
The Purpose

In the role of a god, force the people of the world to worship you.

The Players

Two to five players with a sense of humor, ages fourteen to adult.

The Board

The board is a map of the world, with five continents each containing four regions. Each continent is the home of one of the world's religions (including one region containing a Holy City). Populations of followers, called sects, are represented by colored chips on the Earth's continents.

Earth is surrounded by a ring of higher planes where the gods circle the globe, plotting and gathering power. The outer ring contains two Portals for each continent that allow the gods access to use their powers to kill or convert followers on those continents.

The Cards

Playing Gods has two basic types of cards:

1) Wrath cards are used to kill other gods' followers with Earth's elements (fire, air, earth, and water), or smite them with plagues. The cards come in three types: Attack, Protection, and Immunity.

2) Conversion cards are used to convert other gods' followers or increase the number of your own. They come in three types: Conversion, Gain Sect cards, and Lose Sect cards.

Cards can only be used when a god is on a Portal and then only on the continent associated with that Portal; the only exception is Lose Sect cards. A god may use as many cards as he or she wants at any point during his or her turn.

The Gods (Idols)

Playing Gods comes with six different god idols (playing pieces): One each from major religions, and one generic god with an interchangeable belief symbol. A sheet of adhesive stickers is included, with various symbols that people might worship, from Zeus to the Almighty Dollar.

Or you may create your own gods and playing pieces—a salt shaker may be the Great Granular God of Sodium, a penny could be the Bronze-Faced Emancipator, or a small dried tangle of last night's pasta may be a Fearsome Spaghetti Monster. Spare action figures, dried gum, or even a dead battery (the Cult of Duracell?) can conquer the world. The only limit is your imagination!

The Worshippers (Sects)

Groups of each god's followers, called sects, are represented as colored chips in a given region on a continent.

The Setup

1. Each player chooses a home continent, idol, and set of colored sect chips.
2. Each god places one sect chip on each of his or her home continent's four regions, and two on the region containing the **holy city**. (In games with fewer than five gods, any continents not occupied by a player are treated as neutral territory.)
3. Each god is given one Conversion card at random (Communion, Scripture, Afterlife, Prosperity, or Miracles) and each takes one Wrath card from the deck. The Conversion card is placed face up in front of the player. The cards are then shuffled and placed on the board in two stacks.
4. Each idol is placed on either of the two Portals for the god's home continent.
5. Die roll determines which god goes first (highest number starts).



Holy City

Overview of Play

Game Play Sequence

- 1) Player rolls the die and moves the indicated number of spaces in either direction.
- 2) If the player lands on a space with either a W (for Wrath) or a C (for Conversion), the player takes a card from the corresponding deck. If that card indicates that one or more gods lose a sect, the card is used immediately and returned to the deck; otherwise the card is retained until it can be used on a Portal.
- 3) If the player lands on a Portal, he or she may use any Wrath cards to attempt to kill off other gods' sects, any Conversion cards to convert other gods' sects, or both. The defending god may use his cards to protect his followers, and the attacking god may use as many cards as he wishes on a turn. The player may also use any Gain One Sect cards if the continent is unoccupied (or if the god already has a sect on that continent).
- 4) If the player lands on a space occupied by one or more gods, he may take his choice of one of the other gods' face-down cards, in addition to any other functions offered by that space (such as getting a card).
- 5) If the player lands on a Warp Portal, the god may immediately move to any **unoccupied** Portal and continue his turn.
- 6) The player's turn ends when he or she chooses not to take further action, or runs out of cards.
- 7) The next player's turn begins.

Eliminating Other Gods

Gods are eliminated from the game when their last sect of followers is killed off or converted to another faith.

1) Killing: If a god's sect of followers is killed (for example, by some form of Fire Attack or locusts), the sect chip is *removed* from the board. If a god's last remaining sect chip is removed from the board, that god has been killed off, and is out of the game permanently. The conquering god takes any cards the vanquished god held and adds them to his or her hand.

2) Converting: If a god's sect is converted to another god's faith, the conquering god places his or her sect chip *on top of* the converted sect chip(s). If a god's last remaining sect is converted by another god, the conquering god takes any cards the vanquished god held. However, there is a chance the god may be able to return to the game; see the Resurrection section. Note that regions with more than one sect of the same god in them cannot be converted.

Any "Lose One Sect" card cannot eliminate a player from the game.

Sect Chips: The Joy of Sects

Groups of each god's followers are represented as sect chips that dominate a given region. Sect chips do not move from one region to another; they can be established (see "Gaining new regions and sects" section), killed off by other gods (using Wrath cards) or converted (using Conversion cards).

Gods may stack two or more sect chips on a single region; at the start of the game, the Holy City begins with two sects as a bastion of belief. This prevents other gods from converting that region's followers, though the sects can be killed off. There is no limit to the number of sects that a region may contain; the more sects a god has on a region, the harder it is to kill off.

Cards

Wrath Cards

There are three types of Wrath cards: Attack, Protection, and Immunity. Wrath cards allow the gods to attack each other's followers using different forms of earthly elements (as well as plagues). The elemental attacks are:

Earth: Mudslides, Avalanches, Earthquakes, and Quicksand

Water: Hailstorms, Floods, Droughts, and Tsunamis

Fire: Volcanoes, Solar Flares, Wildfires, and Heat Waves

Air: Lightning, Tornadoes, Smog, and Blizzards



Attacking with Wrath Cards

When a god lands on a Portal not occupied by another god, he or she can use Wrath cards to attack any region on that continent. Each Earth, Fire, Air, and Water Attack card kills one sect of followers, and the elements can be combined in certain ways to make them more powerful. For example, a Water and an Earth card can be used together to create a landslide, killing three sects of followers. Opposite elements (i.e., Fire and Water, Air and Earth) cannot be combined, but may be used consecutively. The attacks are visited on specific regions, and the attacking god chooses which regions he or she wishes to apply the damage. There are also four special Wrath cards which do extra damage and against which there is no defense: Plague, Famine, Darkness, and Locusts.

Earth, Air, Water, or Fire alone kills 1 sect

Earth + Fire or Water kills 3 sects

Air + Fire or Water kills 3 sects

All four elements combined kills 6 sects

Plague, Famine, Darkness, and Locusts kill 2 sects



Protection Cards

If a god holds a Protection card, it can be used as a one-time defense against the element (Fire, Air, Earth, Water) Attack specified on the card. It is returned to the deck immediately after use.



Immunity Cards

There are four Immunity cards, one for each of the elements. The cards provide immunity to the specified type of elemental attack as long as the god holds the card. The Immunity card is not returned to the desk when it is used to defend, though it can be stolen by other gods.



Attack sequence

(How to kill off sects devoted to another god)

- 1) Once an idol lands on a Portal and chooses to attack, the player states which regions on the continent are under attack and chooses which Wrath cards to attack with.
- 2) Any god(s) with sect chips on the continent may try to defend their followers using Protection or Immunity cards against the specific element being used.
- 3) If the defense is successful, the attack is neutralized and all cards used in the attack and defense (with the exception of Immunity cards) are returned to the deck.
- 4) If the defense fails, the conquering god removes the defeated god's sect chip(s) from that area, but does not place his or her own sect chip on the region.

- 5) The attacking god may continue the attacks or conversions on the same region, or any other regions on that continent, as long as cards are available to play.

In the case of a combined element attack, the defending god's successful defense only neutralizes that element of the attack, though the attacking god loses the attack bonus. (For example, if Moses uses Water and Air attack cards to create a typhoon in a Norse community, and Thor defends with only a "Protection from Air Attack" card, the Water attack kills one sect.)

When the last sect is removed (killed off) from a region, that region is considered neutral territory.

Conversion Cards

While the Wrath cards allow gods to kill off each other's followers, certain Conversion cards allow gods to convert other gods' followers. There are five types of Conversion cards (Prosperity, Miracles, Scripture, Afterlife, and Communion)—each of them an aspect of religion the god can offer another god's followers (think of it as bribery).

All the cards have equal value.



Gain Sect cards allow the god to expand into new regions and repopulate existing regions. With the exception of any cards that cause gods to Lose a Sect (which must be played immediately upon being drawn), cards may only be used when the god is on a Portal.



Converting sequence

(How to convert sects devoted to another god)

- 1) When a god lands on a Portal and wishes to convert a region with one sect population, he tells the defending god and shows which Conversion cards he or she wishes to use. Only one conversion attempt is allowed per turn.
- 2) The converting god can use any combination of regular and permanent Conversion cards (see below).
- 3) The converting and defending gods' Conversion cards are presented, and simple subtraction determines the outcome; a tie goes to the defending god. For example:

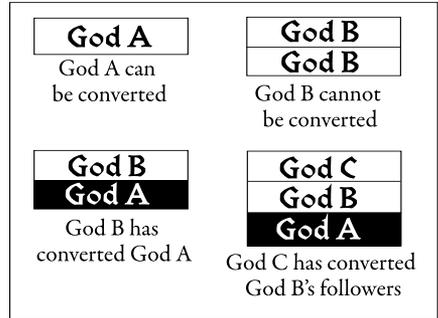
Attacking God A	Defending God B	Result
1 Conversion card (any)	1 Conversion card (any)	Conversion fails
2 cards	1 card	God A converts 1 sect
3 cards	1 card	God A converts 2 sects

4) If the conversion is successful, the converting god places one of his or her sect chips on top of the conquered god's chip. The conquering god or goddess has converted the people in that region to the new faith. There is no limit on the number of times a given region may be converted; each new god simply places his sect chip on top of the stack.

The exception is if a region containing god A's followers is converted by god B and then reconverted by god A again (a metaphorical "belief sandwich"), god B's sect chip is removed and both of god A's chips remain. The followers have thus rejected the new faith and unified more strongly than before.

5) With the exception of any permanent (face up) Conversion cards, all cards used in a conversion attempt or defense are returned to the deck.

Remember: Only regions containing one sect chip of a given color may be converted, though a god may kill off one or more sects and then convert the final sect. Also note that a conversion will only be successful if the converting god has at least one more Conversion card than the god whose followers he is trying to convert.



Permanent Conversion cards

Gaining permanent Conversion cards is an important way to increase a god's power. Face up Conversion cards are considered permanent attributes of your god. The Conversion card each player receives at the beginning is kept face up and retained permanently; it cannot be taken by another god unless the player is converted out of the game or killed off.

It is used along with regular Conversion cards, but is not replaced in the stack when used to convert or defend a conversion.



Additional permanent Conversion cards are gained when a player collects two of any specific type of Conversion card. When a matching card is drawn, one card is retained and turned face up (made permanent) while the other is returned to the deck. Each god can only have one permanent type of each Conversion card (for example, a god cannot have two permanent Afterlife cards). If a conquering god gets a vanquished god's permanent Conversion card, the card becomes a regular (not permanent) Conversion card for the conquering god.

The Godkiller

There is one unique Conversion card called the Godkiller. To use the Godkiller's power, the god who holds the card must land on the corresponding Godkiller space on the board. When the card is played, the god can immediately and irrevocably kill off any other god; all the dead god's sects are removed from the board, and any cards held go to the Godkiller. The card is returned to the bottom of the deck.



The Godkiller card also conveys an additional power to the god who holds it: It can protect the god from an attack that would otherwise eliminate him or her from the game. If a god's last sect of followers is in danger of being converted or killed off, the god may use the Godkiller card to neutralize that attack. The attack fails and the Godkiller card is returned to the deck, along with the failed attack cards.

Gaining new regions and sects

There are three ways gods can repopulate their followers and spread their faith to new regions.

1) Reinforcing the Holy City

If a god's idol lands on a Conversion space, he or she may elect to forego a Conversion card in exchange for one sect chip that may be placed only on the region containing that god's original Holy City. This can be done only if the Holy City is empty or occupied by that god's sect(s); other gods may prevent this reinforcement by occupying that region.

2) Gain One Sect cards

Gods can gain sects using "Gain One Sect" Conversion cards. To use the card, a god must be on the Portal for the continent he wishes to populate or reinforce. However, gods can only establish a sect using the cards on an empty continent, or one where he or she already has a sect occupying at least one region. Thus when trying to establish a presence on a continent where at least one region is occupied by another god, the invading god must convert one of another god's sect before using any "Gain one Sect" cards.

3) Gain One Sect board space

If a player lands on the "Gain One Sect" space, that god may place one sect chip on any unoccupied region anywhere on the board, or on regions already controlled by that god.

Winning

There are two ways to win the game. The first is to kill off (or convert) all other gods' followers, until only one god's sects are active on the board. The second is to occupy eleven or more regions (i.e., more than half the world) with one god's sects.

Resurrection

Gods whose last sect was not killed but *converted* off the board may be able to return to the game at a later time if another god kills off the sect chip(s) that originally converted them. The resurrected player begins with the two card allotment (one Conversion card and one Wrath card) and from one of the original home Portals. (Resurrection is optional; if the player chooses not to return, has gone home, turned pacifist, or is too drunk to effectively wage holy war, that god's sect chips are removed from the board.)

Equipment

One six-sided die
20 stackable sect chips, five colors each
6 god pieces (idols)
31 Conversion and 52 Wrath cards
1 sheet of adhesive stickers with various god symbols
Rulebook



Credits

(it is right to give thanks and praise)

Creator and designer: Benjamin Radford

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