It is the purest expression of their hatred of all God loves.

This war is all there is for you. Take 1000 CP, and choose damnation or the hate of Hell.

## Locations

This world is vast, and there are as many ways to worship God as there are dark forces devoted to spiting Him. You may begin anywhere on Earth or in Hell, although the latter is extremely inadvisable. **Even to most demons.**

## Age and Gender

God welcomes all children into His embrace, while Hell hates almost all of mortalkind equally. You may be any gender and age you please, as long as both are suitable for combat roles. As some in this world may by nature or augmentation have vastly longer lives than men, this explicitly accounts for a centuries-old ghost or a fallen angel that has lived before time itself.

## Origins

There are many nations, cults, movements and otherworldly factions that vie for dominance in the mortal world. All may, however, be broadly divided into two overarching positions. In addition to the free origin you select here, you will be sorted into one or two macro-origins defining your relation to God.

Either **The Remaining Faithful** or **A Stranger Heresy** may be taken as a Drop-In option.

**The Faithful:** Here are listed all the earthly nations loyal to Heaven and God, also known as Allah. Together they mercilessly purge the forces of Hell, cull their heretic slaves and hope to someday lay low their demonic masters. Not all factions see eye to eye, the tension between Christianity and Islam being particularly fierce, but all have agreed to put aside their differences in the name of destroying demonkind.

- **The Principality of New Antioch:** For three hundred years, this fortress-city has been the bulwark of Christendom in the west against Hell's harshest torments. Eight sieges have failed to breach it's 77 towers, reinforced by battle shrines embedded with hundreds of devout Anchorites. Even after the original city of Antioch was destroyed by a demonic weapon the volunteers are as devout as they are diverse, the government viciously rebukes the slightest deviation from Church doctrine (though they give their soldiers plenty of time to make merry before their next battle), and factories blaze night and day in tandem with techno-

laboratories. Each vital to fuelling a crusade that will only end when the last sinner or demon has been castigated for their perdition.

- **The Synod of Strategic Prophecy and the Church:** Though staunchly supporting the faithful of New Antioch, the Church has its' own divisions and holy warriors who bound more to God and sacrament than mortal military affairs. In utmost secrecy they track the movements of the Ark of the Covenant, refine the blood of the Second Meta-Christ and open their minds to God that He may use them as channels for His righteous wrath. The costs they pay for this are grievous, for God is too great for mortal flesh to easily bear his presence, and the Church tasks its greatest champions with quests into Hell against the demons' aristocracy. But there is no room for fear or doubt in the embrace of faith. *In Domino Deus.*
- **The Trench Pilgrims:** No mortal nation has a monopoly on the grace of God. As Hell vents its' rage on the world men receive visions, women are marked by stigmata, and sinners are called to atone. Those who are mad and maimed are difficult to separate from the God-touched and truly repentant, save that these disorganised groups revere representatives of the Lord and fight with utmost zeal. Though not officially sanctioned by the Holy See, the Church nonetheless blesses all those who oppose the demon. Whether one incinerates sinners in the name of St. Olga as a Penitent of Pious Revenge, crushes them with hammers as a Pilgrim of the Iron Path in the name of Saint Rita, or takes their heads as trophies as part of the Theban Legion of Rome, there is no hesitation among them in returning Hell's rage sevenfold.
- **The Iron Sultanate:** When foreign infidels opened the thrice-cursed Gate to Jahannam (also known as Hell), the Creator of the Universe manifested a mighty Iron Wall of Dhu al-Quarnayn, as was written in scripture. A call was sent to the righteous, second only to the Hijrah of the Prophet himself, across Europa, Asia and Africa. The millions who perished at the hands of the many Shaytens along the way died preserving much of the lost knowledge from ancient times. Mosques of white marble and gold now shelter the faithful even as powerful artillery and alchemical wonders punish the unclean with devastating force. There is an understanding between Church and Sultanate that Hell (also known as Jahannam) is an

enemy that brooks no infighting, although the commanders of any given expedition sometimes succumb to mutual resentment.

- **The Order of Assassins:** There is a stronghold upon a mountain called Alamut, the Unconquered. It lives up to its name: No warband of the Court of the Seven-Headed Serpent has ever approached this citadel, both the Order of the Fly and even the Black Grail itself recoil from it, and though Abaddon has promised eternal youth as a reward no amount of Heretic Legions has approached Alamut, which is also called the Eagle's Nest, without falling to poison. A dagger in the back. Or simply disappearing. Within its walls, a militant order trains ceaselessly in the arts of subtle death for the glory of Allah and to purge any who would threaten His domain. The Sultanate offers indirect protection in exchange for their services, though the sages who maintain their artillery and their agile warriors alike hold to their own missions before all others. Their lord, the Old Man of the Mountains, commands a fearsome mystique the demons themselves envy.
- **The Remaining Faithful:** There are many others who revere God, or at least defend the world He has created-some of whom may be far removed from the major factions above, others who may fight alongside them yet be far removed from them by old sins. Would you count yourself among the ranks of the technologically advanced Britons or Prussians? Are you a rider from faraway Finland, trained to punish Hell's legions for fighting a land war far away from the warmth of its flames? Perhaps you are even a member of the mysterious Sacred Order of the Dragon, said to have impaled a million heretics in the hills of Wallachia after the destruction of Byzantium. So long as your faith remains true, you have great leeway in determining the specifics of how you came to God and how He empowers your crusade against evil.

**The Heretics:** Here are listed all those mortal movements that have forsaken God, who many call the God-Tyrant YHWH. Though many have committed innumerable sins against humanity, not all are slaves to the demons of Hell. Some serve more specific or nearer patrons, while others answer to older and stranger powers. Lacking Heaven's grace, *all* these factions are prone to bitter infighting, and some even regularly cull their own membership to make a point.

- **The Heretic Legions:** When Hell was unleashed, a third of humanity bent the knee before it's idols, a sickening echo of the first great rebellion against God that is perhaps the only thing the fallen angels still hold sacred amidst their spite and hate for all creation. They carve off layers of their own flesh in ecstatic offering to Baal (also known as Beelzebub), build inverted pyramids of iron and black stone to store weeping captives for gruesome violation, and crucify those condemned by Hell's law on cathedrals dedicated to the Princes of Hell. As among the forsaken, there is no greater status than to win a place among the Heretic Legions: To have made an unholy pilgrimage to the burning bronze gates of Hell, seared in flesh and spirit as one treads a path paved with insufficiently wicked yet damned souls. Bound by unbreakable vows chaining them into darkness for all eternity and marked by a Devil Lord that has claimed their service, each is a champion embodying wickedness' perseverance. And though Hell sometimes reinforces the Legions with their own misbegotten spawn, it is those legionnaires who continue further beyond the gates of Hell or pay the final price of ritual suicide who are accorded the greatest honours-granted new unholy life as a symbol of Hellish devotion.
- **The Court of the Seven-Headed Serpent:** Atop all of Hell's atrocities sits the accursed Iron City of Dis. It is here that the Infernal War Council, a gathering of the seven most wicked archdevils-each of which champions a cardinal sin-in existence, who prosecute Hell's war against all creation and command Hellish forces the world over. But the hierarchy of Hell is anything but stable. Among the ever-shifting hierarchy of dukes, marquises, margraves, barons, baronesses, paramounts, princes, lords, ladies and other aspirants for diabolical nobility, only Mammon has held an unbroken reign of power for the entire war as the Serpent Head of Greed. For decided by majority of vote and often by the slimmest of margins, the Council offers many chances for opportunities to depose rivals, tear off

their wings and strip away their power-not helped by how the strength of demons waxes and wanes with the number of mortal followers corrupted to their cause. All as the very vilest of damned souls slowly approach the demons themselves in both status and power.

- **The Black Grail:** Alone among the Lords of Hell, Beelzebub scorns his rightful place at the Throne of Hunger and Gluttony (leaving it open for bitter squabbles between the lesser fallen). Instead, he prosecutes his own campaign against creation through a torrent of Hellish vermin and a disease worse than any other known to mortals that can leave land so desiccated that in nine days it devours itself to soothe its insatiable hunger. This plague, the Black Grail, leaves behind ponds of melted flesh and endlessly screaming mouths that the faithful have found no way to halt save by burning the infected with flame. Worst of all, those slain by it-be they men, oxen or even mortal insects-rise again driven by demonic will to spread the festering hate and hunger of Beelzebub. While little more than slaves, by joining this...faction, you are “fortunate” enough to stand among the Order of the Fly: The most depraved of mankind who willingly embrace the Black Grail and satisfy Beelzebub’s ego with their devotion. Thus are they granted arms and armour corrupted by the Archfiend’s hand, in exchange for building grotesque altars to him made from the remains of their victims reshaped like monstrous flies.
- **The Undead Courts:** There are some among the damned that are denied even the flames of Hell. The heretics unlucky enough to fall in battle upon hallowed ground find out that not only are they denied Heaven, but Hell cannot wrest the Earth’s grip upon their once-mortal souls. Thirsting for the glory they once sought in Hell’s hierarchy but denied any sensation other than a desolate emptiness within, the most powerful of these ghosts become mad kings making insane proclamations, wresting command of lesser spectres to enact a pointless rule over barren land and corpses. It is only in battle, and opposition to the living, that ghosts feel the slightest flicker of passion. But however much tribute they bedeck their palanquins and whatever flags they hang, no Ghost King can ever truly fill the yawning absence of what they have forever lost.

- **The Path of the Beast:** The Beast has always existed, even as kingdoms rise and topple like anthills. When mankind embraced the words of the prophets and the promise of salvation, the old ways were pushed to the shadows. But they were remembered in prophecies foretelling the coming of a Beast from the land and the sea, and when the Hellgate opened the Beast prepared to make war with the hated children of YHWH and their invasive laws with what few of its' spawn had survived the eons. To perhaps even the Beast's surprise, finding converts among them was easier than expected: Grief and unrelenting fear from the war, opiates, hunger and poverty had driven many to despair with civilisation. So the Beast's emissaries lure men and women to the wilderness, and unlike the main body of Hell truly wishes to extend a choice to mankind: Be at ease. Reject your weakness, your troubles, your *sentience* and embrace only primal strength. Renounce being made in the image of God, forsake your divine inheritance. Rejoice in howling and the hunt, without end. The Beast offers the gift of oblivion. The war it wages against the laws of both God and man will be a mighty revel to shake Heaven and Earth.
- **A Stranger Heresy:** There are more ways to spite God than are dreamed of in mortal philosophy. Sects championing individual Deadly Sins rather than overseeing Hell at large as the Court does, and even subfactions within the Black Grail who derive greater power from consumption or parasitisation than is normal even for Beelzebub's adherents. There are forces even Hell finds unknowable, such as a certain Church of Metamorphosis-a sect that works unspeakable transformations akin to insectile cocoons that result in both flesh and humanity being shed for insectile divinity, led by the fallen angel ascetic Andromalius but ultimately petitioning a mysterious "god of many forms" who predates the order God brought to the universe. In a doorway 100,000 steps below the depths of Hell, it secretes transformative power from a doorway in a place where a blackened star collapsed in on itself-folding time, space and reality under alien power. Such is the strangeness that Hell proper is willing to tolerate, even if the Court itself is unable to control the strange power beyond this doorway, in the name of resuming war upon Heaven someday.

## Strength of the Heavens, Conflagration of Hell

Great is the gulf in power between those called both to serve, and blaspheme. This section is an add-on to your chosen origin, where you will determine the overall power of your being. Greater costs are typically assumed to be an appropriately exceptional member of a relevant faction, with some examples below, although some factions lack an appropriately powerful representative at the time of writing. In which case you may either assume you have miraculously come upon exceptionally greater power, or are a powerful member from another faction that has decided to champion this one in exchange for reasons of your own.

Due to the open-ended nature of this system, you may likewise have an unusually unfortunate backstory should you decide your nature ranks among the truly divine or diabolical, yet your level of power only match that of mere mortals. You may well have eternal life (or a bitter parody of it) but little else after suffering far greater mutilations than even what hell knights endured, for example.

*Generally* the abilities listed in this section are either intrinsic, relatively commonplace or ambiguous enough to have no clear source. In the event perks overlap with attributes listed here, feel free to assume you or a companion has what's described by the perk *and* a commensurate benefit.

As you are at war, you may assume to own for free whatever arms, ammunition and armor is standard for your order of being. Some but not all unique entities inherently command higher rank in their organisations while others are shackled to a specific one by that same state by their own faction; where perks offer superior rank, the perk takes priority through some contrived backstory.

For free, you may be human and nothing else. At least in scope, and overall combat capability.

You may be a living flesh and blood human who may die from plague, blade or bullet. You may be trained as a sniper, medic, combat engineer or simply shock trooper-average enough to do your duty in combat, and nothing more. Or you may be one of the rank and file in the Heretic Legions, unnaturally inured to rigours of Hell and endowed with greater might than most men. In the grand scheme of things, it is all the same. A blade can still lay low a legionnaire. But by the same token, this does not mean you cannot be uniquely blessed among the

faithful at this level-such as a sniper who aims better when blind, bullets guided by Heaven to slay the sinful.

For 100 CP, you may be a step or two above human due to augmentation or unnatural birth.

The Hunters of the Left-Hand Path are one such example: Empowered by oblations to enigmatic beings forgotten even by archdevils, they can reshape their arm into an accursed bow that fires arrows forged from their own blood. Such projectiles can slay lesser beings instantly, paralyse or infuse them with visions of their own demise among other curses. As the leylines of Hell are mirrored in creation, they can move through any terrain like it was second nature, locate ambush spots few others can and hide in shadowy alcoves present where space-time is loose.

For eccentric sorts, this is also the level required to be a Homunculus: A creature of artificial life and intellect created through alchemy, with fine motor skills beyond any human alive. Though smaller than mankind in stature and deformed, it can change its consistency into slime, as well as endure extreme temperatures and chemical dangers with ease. By default, something has gone wrong but not *catastrophically* wrong with your creation, such that you seem to lack the reflexive loyalty such beings have to the alchemist which made you but otherwise have all the skills that make you such a valued tool of creation.

For 200 CP, you are noticeably greater in stature and combat prowess than human.

The pit-locusts are one such example, iron-clad abominations with insectile bodies but gruesomely humanoid features who overran the entire Levant with greater endurance than any horse while ceaselessly tormenting those who would not bow to Hell with their stings.

The Yoke Fiends are another example: Stillbirths of cursed devils crossbred with beasts of the field for over a thousand generations, until the resulting 7-8 foot tall monstrosity has only the faintest sliver of divinity and enough self-awareness to hate itself for being good for little more than tearing apart flesh and bone.

For those who prefer finesse to force, being a Goetic Sorcerer is another option. Forged from a sliver of a fallen angel that died while being cast from Heaven, their corpse-like appearances are a result of being neither dead nor alive from being suspended at exactly when their divine life ended. Though their celestial

legacy leaves them little more than the power to float above ground, Sorcerers retain the ability to channel Hell's magic (normally conferred by greater demons to supplicants) and spend their existences retrieving dark arts to master. They can shape for themselves multiple mouths, many arms or other augmentations- seldom overwhelming in battle, but inhumanly useful for casting sorcery.

And mercifully, for those among the faithful this is also the price needed to be a Communicant: A human augmented by eating the flesh and blood of a Meta-Christ. Such beings grow to 13-foot heights and musculature sufficient to wield weapons the size of men, and while still deformed they see clearer while blind and all but critical wounds close in seconds. You are fortunate enough to retain your mind through the process with this, leaving you with merely strength enough to fire an anti-material rifle powerful enough to shatter a tank with one hand.

For 400 CP, you can be a dominant presence on the battlefield through nothing more than brute force.

The hell knight is the foremost example of such beings. Once mighty mortal champions raised to devilhood or lesser fallen angels, their devil-lieges cast them from Hell's burning palaces and folded their bodies a thousand times over to be entombed as broken frescos of squirming divine flesh within once-splendid armour as a prison. Though the secrets of creation they once held are crushed silent by obsession with their own torment, such is the strength they still have that they can tear through tank armour with their axes and their armour is proof against almost any mortal projectile. If they should need even greater power, the seal of their devil-liege and the corpse-candles around them allow hell knights to channel goetic magic.

Those who prefer refinement to brute force may instead be a Praetor instead: A bastard offspring of devil and beast, often set in authority over hell knights and yoke fiends despite their parents' contempt due to their purer devil blood. Towering over most lesser creatures and endowed with 4 faces like their celestial forebearers (though the midwives of Lilith tear away their human one), their words form a melody of hypnotic lies that corrupt words and minds, while their fanged wings belch gore whenever human blood is spilt in their name-a valuable fuel for Goetic magic. Though less durable than hell knights, Praetors have the privilege of training in the esoteric fighting pits of Dis or proper tutelage in sorcery. Thus, they may combine strikes with blazing ancient swords and caustic curses with more flexibility than their stunted former peers.

The Sultanate answer to the hell knight is known as a Lion of Jabir. Artificially created through an alchemical process known as takwin, they take many forms- not all leonine, and many having more naked flesh etched with alchemical seals with only a face or similar parts evoking the beasts they are named for. The speed and ferocity of such beings is such that in addition to alchemical metals melted into their flesh, nothing short of a hell knight can stop one from pulping entire armies of lesser foes. Some even have strange powers imbued into them by their alchemical creation, though such beings are equally prone to pain from flaws in their creation.

For 600 CP you can be a living superweapon of some sort or other. Likely the personal masterwork of an archdevil, or the lightest touch of God on the mortal plane.

When thousands or even millions have their entrails cut out and arranged in abhorrent mandalas, when the air fills with the chanting of Beelzebub's cultists and clouds of flies-when, in short, the Black Grail's dark work has reached fruition. Then within 13 days, the still-living are horrifically merged into a hundred foot-tall armoured titan: A Hegemon of the Black Grail. As a shadow of Beelzebub on Earth, Hegemons have all the perverse intellect of a lordly fallen angel and unmatched command over the Black Grail's spread and infection-even able to reanimate corpses beyond the grave. Whole tank corps have struggled against such a monstrosity-those of which can survive the miasma of rot and lesser abominations it spreads, anyhow.

Mercifully, you can instead be a Paladin: A near-perfect Communicant infused with the purest blood that the Meta-Christ program can produce. Gifted with near-perfection of human mind and body, it is a testament to your resilience that you may make war even in the very depths of Hell for centuries and endure-even scarred and burned. Your spiritual power is great enough to pass through Jerusalem's Vale of Tears, and even the horrors of Hell's open maw cannot daunt you. Such is the power you wield that a lone paladin fell in battle destroying one of the Hegemons of the Black Grail despite the disparity in size. Coupled with the Church's lack of success in creating new members of your kind in centuries, and you are considered not only the ultimate weapon of Christendom against demonic onslaughts-but one of its' most precious.

Finally, for 800 CP you can enter the domain of fallen angels and mortals that have undergone a sort of apotheosis-far lesser than the true God, but great enough that little on the battlefield poses a threat to such beings save another of their magnitude.

Succoth-benoth, Childe of Baphomet, was born from their parent impregnating their own womb with their diabolical seed. A *truly* pureblooded demon in every sense of the word. Sought after by many heretical warbands, Succoth-benoth grants their devotees Hell's wisdom and insidious eloquence, able to dominate most mortals against their will. They can grant magic which can shape body and mind like clay, leaving others as slaving monstrosities-or more commonly, heaps of lifeless flesh. Cities, castles and landscapes of similar scope burn at their command, and the Childe demand the intestines and eyes of captured enemies and animals to pass through flaming altars so they may add the flesh to their horrific mass. Succoth-benoth may only be one among Hell's nobility, but should it ever find a way around the Covenant that bars Hell's direct intervention on Earth, the results will be catastrophic for all mortals.

The Zygotic Lord is the ultimate destination for the Path of the Beast. Those precious few who avoid devolution into mere half-animal monstrosity find themselves at the end of a metaphysical labyrinth where Behemoth awaits: God's first creation, which predates the rest of the world. Behemoth is within you. Behemoth is within everything that has the capacity for wildness. You are newly born, a mere embryo, every drop of blood and inch of bone, but now your cellular automata will develop in accordance to two things now superseding the Divine Plan's shackles on your biology: Your will, and the hate that the Beast holds for both God and those bound by His limitations. In your most lowly aspect, you are still large enough to crush a man in your hand like a mouse, expand your biomass into flexible yet mighty tendrils, and give yourself as many limbs and maws as you desire. And you will only grow, as the engine of evolution drives you to higher heights. No forest or mountain cave will conceal the fullness of your being, and your howls will subjugate but embolden all lesser wild things with ecstatic frenzy, yet shatter the minds of the civilised by revealing the labyrinth you walked in all it's awful genetic possibility-leaving them catatonic without extreme willpower. None can speak of what other apocalyptic powers you might evolve beyond these. You may not have a mind as mortals understand it anymore, but you know better than any that raw animal instinct has a will and intention all on its' own that you are now a part of.

## Perks

Perks are discounted by 50% under their relevant background header.

Discounted 100 CP perks are free.

### The Principality of New Antioch

**Combined Arms (100 CP):** New Antioch's yeomen lack the grounding in battle and even ambition many other factions have. Fortunately, like them you've learned to compensate with ingenuity. Using sword and bow and gun in tandem or picking up new types of weapon is second nature to you. Your skill with thrusting a spear grants insight into loading and aiming a rifle, and you quickly intuit how to lead with a few shots while keeping yourself safe with a shield.

**Privilege of Command (200 CP):** The favoured son or daughter of a noble line, while you may have no particular blessings (or mercifully, Hell-given curses) in your bloodline what you do have is a certain level of *social* cachet. Here and in other worlds, you have some sort of noble lineage that always justifies a lieutenant's position in military command-or one of commensurate privilege. This comes with a small level of fortune in finding valuables on the battlefield, or getting away with requisitioning your preferred resources outside the chain of command. But no lieutenant survives long on the battlefield without competence, and so you are also as gifted a tactician and strategist as New Antioch can ask for: Skilled in drilling recruits into soldiers, making use of scarce supplies and forming disciplines tactical movements to abate the enemy's frenzied charge.

**Miracles of Medicine (400 CP):** Oft overlooked for more glory-hungry figures, a Trench Cleric's gifts of prayer and healing can mean the difference between life or death for his unit. You have been touched by Heaven sufficiently to fulfil this role. Through faith and chanted prayer you can knit flesh and bone back into pristine health, purge demonic plagues and render your allies temporarily invulnerable to most forms of harm. God has also empowered you to smite the wicked: Manifesting as walls of sacred fire, blasts of blinding light and similar holy miracles. Your powers are relatively localised, scale with your faith and devotion, and overuse can result in burst capillaries or madness. But that price could mean the difference between certain defeat and a dramatic upset against Hell's champions.

**Holy Steel (600 CP):** New Antioch's greatest breakthroughs in battle have been forging together faith and engineering, something you are now gifted at. You have a special affinity for creating the divine metals of this world, and through some blessing can continue to replicate the formula of Orichalcum Steel even in other worlds, creating a metal effective against almost all missiles at lower cost than all others in this world. Through experimentation and faith, you may also create other blessed metals like sacred silver that burns demons and wicked spirits to purified ash. But aside from being able to create more such metals and innovate others at unprecedented efficiency, your use of invasive augmentations such as New Antioch's mechanised armor is completely unprecedented. They place almost no strain on you, but you can push them far past their limits in combat-surpassing structural weaknesses with zeal. Wherever you go, all metal smites the wicked and defends the faithful with noticeably greater efficiency even in mundane ways. Fight to defend humanity, and you'll likely soon be canonised as a Saint of Iron.

### **The Synod of Strategic Prophecy and the Church**

**Constant Vigilance (100 CP):** The Church is all too aware that demonic influence can abuse its own works after the corruption of the crusaders. Like a more practical holy man, you are also well-versed in spycraft. In codebreaking, unseen movement and detecting subtle influences both mundane and spiritual. Though perhaps not as overall combat trained as a regular soldier, this also makes you experienced in silencing foes quickly and quietly.

**Tactician-Saint (200 CP):** There are youths with great sensitivity to the spiritual world, who the Church tasks with the grim duty of aging a year with every heartbeat in order to commune with the wisdom of long-dead saints. You are not one of those unfortunates. You are *so much more*, perhaps touched by God's angels to alleviate their burden. All your senses are able to perceive and thus allow you to physically interact with spiritual presences like translucent smog. This also lets you commune with beings of great spiritual presence, be they saints or demons, while being significantly resilient to any backlash or strain upon your soul-such that you would not age at all from performing the same mechanised duty the others before you have.

Observance (400 CP, optional undiscounted 100 CP surcharge): Second only to the perfected communicants known as Paladins, you have endured the gruelling training needed to become an Observer. Through absolute solitude and disciplined training, you have gained the ability to attune to the Voice of God-and to be His wrathful fist. God's omniscience, even limited by a mortal mind (and diminished even should you be immortal), lets you perceive the immediate past, present and future. The guidance of God lets you move the minimum required to avoid any harm, while almost lazily stabbing unerringly into where the enemies of God are weakest. But this gift is maintained by strict concentration, and disruption to your attunement would render you as vulnerable as any mortal soldier on the battlefield.

Comes with a free Oculus Helmet in order for a mortal to take advantage of this attunement, as well as to replicate it in order to compel obedience from any creature in creation with a short demand.

Be warned: The words of God are as everlasting as He is, forcing all known Observers to resort to heavy chemical sedation in order to sleep from their resonance even without the helmet on. For 100 additional, undiscounted CP you may achieve a communion even more intense than they with one simple boon: You can sleep just fine even as the words of God echo within you due to the sheer force of your concentration, which also makes it noticeably harder to break your concentration on them.

Sufficiently Studied Faith (600 CP): If New Antioch's wisdom lies in marrying engineering to faith, then the Synod's genius lies in applying the scientific method as a whole to theology. To create great arrays of satellites and difference engines designed to parse some of God's responses to the many prayers sent his way. To manufacture the Arks of the Signal's synaptic cables and chemical tubes, which allow the Synod to analyse the most elusive Words of God. And, someday, to complete the sacred geometry making up the Gate of God: A steepled tower designed to be the perfect conduit for God's voice in absolute clarity.

You are closer than any other to finishing that great work, and in future worlds may channel, amplify and refine more efficient uses for divine forces using similar technology based on analysing divine relics, miracles and the like. Though it may be heretical to emulate any other than the Almighty, perhaps one day you'll build a teleporter pad that can summon and imbue with power champions from other

world without an isekai deity as an intermediary. Or construct a lightning rod that can convert a nuclear reactor's energy into the thunderbolts of Zeus.

### **The Trench Pilgrims**

**Iron of the Spirit (100 CP):** There is a wellspring of zeal in you that burns as bright as any true believe in this world. Whether it be in God, or sin, or your own sheer force of will, your faith is such that you could treat arrows as flesh wounds until the end of combat and remain undaunted by the sight of towering demons trampling your foes. The raw passion within your breast drives you to give your all without distracting you from whims, readying you to not just die but live every moment for the cause.

**In Devotion, Truth (200 CP):** Whether by rapturous encounter with Christ's own wounds or the Virgin Mary healing leprosy, there is an undeniable connection between suffering and divine providence you have internalised. The more you bleed, sicken or are cursed, the stronger and deadlier you become. A man's unbroken arm hits hard enough to send another tumbling to compensate for his shattered limb. A nun with raw wounds gracefully wields two blades to cut down the heretic faster than the eye can see. This divine clarity extends to greatly accelerated healing outside of combat, for the Lord surely wishes to preserve His most devout until worthy martyrdom.

**Vanguard of the Faith (400 CP):** Be they ruthlessly devout castigators or the thunderous Lazarus Prophets, those who lead the Trench Pilgrims blur the line between charisma and charismata as their sheer force of personality shapes the flow of battle. You are of course, an impassioned speaker. The words that whip your followers into a frenzy of devotion or strike fear and shame into your foes come naturally, letting you guide even an untrained flock adroitly in the heat of battle. And as their faith buoys you up, you gain the power to perform miracles answering that faith: Literally striking fear away from your followers with a ceremonial flail, quelling the agony of near-mortal wounds on nearby followers, or demonstrating resilience like unto a stone against demonic might. Such miracles lean towards the subtle, but can affect the majority of those who believe in you so long as their faith in you is true.

Sainthood (600 CP): Only a handful of individuals have, generally through overcoming personal suffering, attained the vaunted title of Sainthood among the more disorganised faithful. You have joined those ranks now-immortal if you were not before such that your form simply remains unmarred by any *mundane* physical harm, greatly resilient to all malevolent spiritual forces, hovering instead of walking-and traversing miles at a time unseen save by those you view as requiring your tending. There is also a certain miracle associated with your legend that you can perform freely and at will-very specific, but extremely potent within its field. Perhaps you can baptise others to not just cure any disease, but have them rise haler, more beautiful and mightier than before. Perhaps even a softly spoken word from your melts Heretic armour into rivulets of molten metal and ignites the bullets of the wicked in their magazines. You may be a mere whisper of God in the mortal world, but you are as undying as any of his words.

### **The Iron Sultanate**

Improvised Loadout (100 CP): Those called to the Sultanate's frontlines are driven by dreams of glory and accomplishment, respect and recognition. *Seldom* proper military training. No matter. The harshness of desert survival provides! You are well-versed in making and using effective improvised weapons out of whatever garbage you have lying around-beating an old plough into a cudgel, or bending iron nails into bullets. A pouch of coins is just a very fast club for the wrist and joints, in your skilful hands.

Jabirean Warrior (200 CP): Captured in raids beyond the Sultanate's borders and indoctrinated at an early age, the Janissaries are an elite cadre of warriors utterly devoted to the Sultan's protection. You are, mercifully, *not* a Janissary. No, you're just a similarly skilled warrior who happened to do a great favour for an alchemist that augmented you similarly under the table. The spiritual enchantments and alchemical elixirs have made you mighty, swift and enduring enough to crush elite formations, vault across trenches and infiltrate enemy strongholds on your lonesome. Even your mind is so bolstered that demonic curses struggle to find purchase on it. Much like the Janissaries, you're quite the spectacle in combat-though it would be wise to attribute your gifts to the grace of Allah before anyone makes a suspicious connection between them and the Sultan's bodyguards.

**Splendour of the Sultanate (400 CP):** Glorious is the tribute awarded to those who serve the Sultan well. You live the dream many a recruit to the Sultanate merely fantasises about: Wealth finds its way into your hands as sand falls into the desert, the treasure you retrieve from the battlefield and the returns on your investment seemingly blessed by Heaven. Your deeds are recognised and appreciated by your superior above most men, and they shower you with privileges some men must work years or give their lives in combat for. *Truly* the Sultanate is the *only* civilisation that thrives even as the apocalypse approaches.

**Alchemist (600 CP):** Alone among the dominant civilisations of the faithful, the Sultanate retains the knowledge of how to blend science and sorcery through knowledge preserved on the legendary Samargdine Tablet in the House of Wisdom. To begin training as a Jabirean Alchemist requires seven years of study in the Keys of Solomon, the Fundamental Disciplines and the Jabirean Corpus. Then the Three Trials must be completed: Crafting a suit of armour festooned with the Seal of Solomon which lets the alchemist bend the elements of Creation to their will while being unscathed by Hell's toxins. Creating a Homunculus, the key to shaping greater artificial lifeforms like the Lions of Jabir that are as mighty as they are loyal to their makers even in the face of existential anguish. And opening their Third Eye: A metaphysical organ that allows alchemists to not just perceive the building blocks of creation but maintain them in perfect balance.

You have done all these things. As a result you can shape fire, ice, metal and liquid as both projectiles and into devastating alchemical concoctions that melt even the toughest armour. With more time and resources, you can create intricate mechanical devices such as lifelike eagles made of mechanical components, and calamitous weapons that can wipe cities off the map.

### **The Order of Assassins**

**Scholar of Daylam (100 CP):** Not all who haunt the halls of Daylam (that which outsiders call Alamut are hardened killers. There is great demand for men of letters, for scholars and engineers and historians. Choose a field of learning- history, mathematics, engineering-even occultism, knowledge of angels and demons and the spiritual practices by which they made be harnessed, bound, warded or emulated. You are now learned enough in them, primarily in an academic rather than practical context, that were the Assassins to know of your gifts they would consider abducting you for a pleasant conversation and some academic collaboration.

**The Milk of Manat (200 CP):** The Supreme Poison, the Cup of Death, is not some brew to be concocted by the hands of foreigners. Beneath the surface of the world, generations of assassins are raised on an awful, bitter diet rich with toxins. Birth by birth, their tolerance grows, until their blood is willingly drawn and smelted into a poisonous iron. Whether or not you were raised as such, your blood too is similarly lethal. You also know the killing curses you can imbue into the metal smelted with your blood and have an innovative genius for concocting poisons both mundane and supernatural-such as the offspring of a basilisk and manticore used to donate a pale, unnatural venom to the already noxious infusions.

The result is a blade that can, with a simple touch on unprotected flesh, kill a victim from blackening rot over several excruciating seconds.

**Secret Knife (400 CP):** Any man can be trained to kill, but you were trained to perfect death as an expression of Allah's justice. To move unseen through the camps of Heretic and demon alike, planting knives in the chests of slumbering lords. To disappear without a trace after leaving behind dead bodies, shattered alliances and entire banquets full of poison. All of this only being the basics. The true power of your sect's training is to bend space and time in localised ways through sacred rituals and hallucinations: To appear in two places at once, strike an enemy then reverse time to one's position a few seconds ago while a body slumps over amidst panic, and flash across short distances in the time it takes one to blink. All of which is further augmented by unguents, chemicals and poisons that render them taller than other men and many times as fast and strong.

So perish all infidels.

**Master of Knives (600 CP):** Little is known of the Old Man of the Mountains, and his visitors are fearful of insulting their dread host. You, at least, have reached a level of mastering his killing arts to the point where you could add substance to that legend. You can disguise yourself to the mortal eye as if you were an athletic youth in the prime of life, or as an ancient. A powerful aura of menace pervades you when you will it, your killing intent and the certainty of your ability to take a life invoking a terror as primal as stepping back from a cliff. Moreover, your ability to warp time, space and perception surpasses any assassin. You can make time roil and churn such that men from across a battlefield die of old age before reaching you, render yourself untraceable even when pursuers are guided by the aid of demonic devices, and burn your enemies with soul-consuming flames.

With the training of Secret Knife, you can even attach these effects to specific structures you have performed a ritual at. Last but not least, your familiar with all ordinary methods of killing is so reflexive, such second nature, you could stab a man in the heart while blind, drunk and armed with a hatpin.

How much of your power is unfathomable prowess at killing, and how much sorcery wrested from the grasp of demons or bestowed by angels? Only you know.

### **The Remaining Faithful**

**In God's Name (100 CP):** Despite bitter past rivalries and past transgressions, the faithful stand united under one simple cry for unity: Faith in God, and respect for the salvation he offers all men. You are an excellent diplomatic and negotiator, able to bring together old rivals on similar grounds of mutually beneficial cooperation, while smoothing over differences like language barriers or cultural differences. And from a reluctant collaboration, you can lay the groundwork for a more lasting respect between God's children.

Perhaps this is what the Heavens truly desire, amidst all the disparate faiths.

**Captain of Industry (200 CP):** Though all nations have benefited from the advent of orichalcum, not all have the luxury of indefinite supplies of it. By some miracle though, all endeavours you have some form of meaningful involvement in are several times as efficient, and use up fewer resources. Sooner or later your pockets will run dry and the mines will cough up their last lump of ore, but your soldiers will revere you for being able to offer up an extra half of rations when you need it most.

And yes, you *can* do a lesser version of the party trick with loaves of bread and fishes.

**Lineage of the Meta-Christ (400 CP):** The Meta-Christ's are, in truth, piteous creatures. Cloned from Christ the Redeemer, they seem to want little than for others to partake of their flesh and blood (or so the monks attending to them say) even as they themselves are desiccated so that others may be uplifted. You are, mercifully, not a Meta-Christ. But somehow, one's blood runs strongly through you. Your bodily fluids are greatly imbued with the power of God-bettering and uplifting all they fall on. The blessings they confer might be less extreme than those of a communicant, but they also confer no adverse alterations at all, and their dispersal can be modified for greater effects as the Church did to create the

Paladins. Last but not least, however diluted you maintain a genetic connection to the Lord, and thus a gift that Hell hates and covets: The power to truly *create*, from the mundane to the miraculous to the very bones of the world. It is a modest gift, for now. A man could perhaps grow a mustard seed into a mighty tree in seconds or make cleansing water spout for a rock with a simple tap with ease, and with exhausting effort raise one of the dead even if hellfire had consumed them utterly. But such a gift will grow with your overall power.

Jedidiah (600 CP): Undeniably, some were cherished far more by God than others. King Solomon for example was not just permitted but sanctioned to take a harem of wives, bring demons to heel and rule a nation even as he praised the Lord with every waking breath. There is something about you that preordains you to wise rulership, bountiful windfalls of both mundane and supernatural wealth, as well we extraordinary favour from benevolent divinities with *tremendous* operational leeway. I you must still at least pay lip service the doctrines of any deities you woo, but should you abide even the letter of scripture rather than the spirit you will be showered with blessings beyond many saints and be punished far less for your missteps. Wisdom into the innermost workings of reality as well as mastery over the means to control them, authority over the nations as your coffers overflow, a bevy of powerful allies and loving partners, artifacts that could build or end nations, and blessings on par with casting down fire from heaven or bears upon your enemies will all be yours in a matter of weeks as long as you make an honest effort at acting with wisdom.

### **The Heretic Legions**

By Torment Made Whole (100 CP): Agony. Sorrow. *Such irrelevant trifles*. Your mind is hardened to the screaming of innocent flesh broken apart for sale in Hell's markets. Your body is numb to the pain of hellfire underfoot, to any wound too shallow to cut into your organs. You have the resilience of one who has made the pilgrimage to Hell's gates and returned ready for war. No horror lesser than Hell's nobility can overwhelm you now.

Death Commando (200 CP): Barracked in the seventh layer of Hell, from a young age the Death Commandos are brutally trained in poisons and weaponry by the archdevil Beleth. They slither like serpents through the battlefield, and strike with blades faster and sharper than their fangs. Whether by taking down targets unseen, mowing through battalions in a whirlwind of violence, or preparing advanced hell mechanisms for specific missions, these warriors are

familiar with discarding every last scruple or trace of honour to complete their missions. You are not *necessarily* a Death Commando seeing how the final trial of their training requires the removal of their tongue, but if not one yourself you've somehow picked up the skills.

**By Sin Consumed (400 CP):** There are wretches, gourmands and even priests obsessed with consuming their petitioners' sins who found themselves distorted by their hunger for human flesh tainted with sin. Their bodies swell, ripened with inner foulness, forever on the cusp of tragically bursting from their overindulgence. Mercifully this has *not* happened to you yet. Rather, there is a specific sin-either one of the deadly seven, or another material or carnal indulgence-that heals your wounds, restores your spiritual power and empowers you rapidly the more you indulge in it. It even reshapes your body, mind and soul permanently in localised but noticeable ways over weeks and months of indulgence to both embody and indulge the sin-a wrathful man rippling with muscle but also learning to turn brother against brother by laying bare the wrath of others, for example. If the so-called Sin Eaters are an example of overindulgence, you're benefiting from a balanced diet.

**Paragon of Patronage (600 CP):** Ultimately, for all their zeal few warbands survive long without a patron. Fortunately, through a combination of having a particularly *delicious* soul and dedicated study of Hell's laws, you've become extremely good at getting the best out of devil's bargains and attracting well-suited patrons. Though Hell's patrons typically demand unquestioning loyalty and obedience, you can negotiate much greater operational leeway than is usual through shows of devotion and flattery combined with fantastic intuition for your patron's own skin in the game-and a lot of luck now on your side. Though demons may still demand the eyes and entrails of captured enemies, it will take far fewer to win wellsprings of might-bolstering and eternal youth-sustaining blood, or have them intercede to set cities ablaze. The ever-binding vows such patrons seek to impose for further gifts hang looser for you, and may even be renegotiated with their favour.

Technically this also helps to attract and work with mortal or even angelic patrons, although know that being heretical at all is a massive disadvantage for such a premise.

## **The Court of the Seven-Headed Serpent**

**Fire of Ambition (100 CP):** No demon rests easy on his throne. Even the Serpent's seven heads bicker and snap at each other for dominance. To secure blackmail, test the defences of one's enemies at a remove, set others up to fail and read the letter of Hell's law to better ravish it's spirit are all necessary survival skills in Dis. Skills that you have honed enough to play the game of politics against raging immortals. In the mortal world, you'd be a politician or salesman with few equals.

**Thy Soul To Take (200 CP):** The countless oaths, mutilations and damnations that Hell levies on its' slaves are more than just an act of spite against God-they are a systematic methodology in undermining Heaven. As God's plan for the universe is disrupted and perverted, Hell uses the release of primordial energy to further alter reality. By thorough study into the mechanisms of damnation, you have learned many ways to damn a willing or helpless soul into your keeping, all the better to reshape it for your purposes. This goes far beyond deciding whether you want to etch ruins that dissolve skin, conjure insects to eat it or burn it alive. You can perform great workings such as cutting away all that is mortal about a being with supernatural blood so that it becomes a pure instance of its immortal parent, transform others into vessels of your own supernatural power or mutilate others into disruptions in systems such as destiny and karma.

There is one limit: Hell fundamentally lacks the ability to create, only to corrupt and destroy. Every seeming creation of new life by its power is a mere illusion, be it hoarding scraps of divine energy that disperse ever-further, empowering existing life through an unnatural hunger or other ultimately reductive processes.

You may never make anything lasting and beautiful with the capacity to become more than it started as, with this alone.

**Goetic Prodigy (400 CP):** As YHWH declared his Ten Commandments from on high, so too does Hell provide ancient lore of its own. To the uninitiated, Goetic magic is a numinous mystery: A work of bargains, pleas and contracts paid for with torture, sacrifice and torment that grants the power to reshape creation with chant and gesture. This seems true, but is not the full truth: In the strictest sense no human can actually cast Goetic magic, and it is merely handed down like scraps from a befouled feast by demonic patrons. When a heretical priest extends his life through ever-worsening atrocities, a demon worshipper plucks a blazing weapon from thin air that blazes with fires which will never dim, an artillery witch

conjures an explosive lined with inverted words of God that unmake even the toughest armour by unspeaking the basis for their creation, or a warlock necrotise men with his gaze. It is not their own accomplishment. They are but conduits for demonic forces.

You, however, are different. By some freak accident, a sliver of a fallen angel's essence has ensconced itself in your soul. This gives you the ability to use Goetic magic like a demonic sorcerer yourself. You must still learn (and likely prove yourself) Hell's foulest spells, but the ability to channel magic on your own is itself a grand boon. Likewise, you can empower all your magic with torture, sacrifice and torment. It is partly the hunger for agony as spell fuel that drives Hell to rearrange the mortal societies they subjugate into excesses of horror.

**Blood of the Serpent (600 CP):** That the Praetor is prized (as a tool) for the closeness of it's celestial lineage combined with it's bestial blood letting it sneak past the normal restrictions against those who fell in rebellion against Heaven, is testament to how corruption itself is Hell's truest sacrament.

Whatever you are, you are also now the child of one of the current Serpent Heads, an archdevil presiding over a specific sin. This does not contradict any other parentage you have; Hell has many unholy ways of passing on its taint. This of course greatly empowers all hellish and diabolical powers, such that a fiery lash fit to scourge a man could slash across an entire battalion, of course. In particular, you can spread an urge to enact your progenitor's sin stronger than any drink on a scale great enough to corrupt entire cities, gaining power just as any fallen angel would from both the corruption of their souls and atrocities inflicted on the world as a result. As proof of your legacy, you may warp your form into ever-greater expressions of Hellish might and charisma in emulation of your progenitor-similar to that of a Praetor but perhaps more glorious for not necessarily having bestial blood. And as your power rises, your authority over and the sheer power of your sin will increase as well.

## The Black Grail

**Too Foul To Rot (100 CP):** No foulness in this world compares to the touch of the Black Grail, being the very embodiment of Beelzebub's hatred of all creation and yearning to reduce it into a parasite-ridden paean to his own glory. To embrace it is the bare minimum needed to serve as one of his acolytes. Thus, you are inured to the Black Grail, and so to all *mundane* maladies or infestations. Cholera itself chokes and dies on your flesh, leeches shrivel and waste away on your blood. The hunger that taints you is too great to be consumed by lesser beings.

If you are not a Heretic, this may be an antiseptic holy blessing instead.

**Feast of Finality (200 CP):** The Great Hunger is not a tool of corruption or conquest. This strain of the Grail exists only to ensure *nothing will ever grow without Beelzebub's consent*. Some foul magic pervades your blows, shot and spells when you will it to, preventing wounds or other damage you inflict from healing by normal means. Moreover, it infuses the victims with an unnatural hunger that only spiritual means can combat-driving them to devour their pets, their friends, their family, and eventually themselves. The agonising appetite within will never cease until all displeasing to Beelzebub is finally still.

**Herald of the Fly (400 CP):** Not every strain of the Black Grail functions the same way. Some spread the clumsily airborne Cancer Angels, which bubble and mutate the flesh of the living with their mere presence until they shatter into horrific beasts loyal to the Black Grail alone. Others infect the mind as well as the body, enforcing perverse devotion to Beelzebub. You now have your own strain, which you can spread in proportion to your own power-such that an ordinary man could reduce a village to complete defilement in nine days. Optionally it may have its' own quirk, though regardless of its' nature it is fully within your control-allowing you to reshape living beings so long as the changes do not overmuch deviate from Beelzebub's own vision of how the world should be, and eventually letting you create loyal Hegemons from your victims.

Cancerous Amalgamate (600 CP): There is no more *intimate knowledge* than the engulfment of inferior flesh by superior form, wouldn't you agree? Beelzebub has truly blessed you, for you now have a power only his most devout or those most infused with his will are given. Be it living or dead flesh, you can corrupt it as if with a particularly vicious strain of the Black Grail and merge it with your form- incidentally taking any gifts intrinsic to the flesh and souls of those you subsumed, such as the blood of once-celestial beings but not the God-given grace of a saint. The dead meld in seconds while even the mortal living must be restrained for the handful of minutes where they scream and writhe as they are agonisingly added to your form. And though you may grow grotesque with this, as one made in Beelzebub's image no matter how vast your form you will be able to move and think with perfect clarity-the screams of those damned into the Hell of your flesh merely hymns to your twisted mind, as their broken bodies are continuously reforged into the image of gluttonous power. Were you not already, you could eventually become a Hegemon of the Black Grail-or surpass one in power and majesty, as you digest greater and greater feasts.

### **The Undead Courts:**

Emptiness (100 CP): There is nothing that truly belongs to ghosts.

They sinned.

They are bound, but done.

They should be gone, but cannot.

Nothing remains, but to go through the motions.

But nothing does remain. So you can use that.

This loss.

You can dampen any emotion you feel down to a manageably remote level.

Except rage and envy at the living.

Entombment (200 CP): What do those that are gone have other than each other?

Exactly.

The restless dead are not friends, even to each other.

But they can be *fuel*.

There is a magic known to you, that lets you bind the dead to task and cold matter. It costs little enough to wield with gesture and command. But it does cost. Not even this pittance is free.

Power engines with wailing wraiths. Man factory conveyer belts with spirits nailed to their production lines. Infuse the coldness and despair of a ghost, into the blade you trap it in.

Or whatever other attributes a ghost may have, in other worlds.

You must bind each ghost individually.

You must also either exceed them in power, or hold some form of authority or control over them.

Either mystical binding or a spoken oath of loyalty will suffice.

Numbness (400 CP): Those places claimed by the ghost kings take on some of their nature. As if death bleeds them from like sweat from the living.

A coldness like that of winter's darkest moments. A terrible sense of emptiness that fills the living mind with unreasoning horror. A slow decay for all things into dust.

You are particularly adept in spreading this to locations. A recently dead man could give a church such spiritual desolation. The target must be a discrete location but need not be a solid one; you may infuse a small river so that all its' water seeps into partakes of its; haunted nature.

This bleak power will grow as your others do.

If you are mighty enough, if the void you left in the world was truly great, perhaps even blessings, curses and alchemical workings can be withered.

Down.

To.

Nothing.

Hollow Crown (600 CP): What makes a king, over an empire of phantoms?

Power.

Power, in the vaguest and most abstract of abstractions.

The stronger you are, the more you can make ghosts submit and obey you.

This automatically qualifies a merely mortal ghost as great among the Ghost Kings.

But it all means nothing.

It means a *great deal* of nothing.

And so, the more ghosts kneel before you, the easier it is for any means you use to take a life. Be it poison, or the blade, or words. It will take hundreds for any gain, *thousands* for power mortals could notice.

Perhaps someday, even immortal demons may be dragged into the grave by you, saints returned to their loving God at great cost, or mortal soldiers die from your mere presence.

Perhaps if you are kind, you may even free your brethren into one afterlife or another.

## **The Path of the Beast:**

**The Scent of Prey (100 CP):** Few think of beasts as sophisticated creatures, and yet even unreason knows the value of strategy. Your sight, your sense of smell, your hearing-every sense you have is adapted to tracking lesser beings across miles of territory in the dead of night. Moreover, there is something you can do to lure people in a village to any forest within line of sight unless their wills are strong. A haunting song, a waft of intoxicating pheromones, perhaps a limited shapeshifting ability to assume an alluring appearance-whatever it is, you know how to call others beyond the lines of civilisation.

**Revel As The World Shatters (200 CP):** Take what you need. Be at ease. You had no say in the degradation of your telomeres, do you not desire freedom? To all those around you, you may spread a mystical frenzy through howl and song. Those who cling to civilisation feel terror on a primal level, while those who accept the pulsing primal passion are emboldened with supernatural strength, endurance and stamina-fighting and satiating their base urges with no regard for decorum or self-preservation. Paradoxically, the nature of the wild imposes a hierarchy of strength. While those mightier than you might fight for the right to be pack leader, should your strength be sufficient the frenzying beasts will obey you as a wolf's pups obey their parents.

**Horned Priest (400 CP):** There are those who have followed the Path of the Beasts for centuries while maintaining an outward veneer of civility, like a bodhisattva of old that guides others to enlightenment. Theirs is an inhuman wisdom and animalistic yet gifted cunning fit to match the greatest generals and Pashas of New Antioch and the Iron Sultanate. Even amidst the savagery of fellow Path followers, their presence maintains a sort of tribalistic order and authority. Doubtless such beings know how to carve the Bestial Runes on naked skin, granting the primal and savage dark blessings associated with the Beast's godless savagery-or perhaps manipulating forks in the Path that let adherents shed their humanity for the form of a great beast freed from the limits of nature. However you attained it, you now have all these gifts. Doubtless, the nature of the Beast will lend itself well to refining your control over other supernatural forces associated with nature, evolution and primal savagery.

Clay of Creation (600 CP): Upon the skin of Behemoth are painted the Sefirot- and between them, 22 symbols that define the parameters of all creation. It is the destination at the end of the Path, which was walked so that the supplicant can unscramble their flesh, mind and soul from all the shackles placed on them by God so that the supplicant remains a part of His Divine Plan-attaining communion with the Beast instead, and becoming a Zygotic Lord. Long ago, you came close to this destination but stumbled, much as those who do not finish walking the Path settle for merely being one of the shapeshifters in legend instead of a true aspect of the Beast.

It was not in vain, though. Before you stumbled, your fumbling grasp of the Sefirot aligned your very existence with a certain concept lesser than the Beast in scope and power but still great enough to rock the rest of creation back on its' heels. Choose a primal, naturalistic concept less absolute than "God", "Death" or "the Devil" like Predator, Migration, Herd, Fecundity, Flora, Parasite or Crab. Every spiritual and physical aspect of your being is now jailbroken from the nomic limits of creation to express that concept in its' most adaptive and potent form. Fight through battalions as a mortal bearer of the word Predator with your bare hands, healing every wound from splashes of blood and moving fast enough to dodge bullets. Or as the Stag, loom taller than the trees and shed obedient lesser members of the species (still stronger and faster than all horses, still touched by the Beast's power) from your antlers. Your attunement to this concept shall only grow with your overall power. If you should one day become a Zygotic Lord or comparable entity, this concept and the capabilities it grants will be refined in the image of your own will as much as the Beast defines the existence of those made in its image.

## A Stranger Heresy

**A Dalliance With Damnation (100 CP):** Cooperation is the weak chain that shackles the wrists and ankles of the pious. You have no need for that, as one who defies God. You are a prodigious genius in the specific art of gauging when and how best to betray others. While you may not be an expert manipulator with this alone, you can smell weakness from a mile away and expertly intuit how to best hurt someone or take what is valuable to them. The art of the steal is second nature to you.

**The Corpse of Civilisation (200 CP):** The meek shall inherit *nothing* but misery that compounds generation after generation, while the strong use them as they please. When you set civilisation aflame, rob others or rape the Earth for resources, the rewards are all the richer. Though this may not miraculously fill a poor man's house with treasure, there will be less destroyed or stolen in a town as a whole until you have taken your sweet time to select the best offerings. The ore you frack the earth open will be all the more easily processed, the heirlooms you steal sell for more and even the children you enslave prove to be surprisingly good workers. This is how the future should be: A face that cries into your stamping boot, forever.

**A Stranger's Gift (400 CP):** There is a place where space is not space, time does not pass as it does under God's auspices, and existence lacks what mankind calls reason. **Something** so powerful that the fallen angels unlucky enough not to rule the Seven-Headed Court come to them as humble petitioners. It has chosen you to be its prophet, its herald. It asks nothing of you that mortals would comprehend. You are the message, and the messenger. But the more you spread that message to other souls, the more gifts it grants you, as any patron in this world would.

It is not necessarily the sponsor for the Temple of Metamorphosis. **But it could be.**

You are infused with its strange, foreign magics and aberrant way of being-both of which are generally effective at subsuming the things of Earth and bypassing conventional mystic defences. For what defiance can a devil muster against or great act of faith a saint perform against that which they have no context for? The Temple of Metamorphosis itself possess haruspices-like arts for reading knowledge from brain patterns and eggs that provoke spiritual transformation while letting those wise in its ways see through the eyes of acolytes, as well as

perform rites of moulting that let aspirants assume increasingly lethal insectile forms with countless limbs or eerily angelic carapaces, shed cauls with miraculous properties, or even undertake an apotheosis stranger than any known to the rest of Hell. They worship a god of many shapes, and outsiders know no rhyme or reason to the ones he bestows on his supplicants through grub-like symbiotes.

But that need not be the nature of your gift. Perhaps instead of the Behemoth at the end of the Path of the Beast, you align with Leviathan's envy more fundamentally than his cultists, or somehow have made contact with the aerial Ziz. Perhaps instead of a god of many shapes, you worship a god of only one.

Perhaps *you are a worm through time, the thunder song distorts you. Happiness comes. White pearls, but yellow and red in the eye.*

Creation's Marrow (600 CP): The Divine Plan is immaculate and inescapable, so long as all within it accept the God-Tyrant's parameters. But there is a power in corruption. In rotting things, and cheating fate. Be it by the fires of Dis or the breath of life siphoned by a furious wraith, by the jaws of the Beast or the unthinkable rites of a horror beyond this world, there are many ways to shatter the laws of God...and profit richly from the celestial energies bleeding out of it. Through acts of great depravity you either inspire or perpetuate, you can cheat forces considered absolute or certain. A ward against devils may prove pregnable if your greed is particularly *human*. An indestructible relic may be obliterated in the boiling blood of those who died wrathful, a certain prophecy rent awry a great victory against the prophet committed in envy. And where your depravity prevails, you of course reap the greatest wages of sin in cosmic energies rent from the world to infuse yourself-bolstering mana, spiritual energy and other such forces in proportion to how much you've corrupted existence. It may even be possible to fundamentally remake your being into a more twisted, yet greater form-recasting yourself in the image of both your own will, and the forces with which you prevailed over this broken world. Should a man with this lay low armies and take their lives to damn a city so prayer will be forever muted in it, he might rise as a being of immortal flesh, endowed with your own font of celestial energies, and capable of soaring to the gates of Heaven.

## Items

Items are discounted by 50% under their relevant macro-origin header. One 100 CP item becomes free, while the others are discounted by 50%. Instead of being divided by individual factions, item discounts are determined by whether a given origin counts as among the Faithful or Heretics.

### Faithful

**Tools of Martyrdom (100 CP):** This war chest is full of holy icons, symbols and sanctified items with various simple but useful effects for those willing to die for God's glory. Iron caprioles that shield your mind from the horror of Hell, but also incorporate mask masks to protect you from chlorine and mustard gas. Martyrdom Pills that inure the faithful against pain and exhaustion, but extract a brutal toll on the body after a few hours. Silver ammunition blessed to smite fiends. And so on, and so forth. Replenishes every week. You are advised to not be present for the angelic messenger performing the delivery.

This item can be repurchased for additional war chests of small, helpful items.

**Scripture for the Faithful (100 CP):** It is little more than a pile of Bibles, and scriptures written by both ordained saints and those of a literary bent who found favour in God's eyes. But the promise of salvation they hold is real. They are little more than a theological and literary curiosity, unless like the missionaries of old you spread the good news of the Lord from this world to others. Those who believe will be rewarded with blessings similar to those given to the faithful in this one, at the minimum able to heal others of physical, mental and spiritual wounds by laying their hands upon them and smiting the wicked with bolts of light and flame. Particularly devout or virtuous believers may become saints or even call down the intercession of angels in times of great need. And those with great supernatural powers of their own may even enhance their powers with God's glory, creating truly hallowed works that proclaim none are beyond Heaven's embrace.

God asks for little more than devotion and virtue. His love encompasses all, and overlooks none. For mysterious reasons He will not, or (though the very thought is blasphemous) perhaps cannot, affect anyone beyond this world other than those who truly believe. But by the same token, He will never withhold blessings merely because it is inconvenient for you-only prioritising true belief and dedication to His teachings.

Also to the extent that matters, if the faithful die permanently or be reduced to similar fates they will be given the choice to pass on to the Heaven that awaits all true believers here in Trench Crusade.

**Orichalcum Mine (100 CP):** It was the work of St. Eligius, patron saint of metalworkers, that allowed weaponsmiths and armourers to produce steel alloys imbued with divine light. So blessed, this resulted in structures more malleable but harder than any normal steel-resulting in suits of armour that can emerge unscathed from hails of bullets. God's gaze must have touched this rich vein of ore, because it's absolutely replete in already-holy minerals that can be forged into compounds like Orichalcum Steel among other useful holy alloys. Comes with sufficient mining equipment, mechanical automatons and a nearby steelworks to do the harvesting, refining and forging for you.

This item can be repurchased at 50 CP apiece for additional sources of divine metal. It's output refreshes with every jump.

**Reliquary (200 CP):** In this well-warded chamber, a number of saints and their relics have been carefully stored in various crates. A pile of bones, an urn of ashes, a severed hand. The true purpose of these objects is communion with the saints for both the great knowledge they held in life as well as what they can glimpse of the Divine Plan in the next one, but while this room includes the equipment the cost for such undertakings is dire even for the rare few gifted with the capability. Perhaps other spiritual practices may have more success than those from this world? Perhaps more usefully, this room also includes the weapons, icons and armor of the saints-each of which is a potent bane against Hell's forces. A sword that cleaves through unholy flesh like butter while ablaze with light that sears demons and their slaves, a banner that whilst raised heals all the faithful-you'll need to find out what each does individually, though the saints' often obtuse revelations are remarkably clear on such things.

**Mobile Shrine ~~Gundam~~ (200 CP):** Towering thrice as high as a man and almost as wide, this mechanised armour is a prototype based on a collaboration between New Antioch and the Iron Sultanate's research of the Anchorite Shrines piloted by some Trench Pilgrims. The result is what may as well be a walking fortress impervious to most weapons, and festooned with enough holy iconography to be greatly resilient to the curses of Hell as well. The great melee weapons it comes equipped with may offer little more than supercharged brute force, but that force is great enough to sweep hordes of heretics across the battlefield and knock down

castle walls. This shrine can of course be powered solely by the prayers of the faithful. But it's most important attribute is that it does *not* require continuous torture or lethal chemical injections to pilot.

Osher v'Chayil (200 CP): Christendom rebukes gathering the wonders you have aplenty in a conveniently located storehouse that includes underground chambers as vast as a royal palace, but not against *earning* them in righteous war against demonkind. Which by paying CP, you are considered to have. Armour of meteoric iron, blades of Damascus steel, fine carbines gilded with silver, gold dinars for days, wondrously lifelike mechanical animals obedient to you alone and other luxuries are now yours. It need not be solely the luxuries of the sultanate, and you may find yourself furnished with rich brandy, splendid furniture or other gifts found wherever the faithful hold power. You would be advised to spend them wisely, though by divine providence anything expended is replenished within a week.

This item can be repurchased, likely to the aggravation of Mammon.

Tactical Theology (400 CP): The facilities used to refine miraculous workings into useful tools of war are extensive as they are secretive, and somehow you've been put in charge of one. It includes whatever components are strictly necessary to apply theology to the military sciences, be it an eighth Meta-Christ to harvest from or an Ark of the Covenant to use as a reference point for divine communication. So too is it staffed by loyal scholars or monks and/or nuns who are gifted in the divine sciences needed to carry out experiments or make appropriate components, or optionally by automata capable of self-replicating and maintaining the facility with more precision than humans. Though at the cost of lacking the souls which some practices may require. Regardless of this place's exact nature and purpose, it has a rare and wondrous closeness to God's great work that just so happens to be primarily for using it to kill evil people.

This item can be repurchased, for different specialised facilities. Any or all of them can be combined with other properties found here.

Divine Protection (400 CP): Alamut, the Eagle's Nest, is shielded by a mountain range. A raging river. And a narrow entrance shielded by cliffs and mystic stones. The long-ranged artillery mounted within it exacts a heavy toll on all invaders, as does the flotilla of flying ships. Those who can bypass such protections find the place impossible to find even with demonic assistance, the fortress itself vanishing from the minds of the malevolent and even *time itself* aging would-be invaders to

infirmity and death long before reaching the fortress walls. You now command one such wonder. Perhaps it lacks *everything* the true Alamut has within, but it's defences at least are on par with it. Alternatively you may take command of a simpler but far more invincible structure such as the Iron Wall that is the Sultanate's purpose for existing: A barrier raised by God himself and studded with gems, that pours out molten metal upon Hell's forces on the rare occasion it's surface has been cracked by an infernal weapon-which rapidly cools to reform the wall good as new. In addition, a fighting force as deadly and zealous as the Order of Assassins maintains the place-though their exact nature is up to you to determine. Perhaps they are a more distant spiritual order from a yet further continent, an artillery brigade from Europe or an entire convent of particularly organised stigmatic nuns.

This item can be combined with any other properties found here.

**A Moving Fortress (400 CP):** Most feared among all the superweapons produced by Europe, the Moving Fortress is a battleship fleet carrier that can engage Heretic Behemoth-class vessels in single combat and emerge victorious. It is staffed by 10,000 Knights of Saint George, moves equally well on land and sea, and both its artillery as well as onboard aerial vessels are capable of engaging airborne heretics. There is little that can daunt this vessel other than the rarity of the divine metals used to repair and resupply it's components-something this one doesn't seem to need to worry about. But as a superweapon fit to defend the shores of Britain on its lonesome, it does not disappoint. Sailors swear that it's figurehead can turn aside any artillery shell through divine providence, and while unclear certainly no ordinary heretic fire seems capable of touching it.

Alternatively, you may own a comparable amphibious warship. This item can be repurchased for different war machines.

**A Holy Kingdom (600 CP):** Where would the faithful be without New Antioch, the spearpoint of the western world's research into both mechanised warfare and weaponised theology? Or the Iron Sultanate, refuge for holy warriors across the middle east and heritor to teachings that the Lord bestowed on mankind in ancient times? You are now the monarch, sultan or otherwise rightfully appointed ruler of a civilisation equal to them in overall military threat against demonkind. Your people's faith is stalwart, the machinery of war flows smoothly, the resources nearby can sustain it indefinitely without demonic interference and at their greatest your most potent military feats can match the Paladins or alchemical

superweapons deployed by other nations. Otherwise, feel free to determine the specifics of your nation. Perhaps Sheba yet survives and is still ruled by its ancient queen's descendants, or perhaps the Kingdom of Prester John is not as mythical as the damned hope.

**A Banner of Heaven (600 CP):** When an angel arrives on the battlefield, cities disappear in clouds of flame and leave behind nothing but cinders and ashes. It's visage and voice alone scar the minds of men with blinding heavenly glory, and there is little in this world or the next that can match it in combat. While this flag is woven lovelier than anything but mortal hands and shines with God's grace, it's true purpose is that once every few months or so, wherever you plant it an angel will descend to smite the wicked in six hours. There will be no truly overt warnings-though subtler omens, portents and other signs may hint at something great and terrible coming which intensifies as the time of judgement approaches. The flag is never destroyed as a result, and always finds its way back to your side or your preferred site of storage shortly after the angel's visit concludes.

The angel will never smite the righteous and innocent.

**The Ring of Solomon (600 CP):** As this simple ring, engraved with the seal of the mighty Allah-chosen ruler Sulaimān ibn Dāwūd (known as Solomon the Wise to the Franks. Among others), falls into your hand, all of Hell shivers in dread. It is speculated that this ring alone keeps Alamut safe despite Hell besieging it from all sides, and certainly that power to counter Goetic magic or ward away demons and their bastard spawn is all too real. But the true threat of this ring is its authority over all unclean spirits. With little more than a gesture or a command (and those only for style), the wearer can force a hell knight to crack open it's armor then crawl into an open grave. Command those infected by the Black Grail to cast themselves into a blaze of holy flame. Banish ghosts from the land they haunt. And even make mighty Praetors kneel and coax praise for the creator of the universe from their many throats. And exert these commands on the multitudinous armies of Hell, *at least* as far as the wearer can see or speak. It remains unknown if the archdevils have any greater resistance to this ring, although their insistence only mortal servants of Hell challenge Alamut does not speak to their confidence in any lesser demon than the likes of Mammon and Abaddon.

## Heretics

**Flesh and Blood (100 CP):** 666 human beings have been chained at the ankles and wrists with cursed shackles, and by the law of Hell are your rightful property. They are of your preferred age, gender and other demographics. Though they may scream, protest and beg, each knows in their heart of hearts that the shackles will never come off without your permission. Among them, 66 are both evil enough to joyously accept a pact with Hell yet possessed of the devotion and competence to be the treasured slaves for many nobles of Hell. Perhaps not coincidentally, these are the ones that look fairest of form to you.

This item may be repurchased at 50 CP apiece. This item *explicitly* damns random, unimportant human beings into your custody rather than creates them wholesale. Hell has no power to create.

**Tartarean Ore (100 CP):** The metals of the underworld far exceed mundane ores in strength and durability, resisting cracks and deformation by bullets with the sullen spite of damnation itself. More terrifyingly, the metal is corrosive both physically and spiritually to all who touch it without Hell's cruel acknowledgement-inflicting agonising, festering wounds that never heal naturally and spreading a festering madness, as though it never left the hateful forges of Dis. You now have access to a convenient mine of the stuff, which can be rather inexplicably located far outside of Hell if you would prefer.

This item can be repurchased at 50 CP apiece, for additional sources of soul-corrupting, flesh-warping Hell metal. Comes with sufficient mining equipment, mechanical automatons and a nearby steelworks to do the harvesting, refining and forging for you.

**Stealth Generator (100 CP):** Little is recorded of this device save that it can easily be worn in combat, perhaps a testament to its efficacy. It diffracts light, using the heart of an innocent as well as infernal technologies that even the eyes of God struggle to pierce. It does little more than keep the likes of Death Commandos invisible even amidst saints or alchemists, but this it does with utmost surety.

This item can be repurchased at 50 CP apiece. Each time it is, an innocent heart is shattered for it to exist.

**The River Styx (200 CP):** This river, pitch black and flowing without clear origin or end, is utterly steeped in death. Wounds inflicted by it inflict agonising suffering that can last for *days* before the merciful end of death arrives, mentally shattering victims and making them bleed even more all the while. And somehow, you have won the right to own and manage this river by the law of Hell. If you are mortal, expect many demons to find dark humour in how for most this is little more than an invitation to a horrific death sentence-though should you have the knowledge and ability to treat this river's waters properly, you could find many uses for Hell's most feared poison.

After this jump, the River Styx may either flow as a catastrophe in a sufficiently Hell-like location of your choice, or be accessed from a Tartarean shore behind a doorway placed in either the Cosmic Warehouse or a property of your choice that is inscribed with many clear warnings about its dangers.

...in the language of Hell.

**The Mouth of Hell (200 CP):** 666 feet long with a 1666mm calibre, this oversized piece of Hellish artillery has been *further* blessed with hellfire-infused shells that are reloaded through malice rather than physical ammunition and requires no mortal crew-only the will of a commander vicious enough to turn its power upon others. Toddling after you, this wonder of Tartarean metal can blast holes straight through castles and reduce oncoming battalions to clouds of screaming meat. Let the righteous cower before it's howling, and be scattered to the wind by its shots.

Also, it looks *exactly* as obscenely phallic as you imagine an oversized weapon of Hell with its design specs must be like.

**Ten Golden Horns (200 CP):** Egypt did not become a bastion of Hell's influence from conquest or great sorcery. Rather, it fell because of a shadowy network of bankers, financiers and other money-movers similar to the one that now swears loyalty on pain of damnation to you. Though the true Ten Golden Horns used the symbol of the ancient king Iskander as their mark, the mystique and traditions of this one are yours to determine. Their wealth is quite genuine, having many resources and trade relationships they can leverage to carry out your will, and are adept in underhanded tactics like using happy debtors to recruit new members or claiming loans are Qard al-Hasan (a type of benevolent interest-free loan granted under Islamic law) among other nasty tricks that make them such effective financiers even *without* Hell inspiring them to greater depravity. At least their

leadership is amoral, rather than gleefully immoral. And more importantly, *not* sworn to Mammon over you.

This item can be repurchased, either for separate financial networks or one enormous one, or any combination thereof.

**Graven Idol (400 CP):** The Golden Calf is a common symbol among heretical warbands, it's burning shrine mounted by a regally decorated bull into which children are incinerated on an industrial scale to soothe bitter Moloch's failure to truly create life on its own. It may not be a calf, but you have something similar that appeals to a specific powerful being of Hell. Whatever it is, not only is it very efficient at killing helpless mortals but such is it's extravagance, it's glory, its ability to appeal to whatever dark power you please with it (even the dread incomprehensibilities that ruled before the heavenly rebellion) that favour of some kind is almost guaranteed from the entity, and far more wondrous blessings for the same sacrifices. A whole legion of demonic reinforcements could be summoned for the price paid just for one. Or were this altar to be raised to Leviathan instead, perhaps you could keep an entire community safe from war and avenge even attacks by enemy heretic forces with summoned beasts of the deep.

As rebellion is practically tradition in Hell, in future worlds you have the option to reconsecrate and redesign this idol at the start of a jump to a different deity and/or demon. They may not appreciate human sacrifice, but you will be provided instructions on what offerings they would accept instead. Either way, the idol will appease the deity so much you will enjoy comparable benefits.

At the start of any jump you may also reconsecrate this altar to its original form, continuing to appeal to the original demon.

The demon will not be informed of any discrepancies related to the altar.

**A Wound in Reality (400 CP):** Since the opening of the Hellgate, demons can and have created lesser rents in reality to move their forces around and about the world. This one is particularly stable and prominent, almost as great as the original Hellgate, and has been bound to your will-appearing and disappearing with a thought. You may will it to provide instantaneous travel to anywhere in existence you are aware of-passing through it to arrive at the other side of the world while it remains present behind you, or into a random demonic manner in

Dis. There exist powerful methods both celestial and diabolical to ward against magic like this, but it is extremely rare.

In future worlds, the Hellgate will continue to offer unparalleled access to any region in mortal or Hell-like planes of existence. With God no longer around to be vigilant for it, *theoretically* occult tinkering could let it provide access to divine realms as well.

**A Noxious Brew (400 CP):** Your cup truly runneth over. “Your cup” being a cauldron the size of a swimming pool, into which has been brewed a seething, roiling mass equal to the Black Death in both virulence and devastating effect. But it need not emulate the hatred, gluttony and ceaseless petulance of Beelzebub, nor resemble *his* vermin. It could consist of mandala-spewing silkworms from one of the ancient powers of Hell. The infection and it’s least hosts could be wrathful locusts that drive men into inhumanly powerful berserk rages until the last survivor becomes a vessel for your hatred, or...whatever you deem suitable for the obscenity of *lust*. Whatever this infection is, fundamentally it’s an extension of your will as coloured by the destructive nature of Hell-so much so that you can even shape the vermin with your will as well as those infested by them, and empower them with any abilities you have. Those infected by it are far more vulnerable to all of your powers, easily suborned by your will, and like Beelzebub the more are infected by it the more your power grows as your corruption feeds backwards into the ultimate parasite for which it is merely a vessel.

**A Monument to Sin (600 CP):** Among the 66 domains on Earth ruled in Hell’s name, Ekron stands apart as a place shunned even by mortal Heretic Legions and the servants of the Court. For the temples, churches, mosques, pagodas, shrines and altars there are more functional than decorative: The millions of thralls there buoy Beelzebub with so much worship he dreams of someday flying back to the Gates of Heaven to once more make war upon his hated father. Every aspect of this civilisation is designed to please Beelzebub, first and foremost. Elaborate rites of desecration have been developed to corrupt icons and holy places, the Black Grail runs rampant serving a dual purpose of empowering Beelzebub’s chosen while violating his enemies, and all the many instruments of war common to Hell as well as easy access to its occult economy of human suffering are within arm’s reach.

It need not be *quite* like this. But a city of similar scale, similarly infused with Hell's powers and as loyal to you as Ekron is to Beelzebub is now yours. Though perhaps not as militarily *innovative* as New Antioch, the heady power of worship will surely more than compensate. If you bought **A Noxious Brew**, it may permeate this place-although even without it, magical protections of similar strength will empower and threaten as you please.

**The Lake of Fire (600 CP):** The ground, blasted and scarred with ancient hatreds. The shores of the burning lake, in which waves lap as if eager for sinners to draw screams from. Even a series of fortresses and manners on the shoreline, for demonic nobility to luxuriate under a Hellish sky. That's right: A section of Hell vaster than multiple cities has been cordoned off, and given to you to rule. Those who have sworn fealty to you will arrive here as naked souls upon their death, and your authority over this Hell will let you grant them flesh anew even if you have no other supernatural powers-as well as great prowess in reshaping or empowering them. It goes without saying that all your powers are much stronger here, even more so than in **A Monument to Sin** which if you like may be located here as a capital like Dis is to Hell proper. Though it would be absolutely haram for an Allah-fearing Muslim to even comprehend the notion, even a mortal alchemist ruling here could raise numerous citadels and make the noxious rivers flow into the sky like a mad god.

There are no other demons except you in this Hell. This is a great boon. There *are* however a great many pieces of fallen angels' shattered celestial fragments scattered everywhere (enough that the likes of Moloch could spend centuries creating new Goetic sorcerers and still not run out), that an enterprising wannabe archdevil could potentially use to create thralls with gifts like Goetic magic using some other living being as a base...

**A Doorway (600 CP):** Hell is far older than creation itself. This stairway leads to a hidden descend leading one hundred thousand steps beyond the world and below even Hell, to a long narrow tunnel leading to a doorway where space and time are folded in on themselves. Beyond there is a grand and solitary power that rules it's portion of Hell with seemingly utter impunity. Furthermore, communion with the doorway will reveal that by some leap of unreason, it has decided you are an ally and trading partner worth treating with as something like an equal. Bring it offerings (which may vary greatly, but living acolytes are *always* in demand. It wishes a strange apotheosis upon the devout) and it will share eldritch artifacts, forms of magic unknown to the rest of Hell, minions even other demons will find unsettling and other wondrous gifts found nowhere else. There seems to be little in this world that can limit it's generosity, other than being paid in kind or (one must hope) the undivided attention of God and His angels.

If pressed, you may be relieved to learn that the unknowable force that rules beyond this doorway is actually rather ambivalent about Hell's war with Heaven, having no love for the archdevils either. It may mention some manner of rite similar to the *other* doorway opening, but leaves it to you if you deem this a suitable outcome for your collaboration.

Optionally it may be the same entity as the one that provided you with **A Stranger's Gift**. In the case of the Temple of Metamorphosis, you will have successfully subtracted one of Hell's allies, for reasons no demon is likely to ever understand.

## Companions

**For Glorious Victory! (50 CP apiece/200 CP):** You're fortunate enough to run into or show up with some loyal to you for reasons other than creed or common cause. A comrade, a generous superior, perhaps even family. For 50 CP apiece, you may import a companion which gains 800 CP to spend on anything except other companions. CP must be paid for backgrounds. For 200 CP, you may import a full set of 8 at a discount.

**Brethren In Arms (Free/50 CP):** The clash of war makes for strange bedfellows, something many allies among the faithful have learned the hard way. Should they agree, any who leave this world may join you as companions. It must be said however, that the odds are against you. By and large the faithful yearn for salvation, while the damned have given everything to take back a world they wish to repaint in their image. Not even the best initial impression will stay the hand of those with true commitment. Nonetheless, you are welcome to try. For 50 CP apiece you may even make an extraordinary impression as though blessed by God or as tempting as the Devil's own offer with a specific character.

**The Great Crusade (Varies, can be chosen multiple times):** The horns are sounding, and battle is declared! Quickly, to your post. There await the brave men, women and otherworldly horrors beyond imagining that have for one reason or another sworn an oath of loyalty to you as binding as those to Hell or a zealot's devotion to God. Each purchase you make here provides you with a set number of combatants from this world, based on their overall capability.

To calculate how many you acquire here, gauge what prices the type of unit you would recruit would have in the **Strength of the Heavens, Conflagration of Hell** section then divide it by 2; human-scale combatants that would otherwise be free cost a flat 50 CP. You gain 20 combatants with each purchase were they to be free, 15 if they would normally cost 100 CP, 10 if they would cost 200 CP and 6 if they would cost 400 CP. "Recruits" likely shackled by a higher power to your will that would cost 600 CP are purchased as a set of 3. The godlike entities that cost 800 CP are purchased individually, their battlefield-shaking power is more than enough to decisively win most conflicts, and they must *truly* enjoy something about you to follow you this closely for little can cage such beings. Nothing more powerful than they may be recruited, lest the war between Hell and Earth end with Heaven utterly destroying the latter.

As with **Strength of the Heavens, Conflagration of Hell** it may be assumed units recruited here have all equipment considered standard for them, and some miraculous means of resupplying provided by Hell or Heaven in future worlds.

### **Drawbacks**

**Years of Iniquity (+ 0 CP):** This war has raged for centuries with neither Hell nor it's mortal adversities obtaining a decisive advantage. In that time, many events great and terrible have come to pass. In the Year of Six Woes (1666), the newly created Heretic fleet captured Gibraaltar-creating a base of operations against all of Europe, and giving Hell access to the Atlantic. In the year 1899, the Church's Space Program commenced. Should you wish to witness or perhaps intervene in some of these events, you may start at any point up to the year 1098, one year before the First Crusade captures Jerusalem.

**Dark Prophecies Unveiled (+ 0 CP):** Neither man nor devil knows what will truly come to pass, only God-and even then, the Divine Plan itself suffers as a casualty in the war. 10 years may not be enough time to conclude a conflict that predates the world itself. If you wish, you may extend your stay here as long as you like should you truly wish to see this war through to the bitter end-whether by decades, or millennia. Should Hell gain a decisive advantage over the Earth, you may leave this world early after 6 days. Should the faithful instead gain a decisive advantage over Hell, you may leave it in 7.

**Unflinching Righteousness (+ 100 CP):** There are many in both factions drilled to absolutely loyalty as a matter of course, but few are as self-sacrificing as you regardless of which affiliation you are part of. You are not merely zealous for that is par the course, you obtain true joy from losing dignity, opportunities and even body parts in service of whatever cause you champion. You have just enough reason to hold to self-preservation, if only to make your martyrdom have meaning, but the call to destroy not just others but yourself will continue to be a problem.

**Incorrigible Iniquity (+ 100 CP):** On the other end of the scale, you've picked up a certain vice that's proven inconvenient. Not merely the usual sins of Hell, but something that actually worsens your performance in combat. Your penchant for the bottle may make you sloppy and easily distracted, your sadism may lead you to draw out battles you could have won decisively with finesse, your lust may...well, one gets the idea. You can work around this with discipline and in extremis, but expect these inadvisable impulses to be as persistent as flies on the battlefield.

**A Desolate World (+ 100 CP):** It seems that the conflict has cost the world more than was expected. Wherever you go there's less grain stored up, fewer useable weapons to salvage from the battlefield, emptier coffers and overall just *less* to make use of. Even the vile resources of Hell, should you be in a position to make use of them, are either more fought over or even more putrid time and time again. Hell and Heaven's rage must have exhausted the world's capacity to express it.

**Bared Flesh (+ 200 CP):** At some point the heretics of Hell fell upon you, carving away enough proportionate flesh to leave a man's torso flayed until the ribs were exposed to just above the naval. Yet by the grace of God, or fouler powers, you were revived and will never die of blood loss alone. What you *should* be concerned about however is as you are not *necessarily* some manner of ethereal saint that shows up wherever's convenient with this alone, is that your internal organs are now side open to whatever harm the enemy wishes to inflict on you. Also some cruel twist of fate keeps causing any means short of wearing armor all the time to keep leaving chinks, falling off or otherwise leaving your poor organs vulnerable to heresy unless you have the means to maintain constant supernatural protection on them at all times or are able to wear armor permanently.

**Bound To Serve (+ 200 CP):** You wanted power, and this problematic patron was all too eager to provide it. Though many swear oaths of loyalty in Hell, be assured that whatever's owed to this one will be particularly inconvenient. They may require sacrifices of a very specific demographic to be ritually cut up in certain ways, the assassination of influential figures in the war or just enough money to pay a lot of soldiers' wages set aflame in their honour to avoid punishing you with burning chains that will immobilise and torment you to the brink of death wherever you are. At least they only make such demands once every few months, and are oddly indifferent to you beyond fulfilling those duties. In fact the patron is always up for some casual conversation, even if they respond to attempts to

learn more about their powers or motivation with (at best) raucous mockery. If there is a way to shuck this service, it must only be found in the most obscure and potent of magic in this world-or great powers of oath-cheating and escape from others.

The nature of the patron is deliberately mysterious, a matter for you to discover on your own. One might be used to demonic masters only to find oneself bound to a particularly ruthless angel, or be faithful to God yet at the whim of a being more alien than any demon.

**A Home for Hidden Knives (+ 200 CP):** Not all wars are honourably waged on the battlefield. Someone, somewhere, has demanded your death be carried out with discretion and precision. Your assassins are either as deadly as the master Death Commandos Cain, Barrabas and Hamon (whose skills let them simultaneously slay the Supreme Pontiff, the High Prophetess Aelia and the Holy Roman Emperor in 1894) or make up for their lack of expertise with numbers. They will learn your habits, pay any price or cross any line to learn your weaknesses, and prepare accordingly. And if you truly are invincible or close enough to not matter by mortal measures, they will gladly destroy everything you care for or even end themselves in as spiteful and inconvenient a way as possible, with all the furious focus of the fallen angels' contempt or a crusader dying in battle with heretics.

**Saintly Repose (+ 300 CP):** It was over. After discharging your duty with honour, you were laid down in hallowed ground to your just rest. Or perhaps, in Hell's soil. But the war did not end. It was not enough. So you believe anyway, but it appears you've been sealed inside a magical coffin-like box. You don't seem to hunger or thirst while inside it, but there's nothing to do and nowhere to go. More importantly, you can't leave with our own effort but at least you're placed somewhere relatively safe at the outset. Convincing someone else could lead to you being unleashed upon the world, though.

**Calamitous Crusade (+ 300 CP):** If you look at the history of this war, there's an unspoken balance, a certain level of give and take-an advance or reprisal by the faithful, for every disaster that Hell unleashes. Unfortunately, in your personal endeavours it seems the pendulum always swings against you. If you conquer territory, it will turn out to have undetected strains of the Black Grail or another rival force will show up when it's least convenient. If you build great wonders, their foundations will be unstable. And if you forge alliances, be wary of either

you or your new ally getting stabbed in the back. Any joint endeavour you embark on as significant as winning a major battle will be beset by these contrivances, though mercifully this doesn't seem to affect things you set out to accomplish on your own or with fewer than 12 people. While harsh, none of the calamities will ever be impossible to overcome with superior firepower, faithful perseverance, extraordinary wit or some combination of the above. You may still win victories, they will just be bittersweet.

**Factional Fury (+ 300 CP):** A prophecy has been sent out into this world, of how your coming will bring either jubilation for the hated rival of some faction here or else utterly end it. The consensus is swift and merciless: You must be destroyed. The Heretic Legion, the Sultanate or powers comparable to them will move to end you, leveraging all their resources and sounding out the call to their followers that you are marked as an enemy. Diplomacy will not be entertained, and your opponent will neither expect nor show any mercy. Mercifully, part of the prophecy hints that the *most* powerful members on either side risk accelerating the prophecy by showing their hand early. God at least will not react in person, but should you persist for a year Beelzebub may grow frustrated enough to start trying to find a way around the Covenant of Hell.

**Divine Discontent, Diabolical Destruction (+ 600 CP):** Something great and terrible has shattered in the interstice of oaths that bar Heaven or Hell from exerting too much influence on the mortal world. A fallen angel, "mercifully" merely of common stock for one of its kind rather than being an archangel or archdevil, or something on par with it in power and wrath has smashed its way into a distant part of the world with one goal: To kill you, which the being believes will give it a permanent foothold in the mortal world. It towers taller than many buildings. Its mere voice and visage shatter the sanity of men. It can set cities aflame, bestow magic to reshape the form of man into the instruments of Hell to armies from another plane of existence or perform similar miracles. Though its masters do not openly condone its arrival, it seems to have their tacit approval. Without truly potent methods of concealment, the delay for it finding you is measured in hours at most. To challenge such a being is to put your utmost faith in God, or else boast of power great enough to shake the pillars of Hell.

## Endings

**Salvation (Go home):** You have seen further than man was meant to, and it is already too much to bear alone. You require solace from Hell's torments, or else shy away from the brilliance of Heaven's light. Return, then, to the true world of your making. With all you have laid claim to on your journey. Let the flames of damnation fade like a distant nightmare, but may Heaven's light inspire you to higher heights even after passing from it.

**Hell or High Water (Stay):** Though you walk in the shadow of the valley of death, you shall fear no evil. Either because God brings you comfort, or because that valley is wherever your shadow falls. You will remain in this world, all that you have earned along your journey either subject to God's Divine Plan or existing in opposition to it. It is too much to ask any men to topple Heaven's throne or harrow Hell on his own, but if you manage to strike against Hell on the level of slaying an Archdevil or destroying the great Gate from whence it's legions issue. Or if you manage to open a second Hellgate, or drive the majority of a Faithful faction into abandoning their devotion. You gain 1000 CP to spend however you wish.

**Revelation (Move on):** It is known to you, as if by divine revelation-this is not the end. Heaven won't have you, and Hell can't take you. So you will journey onwards, to a new jump, with the tribulations of this world as a reminder that there are forces so much larger than mere physical pain and exhaustion. Perhaps in the next world, there will be new conflicts with the divine beyond a simple binary. Or perhaps the next world will be utterly materialistic, a dull relief from the clash of celestial and infernal powers in this one.

## Notes

Here's a shocking revelation for you: Hell sucks. The Heretic Legions are forced to swear damning oaths of loyalty to commit to a war in which God's mortal agents alone are suppressing what Hell can bring to bear. The Black Grail is one never-ending descent into decay at the behest of the world's angriest fly. Ghosts are lacking in sensation, while the Path of the Beast encourages the gradual loss of what mortals would call ego. And the Court of the Seven-Headed Serpent has little mercy even for its' own, hence why despite arguably offering the greatest power among the Heretic backgrounds it's charged at the same price. At the very least though, should you survive this jump, your interdimensional nature will slip free of whatever oaths you swore or other metaphysical damnations imposed as a result of your background. After all, Hell has enough trouble merely breaking into Earth.

While less severe and far less common, certain Faithful backgrounds such as being one of the reformed Crusaders during the default start date also come with taxing conditions such as being surgically welded into their armor and being threatened with immediate death and perdition should they ever doubt the righteousness of God again. The adverse effects of these backgrounds too, will be nullified by the next jump as in a show of mercy, God himself opens the armor caging you or deems the oaths fulfilled. Or perhaps, should you have somehow committed heresy before departing, an impressed devil decided to liberate you with a forbidden art out of spite against Heaven.

For those who care about such things, Osher v'Chayil and Ten Golden Horns offer roughly the same amount of wealth in strictly monetary terms. Hell sets up exploitable financial institutions, Heaven just gives you things of actual value.

The *complete* lore of this game is **hard** to find collated in one place (as opposed to the officially released game rules), not helped by the deletion of a Patreon that contained lots of unreleased information. I recommend using *all* of the following resources to learn more if you're interested and don't have access to the creator's Discord:

[https://trench-crusade-english.fandom.com/wiki/Trench\\_Crusade\\_Wiki](https://trench-crusade-english.fandom.com/wiki/Trench_Crusade_Wiki)

[https://trenchcrusadewiki.miraheze.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://trenchcrusadewiki.miraheze.org/wiki/Main_Page)

<https://www.trenchcrusade.com/lore/>