

# The Orientation Committee

It is a regrettable Truth that while the entrants to Heaven are generally good, decent, and virtuous souls, they will still have... disharmonious personality quirks, cultural blind spots, or unfortunate personal opinions. Thankfully, the nature of Paradise is such that the overwhelming majority of blessed souls swiftly discard such dross on their own. Those finding slight difficulty in cleansing their souls will be able to get help from another blessed soul, or perhaps a sympathetic angel. Those with *moderate* difficulty in doing so will be more or less assigned a sympathetic angel. That will usually solve the problem.

If it doesn't, then it's time for the Orientation Committee.

## Purpose and Goals

To ensure that every mortal resident of Heaven is fully integrated into the ideals and community of Paradise.

## Organization and Membership

The Orientation Committee is primarily made up of Servitors of Stone, Trade, Destiny, Flowers, and Lightning (although every Archangel - including Jordi - has assigned Servitors to the group). To be considered for membership

an angel must demonstrate that he or she has the knack for both working with humans, and angels from rival Words. This last bit is quite important, as a good deal of the Orientation Committee's work relies on being able to switch cases on short notice. There are also several human members of the Committee, with fairly specialized duties.

Blessed souls are usually referred to the Orientation Committee by the Seraphim Council, but individual angels can make suggestions as to who might benefit from the Committee's attention.

## **Abilities and Resources**

The Committee has a complex of buildings set aside for its use, called the Cloister. The Cloister is not isolated, but is fairly remote: it is on the edge of the Groves closest to the Eternal City, and not on any of the major thoroughfares of Heaven. It boasts a wide variety of lecture halls, barracks, therapy rooms, and miscellaneous equipment; everything that the Committee needs to do its work can be found there. The charges of the Orientation Committee live on-site (thus, the barracks). For that matter, many members of the Committee spend a good deal of time at the Cloister, as well. It's an important job, after all.

Committee members also have access to whatever they can get out of their Words - and, as you cannot lie in Heaven, they can get everything that they honestly need, including access to blessed souls whose presence might prove motivational or instructional to their charges. The Orientation Committee also freely and regularly accesses the ethereal plane via special dispensation from Blandine; they can and do bring their charges there on a regular basis. The unique conditions there can often be quite beneficial to the Committee's work.

## **Celestial Relationships**

### **Heaven**

Needless to say, the rest of Heaven understands the very important work that the Orientation Committee performs. Individual members of the Host do their absolute best not to interfere with that work, or distract Committee members unduly. They also understand that the Committee is usually unavoidably busy, so its members are not likely to be available except in cases of legitimate emergency.

### **Hell**

The Orientation Committee is a favorite object of Diabolical agitprop: a typical screed will paint them as ruthless brainwashers who torture their humans for the fun of it, and soul-kill any blessed soul who does not break

quickly enough. This is probably to give demons one more reason to avoid Redemption, as it is rumored in Hell that repentant demons must survive the Committee's gauntlet before they can join the Heavenly Host.

That last bit is, by the way, completely untrue. The Committee is scrupulous about only working with humans, and does not involve itself with potential Redemption cases.

## **History**

While it is unfortunate that some "blessed souls" are not really suitable for Heavenly society until they have had things explained to them properly, it is not surprising. The Symphony awards rewards and inflicts punishments on a system best understood by God, and only dimly by Archangels: ordinary angels don't really have a chance to understand the rules above a certain level of complexity. Nonetheless, as a practical matter it became clear early on that the socialization of the most recalcitrant blessed souls would have to be done in an organized fashion.

Hence the Committee: it has been functioning in its present state for about four thousand years now, and shows no sign of slowing down. Its members have an amazingly good success record, and are constantly

looking for new techniques and strategies for doing their jobs better. For some, indeed, it is practically a vocation. Indeed, some joke - quietly, out of respect and politeness - that the Committee itself is the true Superior of its members...

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