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The Path of Mediation

*Establishing and Modeling a Critical Path
toward Efficient Mediation and Dispute Resolution
within Our Holy Order*

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The Path of Mediation, Part 1

Establishing and Modeling a Critical Path toward Efficient Mediation and Dispute Resolution within Our Holy Order

It is with much respect and honor that I approach the subject of dispute resolution and the specific topic of what I refer to as the “Path of Mediation” within our Holy Order. It has come to my attention, over time and through experience that many within the Order are unclear or uncertain about the appropriate steps to take, and the resources available to them, for effectively dealing with problems or disputes with other members of our Order, when, in the common course of events, they do happen from time to time. Such are the reasons for this presentation; to foster the joy and enrichment of fraternity through a greater understanding of the processes and structure of our Order. And it is my sincerest wish that what I am about to share with you will assist in some small way in making your journey among us more efficient and effective.

As initiates, we have several very notable documents from which to draw in order to assist us in these efforts. Most notably are our foundational documents such as our Constitution, *Liber CI* and *Liber CXCIV*, as well as the *C.O.L.M. Handbook*, the U.S. Grand Lodge bylaws, the *Minerval Guide* and our initiation rituals themselves, just to name a few.

Pax Templi

In examining the path of mediation and the steps available to us in dispute resolution within the structure of our Order, it is perhaps best for us to first address the issue known as *Pax Templi*.

Simply stated it means Peace within the Temple. It is the ability to work together in harmony and fraternity with our brothers and sisters and to not allow personal issues to effect the peace within the precincts of the Temple, even when we may be in disagreement or conflict with our brothers and sisters. Sounds simple, right? Well, it isn't always, and it requires a great deal of “tact and friendliness” as well as a high degree of maturity and self-responsibility on the part of everyone concerned in order to be able to continually and effectively manifest it. It requires a heightened sense of awareness and the disciplined development of the distinct ability to allow our “mental Equilibrium to be above disturbance by material events...” as so eloquently stated in *Liber Librae*. As initiates we have a greater responsibility to our brothers and sisters and the Order as a whole, and it is developing and maintaining the *Pax Templi* that becomes our chief concern in this regard. There should rarely be anything that arises which disturbs or disrupts it. An example of this idea is clearly articulated in *Liber CI: An open letter to those who may wish to join the Order*, Seventh House (Libra) paragraph 32:

Public enemies of the country of any Brother shall be treated as such while in the field, and slain or captured as the officer of the Brother may command. But within the precincts of the Lodge all such divisions are to be forgotten absolutely; and as children of One Father the enemies of the hour before and the hour after are to dwell in peace, amity, and fraternity.

If such a condition would apply to an “enemy of the state,” someone we might kill or capture in battle, then what of the brother or sister who we may be merely having some kind of personal issue or dispute with?

Step One: Personal Responsibility

Ultimately, I believe, we must first look to ourselves for the answer to this question. And this is exactly where we begin on this Path of Mediation. We begin with ourselves; for in a very real sense it is within ourselves that the real issues and their resolutions lie.

There is an old adage that states, “When you are pointing a finger at someone else, there are three fingers pointing back at you.” When we are experiencing a problem with another brother or sister we should take the time and effort to first examine our own actions and attitudes. This is the first critical step upon the path of mediation, and this step is three-fold: self examination, self-analysis, and self-responsibility. We must first look at ourselves and examine what exactly is at the root or cause of the dispute or conflict. What is it, really, that is bothering us or that has created a tension or upset? What is the real core issue? Once that is clearly determined we then can state that core of the issue, clearly, in what I refer to as an “I” or “My” based statement. Such as, “I am having a problem with Sister X because...” or “My issue with Brother Y is...” Doing this allows us to begin to take ownership of our part in the issue. It is also important to express how a conflict or dispute makes us feel. What are the feelings that come as a result of this dispute or conflict that are motivating our particular reactions? We can then include these in an “I” based statement. “I am having a problem with Brother X. When Brother X does this (particular action) it makes me feel angry, hurt, scared, mad, etc.”

It is important to articulate and even write down the exact nature of the upset and how it makes us feel. And to recognize and own these feelings while not trying to bury, stuff or disown them. It is also important for us to stay out of what I call “the story” surrounding the given situation for the present in this process. “Our story” of what happened often deludes or conflates the facts of a matter based on the feelings it brings up in us. For the present, we just want to look at the facts and distinguish the feelings.

Once this self-examination has been accomplished and the issues and feelings surrounding them have been clearly determined and articulated, we need to then analyze the issue, again from our own personal perspective. “Why is this an issue for me? What about this issue is causing a problem for me?” On a deeper level, “What is the lesson within this conflict for me? What is the lesson in regards to my personal path as an initiate? What is it, in this other brother or sister, that is mirroring myself and my own actions? What might I be projecting on to this brother or sister that I am disowning in myself?” Again, writing these things out and answering them with rigorous honesty will bring out salient points of the issue for yourself, which you can then clearly articulate to the other person in the conflict in the next step of the process.

Finally, within this first step we must look for our self-responsibility in the issue by asking, “How am I a cause in the matter?” “What role or responsibility do I take in the dispute or conflict?” This is likely the most difficult aspect of the first step—recognizing what part we play in the conflict and taking responsibility for it without being defensive of our position or

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denying that role, without painting ourselves into the role of the victim or giving our power away in the situation, or once again going into "our story" of the issue.

Example: I loan Brother X \$100 because he's short on rent. He promises to pay me back in a week once he gets his paycheck. A week goes by and I don't hear from Brother X. I call him and he doesn't answer or return my messages for another week, even after I leave a message explaining I need my money back. When I finally do run into Brother X at an O.T.O. event the next week, he says he's sorry makes an excuse and says he can only give me \$20 tonight because he's short and he'll *try* to get the money back to me as soon as possible. This really upsets me, and I want to tell him so right then and there in front of everybody.

A fairly cut and dried scenario, right? Let's look at it from the point of the first step. What is the core issue and how can we take ownership of it? First, state the issue clearly.

"I am having a problem with Brother X. He borrowed \$100 from me and promised to pay me back in a week. He has not paid me back as he promised." That is the basic issue and the facts of the matter.

"I feel as if Brother X has been avoiding me and it makes me angry that he has not been true to his word and has not paid me back on time." Those are the general feelings involved in the issue. There may be more, but again we need to be careful about going into "our story" and placing blame. Such as, "Brother X is a liar. He said he would pay me back the \$100 I so graciously

loaned him and now he is avoiding me. He's a lazy slacker and a thief and I can't believe he would rip me off like that!" That's a story; and a rather impolite, somewhat slanderous, and highly reactive story at that. We need to be able to clearly separate out "our story" while still giving credence to the emotions that may arise around a particular issue. We'll talk a bit more about that in the second step.

Here's an example of taking ownership of our cause in the matter. "I loaned Brother X \$100. I trusted Brother X's word that he would pay me back. I realized there was a possibility that he could not pay me back. I wanted to help my Brother X."

That's ownership. That's your part in the matter expressed without going into "your story." Brother X also has a responsibility for his part in the matter as well, but we'll tackle that in the next step.

Taking the time, energy and effort to look at ourselves rigorously in this way may not be easy. It is, however, a necessary and vital part of the process in maintaining *Pax Templi*. No one ever said, after all, that becoming a part of a magical fraternity was going to be easy.

Once we have thoroughly completed the three aspects of Step One, we will have clearly determined what the core of the issue is, how it effects us directly and makes us feel, and what our role or "cause in the matter" is, at which point we can then really begin to move on to Step Two with clearer knowledge and understanding of the issues before us.



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The Path of Mediation, Part 2

Establishing and Modeling a Critical Path toward Efficient Mediation and Dispute Resolution within Our Holy Order

Step Two: Responsibility Toward our Brothers and Sisters

In the next step upon the Path of Mediation, after clearly analyzing “our part” in the matter, we bring our issues directly to the attention of the brother or sister with whom we are having a problem. Having first fulfilled the three-part process of self-examination, self-analysis and self-responsibility, we can now approach our brother or sister rationally, non-reactively and with discretion.

A rational, non-reactive, and discrete approach does not require that we repress our emotions surrounding the issue. In fact, it is important to convey our feelings in a direct, forthright and effective manner. The key is to express our feelings about our issue, with precision, accuracy, “tact and friendliness,” in a way that will get through to the other person; and in a manner which they will listen to, hear, and understand the core issue we are having with them and how it is making us feel. This approach is called “emotional literacy”—the ability to express our thoughts and feelings on a matter of conflict, in such a way that the other person can understand what we are expressing, without having to take a defensive posture. Emotional literacy is about *acting passionately and thinking rationally, while being Thyself*, to paraphrase *Liber Librae*. If we bury our emotions around an issue, it will only fester, and likely come out later in the form of deep resentments. We need, however, to handle our initial interactions with our brothers and sisters extremely tactfully.

Reactive Consciousness

Most individuals have a tendency, when faced with challenge or conflict, to either go into a defensive mode (by rationalizing, defending or denying), or to take a self-righteous offensive stance (by attempting to prove that we are right, the other person is wrong, and that the other person should be punished or shamed). This tendency is one of the most important things to recognize at this stage in this process. Neither of these positions—defensive or offensive—gets us what we really want; in fact, these stances tend to only escalate tensions and create further division. These “states of being” are commonly called, “reactive states of consciousness.” They are very often deeply rooted in our subconscious mind, originating from the way we were raised, the decisions we have made as adults, and our worldview that these experiences have formed over time.

One of the best ways of dealing with our reactive consciousness is to put up “gatekeepers.” Read *Liber Jugorum* to learn the method of controlling thoughts, words and actions. It’s a means to prevent us from just robotically blurting or acting out the first thought that rises into consciousness when an emotionally charged issue comes up. When bringing our concerns to our brothers and sisters, it is important to take some time, perhaps create a bit of distance, and generally remember to breathe when issues of real conflict arise. (*Remember that Pranayama folks!*)

Avoiding these reactive states of consciousness is part of taking self-responsibility, as was described in Step One. In this step, however, it is our goal to communicate responsibly and directly with our brothers and sisters.

Putting our Cards on the Table

Our best approach to communicate, in any situation of this kind, is to have a face to face, private, sit-down conversation with the brother or sister involved, and to calmly put all our cards on the table with them.

This kind of approach involves rationally and clearly discussing the issue we have with them, or just having a conversation about the root of the conflict, while incorporating “emotional literacy” into the process. E-mail & LiveJournal are generally not the best venues for this kind of interaction. These mediums, more often than not, have a way of filtering out the kind of fraternal exchange and subtle nuances of spoken language that we use when we are communicating face to face. I have seen more conflicts escalate in e-mail, and through other web-based modes of communication, than I care to mention. It is important, when using these mediums, to be extremely prudent about hitting that “send” button. One advantage to e-mail, perhaps, is that it allows us to get our thoughts and ideas clearly worked out and articulated over time. There are also situations which call for maintaining a record of our communications. For the purposes of *Step Two*, however, nothing works better than a face to face, casual meeting on mutual ground, where the two parties involved can interact in the spirit of fraternity, with the mutual goal of voicing their concerns in a mature, honest and straight-forward manner. I sincerely believe that most problems and conflicts can be resolved easily at the personal level, if we take the time and make the effort to approach our brothers and sisters in this manner.

Deep Listening

“Deep Listening” is the essential component of relating responsibly to our brothers and sisters. This is an active process, in which each person shares their thoughts and feelings openly while the other just listens attentively, and actively; not commenting, making excuses, or defending their actions. The listener simply listens, intently and openly, to what is being said. Again, developing a non-reactive way of being facilitates this process.

In most circumstances when another is speaking, we have an active monologue or commentary going on in our minds. We usually want to interrupt to clarify our side of the issue. That is not how this process works. There will be time for sharing later. Once the first person has said everything they need to, the other can respond, while the first actively listens in the same manner. The point is for each person to express themselves completely and fully, so that each may put *all* their cards on the table, neither withholding nor being interrupted. This again requires emotional literacy, self-accountability, and taking responsibility for our issues.

“Deep Listening” can also be utilized in group conferences or mediation sessions facilitated by a local body master. These sessions can include the sponsors of the concerned parties, and/or members of the Committee of Four. The process of facilitated mediation sessions will be covered more in depth in Step Three.

The First & Second Level

Steps One and Two represent what I refer to as the “First Level” of mediation. This is the “personal” level. Relating and attempting resolution on the personal level is the most direct and effective way of dealing with problems and conflicts that arise between members; handling issues directly, one-on-one, mutually and equitably as brothers and sisters. It involves addressing and taking responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings and actions while cultivating mutual respect and honesty. When mediation and resolution cannot be effected at the *personal* level, we move on to *Step Three: the Local Body Master*, which takes us to the “Second Level,” which I refer to as the “local” level of mediation.

Level One: the "Personal" Level

STEP 1. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
See pages 2-3

Self Examination

1. What are the real core issues?
2. Define issue with "I" or "my" based statements.
3. Distinguish the "facts" and the "feelings" from "story."
4. Journal all of this out.

Self Analysis

1. Why is this an issue for me?
2. What is the lesson in this conflict for me?
3. What might I be disowning or projecting?

Self Responsibility

1. How am I a cause in the matter?
2. What role or responsibility do I take in this conflict?
3. How can I take ownership of my part in the matter?

STEP 2. RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Reactive Consciousness

1. Avoid defensive or offensive stances.
2. Learn to control thought. Avoid blurting out.
3. Remember to breathe!

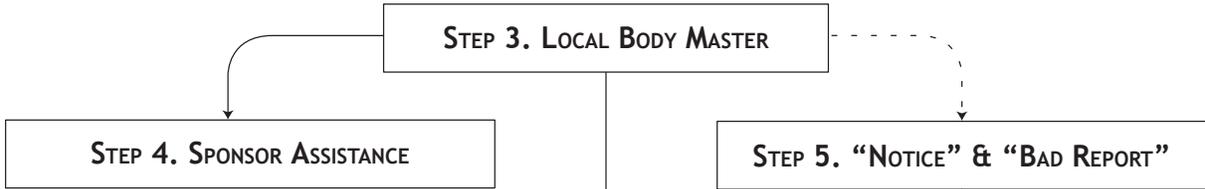
Put All Your Cards on the Table

1. Cultivate "emotional literacy."
2. Consider the venue carefully.
3. Make time for face-to-face communications.

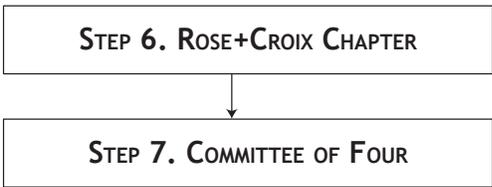
Deep Listening

1. Listen attentively without interrupting.
2. Work on stilling internal dialog.
3. Take turns to express issues honestly and fully.
4. Can be effectively utilized in conference.

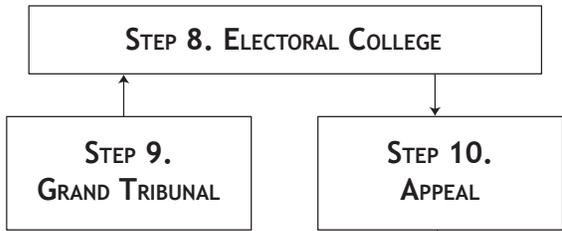
Level Two: the "Local" Level



Level Three: the "Regional" Level



Level Four: the "National" Level



Level Five: the "International" Level



The Path of Mediation, Part 3

Step Three: The Body Master—Mediation at the Local Level

Liber 101, Seventh House (Libra), paragraph 26 states clearly:

All disputes between Brethren should be referred firstly to the Master or Masters of their Lodge or Lodges in conference; if a composition be not arrived at in this manner, the dispute is to be referred to the Grand Tribunal, which will arbitrate thereon, and its decision is to be accepted as final.

This seems pretty clear, but let's look at the first half of this statement a bit more closely before addressing the second. The next, or third step in the Path of Mediation becomes taking the issue "in conference" to the local body master. So, after we have attempted resolution of a matter at the personal level we are next instructed to bring it to the attention of the local body master, or in the case when the dispute is between members of different bodies, the two body masters together in conference with the members concerned. This is where, once again, a facilitated process of mediation, utilizing the elements that we have discussed previously, can now come into play. The body master may choose to speak to each individual privately before arranging a group conference. The body master may choose to confirm that the members in question or the member with the particular issue, has attempted resolution at the personal level. If not, the body master may choose to counsel the members and suggest going back to the first and second steps, as the members in question may not have attempted resolution pro-actively enough at these levels. The local body master may also choose to request that the two parties write out the nature and circumstances of the dispute and submit it in advance of the group conference so they can be better informed and apprised of both sides of the issue and the concerns involved.

Body masters have numerous options and resources available to them in any given circumstance to assist in the process of mediation. They can make determinations, if necessary, of limiting a member's attendance at certain events, for example, or even having a member or members take a break from attendance to allow for a "cooling off" period if tensions between members are high. I like to refer to this as

a "call to corners" as in boxing. If the body master is uncertain about how to proceed in a given circumstance they can turn to their Electoral College appointed mentor for advice and counsel. Or they may seek informal advice and counsel from other local body masters or possibly a Grand Lodge representative with whom they are familiar. Yet it is important to distinguish between seeking counsel from these senior members and trying to get them to resolve the dispute for you.

Step Four: the Sponsors' Role

Within this process as well, the local body master may choose, if appropriate and necessary, to call in the sponsors of a member or members to assist in the mediation process or to help in handling personal disputes or conflicts. This would be considered as Step Four within the process. As it states clearly in the conclusion of *Liber 101*:

. . . it is incumbent upon the honour of every Brother (or Sister) not to abuse [the privileges of membership], and the sponsors of any Brother (or Sister) who does so, as well as he himself, will be held strictly to account by the Grand Tribunal.

Part of this "accountability" referred to in *Liber 101* can and may also apply to sponsors within the mediation process at both the local and national levels, if and when appropriate. Usually, it would be hoped, the sponsor has a reasonable familiarity with the member and may be able to assist by providing counsel, if necessary and appropriate, in assisting in the mediation or resolution process. Again, at the local level, it is the prerogative of the local body master or masters to utilize this resource if and as necessary. We'll speak to the idea of sponsor involvement a bit more when we address the ninth step, that of the Grand Tribunal.

Step Five: "Notice" and "Bad Report"—Escalating the Matter from the Local to the National Level

Another resource available to body masters in the process is that of potentially putting a member "on notice" of pending bad report, though we would hope, this is only utilized if and when absolutely necessary. And it is therefore important that we briefly mention and look at

"notice" and "bad report" in order to clearly understand what they are and how they might be used appropriately in this process.

Putting a member on "notice" is a step a local body master can take when and if they are finding a member's conduct or behavior to be either abusive or disruptive to the *pax templi* of the local body. The C.O.L.M. Handbook states:

A member may be placed on notice for unruly, disruptive, or abusive behavior at O.T.O. events, for minor incidents of slander or defamation, for harassment of other members, for minor property damage, failure to repay local debts or otherwise honor reasonable local obligations, and other relatively minor offenses of local concern."

Often within a case of conflict or dispute resolution a brother or sister may act out inappropriately in a given situation. "Notice," when utilized correctly, gives the local body master an opportunity to notify the member about conduct that they determine is causing problems and offer reasonable methods of solution or remedies for the member to adjust their behavior, while at the same time potentially limiting the interaction between the member and those with whom the member has a dispute, or with the local body as a whole. We could likely devote an entire article to this subject alone, so, for the present we will just make mention of it as an option to local body masters. The local body master, after counseling and giving the member an opportunity to then "moderate their conduct" would then submit a letter of "notice" to the member in question, to the member's sponsors, and to the Electoral College, either directly through the E.C. Secretary or via their E.C. appointed mentor.

Formal "bad report," on the other hand, is an official sanction of membership privileges taken at the national level. "Bad report" can only be declared by a Sovereign Grand Inspector General, by the Grand Tribunal, or by the Executive, and this is only done by submitting a formal complaint or petition to an S.G.I.G., the G.T. or the Executive in writing. In both cases copies of the complaints are also required to be submitted to the member in question, so that they

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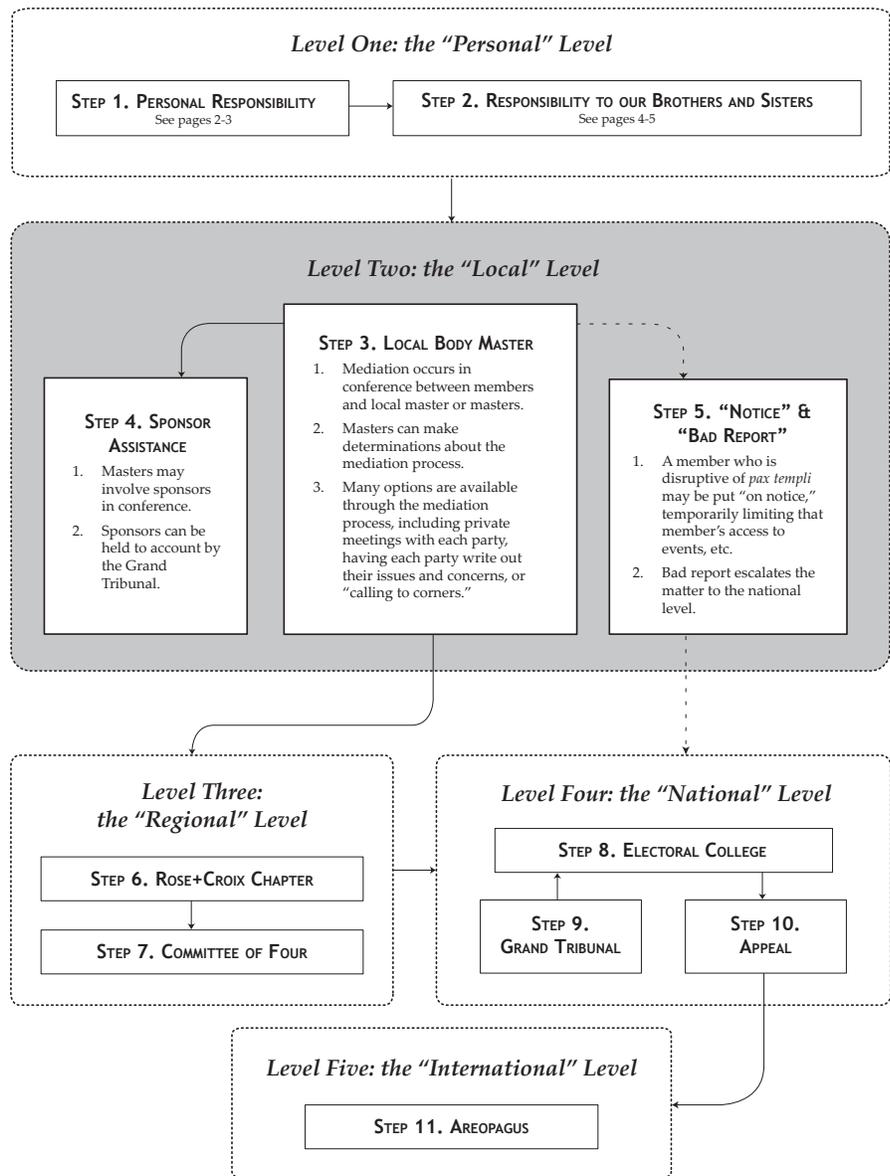
have an opportunity to respond to that complaint. Please note that “notice” does not necessarily have to be issued prior to a complaint requesting consideration of “bad report.” When, for example, there is a clear instance or pattern of serious abuse or misconduct on the part of a member, “bad report” may be considered without first issuing “notice.” Bringing serious abuses of membership privileges to the attention of the appropriate Grand Lodge representatives in a clear, concise and forthright manner is the responsibility of all members. This generally requires a written petition or complaint issued to an S.G.I.G., the G.T. or directly to the Executive. If you have any question about this, check with the Ombudsman’s office for counsel.

Once again, these actions exist as options or resources that body masters and individual members have available to them, but should be utilized only with the utmost discretion and when absolutely deemed necessary. Although “notice” and “bad report” could be considered as the fifth step in the *Path of Mediation*, both of these actions effectively escalate the matter from the second, or local level, to the national level. So real consideration needs to take place on behalf of the local body master before either of these steps are considered.

Keeping the matter at the local level

The key in these situations is to effectively manage the mediation process, and when at all possible, to keep the matter contained at the local level to be sure that it has a chance to be effectively mediated and resolved at that level before proceeding on to further steps upon the path. It is important for everyone involved in the matter not to “skip steps” in the process by going to a “higher” source or authority within Grand Lodge with a matter that could be effectively dealt with at a lower level, as has been the case on far too many occasions in the past.

This kind of political “side-stepping” or “step skipping” makes the entire process ineffective and, in my estimation, actually weakens the Order’s function and undermines what the Prophet intended in putting these structures so painstakingly in place. So, be sure that if you are involved in the mediation process, you are not skipping steps in this manner. Feel free



to seek counsel from those you know, but be sure you are really dealing with the matter directly at the appropriate level. All too often I have seen brothers or sisters attempt to try to go above the head of the person who could most effectively mediate or resolve a problem by approaching a Grand Lodge officer for a matter that should have likely been handled by a local body officer or at the personal level. Be at pains to avoid doing this. If there is ever any confusion or uncertainty about how to proceed, contact the Ombudsman’s office and simply inquire about the best course of action.

According to the previous clause of *Liber 101* it is stated that if the dispute cannot be mediated by the body master at the local level it should then be referred directly to the Grand Tribunal for arbitration. This may be true and effective for a number of different types of cases, however there still remain several valuable steps that are available to us on the *Path of Mediation* before arriving at this point. This takes us to Step Six, which involves the Chapters of Rose Croix and effectively takes us into the “third” or “regional” level.

Step Six: The Responsibility of the Rose Croix Chapter—the “Regional” Level

If a local body is fortunate enough to have a regional Chapter of the Rose Croix in their vicinity, the local body master may, if they have been unable to assist in effectively resolving the matter at hand, choose to refer the matter to the Most Wise Sovereign and/or High Priestess of the Chapter. The members of the Chapters of Rose Croix are mandated to promote beauty and harmony within the ranks of our Order, which can be an invaluable resource to body masters and individual members in this process. The members of the V° therefore have a greater obligation to the general membership, and the Order as a whole, in fostering harmony through their actions. Body masters, if they are not members of a Chapter themselves, would do well to familiarize themselves with local members of the Rose Croix in their area, including the officers and the Chapter’s Committee of Four.

Step Seven: The Committee of Four

Liber 194, paragraph 8 states:

In this degree the Most Wise Sovereign of each Chapter will appoint a committee of four persons, two men and two women, to arrange for all social gatherings, banquets, dances, the performance of plays, and similar pleasures. They will also endeavour to promote harmony among the Brethren in all possible ways, and to compose any disputes by tact and friendliness without formal appeal being made to any more authoritative tribunal.

The above excerpt clearly shows that we have yet another resource available to us upon the *Path of Mediation* in the Committee of Four, which represents the Seventh Step on the *Path*. The Committee of Four, though explicitly referred to in *Liber 194*, is a resource that is steadily being developed within the various Rose Croix Chapters of our Order. Psyche-Eros Chapter in Portland, Oregon, for example, has a standing Committee of Four which is charged with informal dispute resolution.

Essentially, the four members, two men and two women, are known to the general membership; if a brother or sister is having a problem, the local body master can refer them on request or the member can informally approach a member of the committee as a neutral party, in confidence for advice and counsel without needing to take the matter any further. From my experience on this committee, this has proved immensely useful in clarifying questions for the general membership as well as resolving disputes in their earliest stages of development. The reason this has been successful is primarily that members know that the committee is available to them as a resource. The committee is specifically charged with “promoting harmony” and composing disputes by “tact and friendliness.” There are Committees of Four being established within various Chapters around the country. This resource will become more widely available to the membership nationwide, as Chapters continue to mature and develop.

Level Four: The “National” Level

If a dispute or conflict cannot be mediated or resolved at the

regional level through the Rose Croix Chapter or its Committee of Four, the matter should be referred back to the local body master, as stated previously in *Liber 101*. The local body master should then instruct and possibly assist the member(s) to formulate and file a letter of grievance, outlining the matter of the dispute and completing the *Complaint Tracking Form* for submission to the Grand Tribunal *via* the G.T. Secretary. A copy of the letter should also be sent to the other member in question (as well as their sponsors) so that they may formulate and submit responses to any accusations, or file a statement of grievance themselves, as necessary. This action brings the matter to the fourth level, which is the “national” level.

In a case where the complaint specifically involves a local body master or local body officer, the individual member should file a signed and dated complaint in writing to the Secretary of the Electoral College and the Executive and/or a responsible Sovereign Grand Inspector General in the region for review and consideration.

Step Eight: The Role of the Electoral College

The E.C. generally deals with issues concerning local bodies and the actions of body masters or officers specifically, as these matters fall directly under their purview. The Grand Tribunal, on the other hand, generally deals with disputes or conflicts between individual members of the Order. So it is very important, at this stage of the process, to get really clear on how these governing bodies function and where to address problems or grievances. Again, we can refer directly to the *Minerval Guide* or the *Camp, Oasis, Lodge Master’s Handbook* for clarification. Recognize that the E.C. would only become involved in a matter that concerned problems with a local body master or possibly another local body officer, not in disputes between individual members. For convenience, we will refer to the E.C. as the Eighth Step, though this would only apply in the specific instances mentioned.

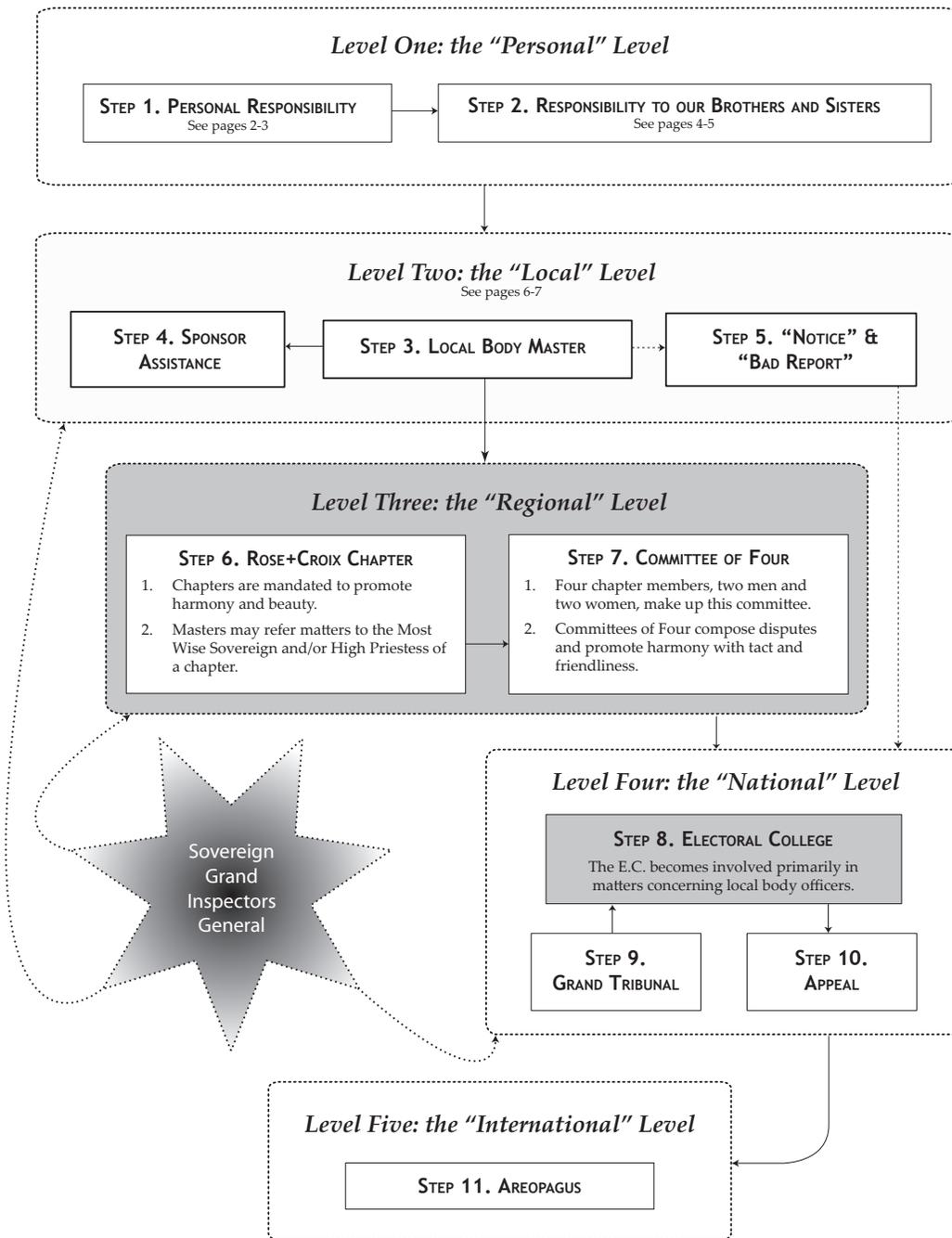
The Role of the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General

The Sovereign Grand Inspectors General also play an interesting, important and vital role in this entire process. *Liber 194*, paragraph 19 states:

All members of the Seventh Degree travel as Sovereign Grand Inspectors General of the Order, and report, on their own initiative, to the Supreme and Most Holy King, as to the condition of all Lodges, and Chapters; to the Supreme Council, on all affairs of the Second Triad; and to the Electoral College, on those of the Third.

Essentially, they serve as the eyes and ears of the Supreme and Holy King and are his direct representatives. They therefore do not represent a specific step on the *Path of Mediation*, but in a very real sense can serve as an effective guide upon it, by taking action on their own initiative, or by referring members to the appropriate officer or governing body that can assist them. The role of the S.G.I.G. may therefore vary at each level and at each step upon the *Path*. So it is important that we recognize the important role of the S.G.I.G., and that it is incumbent upon us not to abuse their office in the process by trying to use them to skip a step in the *Path* by appealing to their authority. Just so, it is important for the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, when

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approached by individual members with a particular problem, to check in with that member to see where they are upon the *Path of Meditation*, and if they see a member inadvertently or intentionally skipping a step, to refer that member back to the appropriate officer or governing body who can best handle the matter at the appropriate level.

In terms of dealing with specific matters concerning the Man of Earth triad, an S.G.I.G. would be an appropriate governing officer to approach if there is a specific grievance or problem with a local body master, in which case the S.G.I.G. would

report the matter to the S.H.K. as well as the E.C. for review. In the case of issues within the Lover triad, they would refer the matter to the Supreme Grand Council.

Sovereign Grand Inspectors General are also charged with the duty to report on the condition of all Lodges and Chapters to the S.H.K. If there is a matter that is potentially adversely affecting a local body, the S.G.I.G. may, at the request of the S.H.K., intervene and mediate; or may attempt to resolve the matter at any particular level. Consider this, and remember that this is the prerogative of the S.H.K. to authorize an S.G.I.G. to take action in this manner as it may concern the general welfare of the Order.

The Path of Mediation, Part 5

Frater Hrumachis

The Ninth Step: Formal Appeal to the Grand Tribunal—What's Appropriate & How it Works

Liber 194, paragraph 16 states:

The Grade of Grand Inquisitor Commander follows. Here every member has the right to a seat on the Grand Tribunal, which body decides all disputes and complaints, which have not been composed by the Chapters of Rose Croix or the Lodge Masters.

If a matter still has not been resolved after mediation at each of the previous levels, or an instance or pattern of serious abuse or misconduct exists, the member may compose a formal letter or statement of grievance along with a Grand Tribunal complaint tracking form, available from any local body master. The member then forwards this to the Secretary of the G.T. who will review each grievance with the President of the Grand Tribunal, i.e. the Grand Master. A copy of the grievance must also be submitted to the member who is the subject of the complaint.

The G.T. Secretary and President together then determine if the matter warrants mediation or arbitration by the Grand Tribunal. There may be certain cases where G.T. involvement would not be warranted; for example, matters considered *de minimis* by the G.T.—in other words, matters determined to be insignificant and therefore unworthy of formal arbitration or mediation by the Grand Tribunal.

The G.T. also does not deal with lawsuits regarding domestic disputes, such as divorce, between Order members. The G.T. can give dispensation for members to seek redress of grievances in the secular courts as well, if deemed necessary or appropriate.

The Grand Tribunal exists specifically to serve the Order in the following manners:

1. To mediate and/or arbitrate disputes between members of Ordo Templi Orientis in the U.S.A., on request of one or more of the disputing parties.
2. To hear complaints and grievances filed against members of the Order by either individual members of the Order residing in the U.S.A., or by governing or administrative bodies of O.T.O. U.S.A.; to investigate and make findings of fact regarding same; and to prescribe appropriate remedies and/or disciplinary actions, subject to the limits of applicable law.
3. To hold members of the Order residing within the U.S.A., together with their sponsors, strictly to account for any abuse of membership privileges.
4. To impose sanctions as it deems necessary, should a member of the Order residing within the U.S. refuse to accept a decision of the Grand Tribunal.

G.T. Dispute Resolution

Essentially, the Grand Tribunal deals primarily with two types of issue:

1. Dispute resolution and arbitration between members.
2. Instances of abuse of membership privileges by individual members.

Remember, too, that while the local body master may call upon

the sponsors of a member to solicit their aid in effecting an appropriate remedy, the Grand Tribunal can also call sponsors to account. This can include assisting directly in resolving matters of conflict or dispute in a variety of possible ways, if deemed necessary and appropriate. For the intent and purpose of this paper, we will look primarily at dispute resolution, arbitration, and mediation.

Since members of the First Degree of O.T.O. and above agree to be bound by the decisions of the Grand Tribunal in resolving civil disputes between them, civil lawsuits between members of O.T.O. are forbidden on pain of expulsion. Instead, matters that would normally go to the civil courts would be taken to the G.T. if they cannot be resolved amenable by the two parties concerned. Matters that would normally go to small claims court, for example, can effectively be handled by the G.T. and should be referred there when necessary. Cases potentially involving criminal matters, however, should be referred directly to the civil authorities, such as the police or criminal courts. In the rare instance when a criminal matter may involve an Order member, anyone aware of it should notify their local body master, the Grand Tribunal Secretary and the Executive through the Grand Secretary General of the alleged offense, so that the Order is at least aware of the matter.

Issues involving abuse of membership privileges or violations of O.T.O. policy should be referred to the appropriate governing bodies or authorities, i.e. the Grand Tribunal, or the Electoral College in the case of body masters and officers.

In either case, the G.T. will then form a Court of Inquiry, consisting of three of its seated members, to investigate the case. Once its investigation is complete, the Court of Inquiry will formulate its decision, which generally includes the Court's resolution for the issue at hand. If accusations of member misconduct are involved, charges are formulated and presented to the accused, who may respond to them. In certain instances, the accused can request a formal hearing by the G.T., at which he or she will be assigned representation. The Court of Inquiry submits its decision to the full Grand Tribunal for ratification, and then to the Executive for final action.

Final action includes notifying the members involved of the G.T.'s decision. Members must then abide by those decisions regarding the matter, or, if they are still in disagreement, the following appeals process may be utilized.

The Tenth Step: The Appeals Process

Liber 194, paragraph 16 further informs us:

"[The Grand Tribunal's] verdicts are without appeal, unless a member of the Electoral College gives sanction to take the case to the Areopagus of the Eighth Degree. All members of the Order, even of higher grades, are subject to the Grand Tribunal."

In order to effectively appeal the decisions of the G.T. a member of the E.C. must certify the appeal. This is accomplished by forwarding a formal request to the Electoral College Secretary who will in turn pass that request on to the members of the College for individual consideration. If certified, the case will then pass to the Areopagus of the Eighth Degree. This is the final and

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ultimate step in the process of dispute resolution and mediation within our Order, which takes the matter to the fifth and final level, the “international” level.

The Eleventh Step: The Areopagus’ Role (The Fifth or “International” Level)

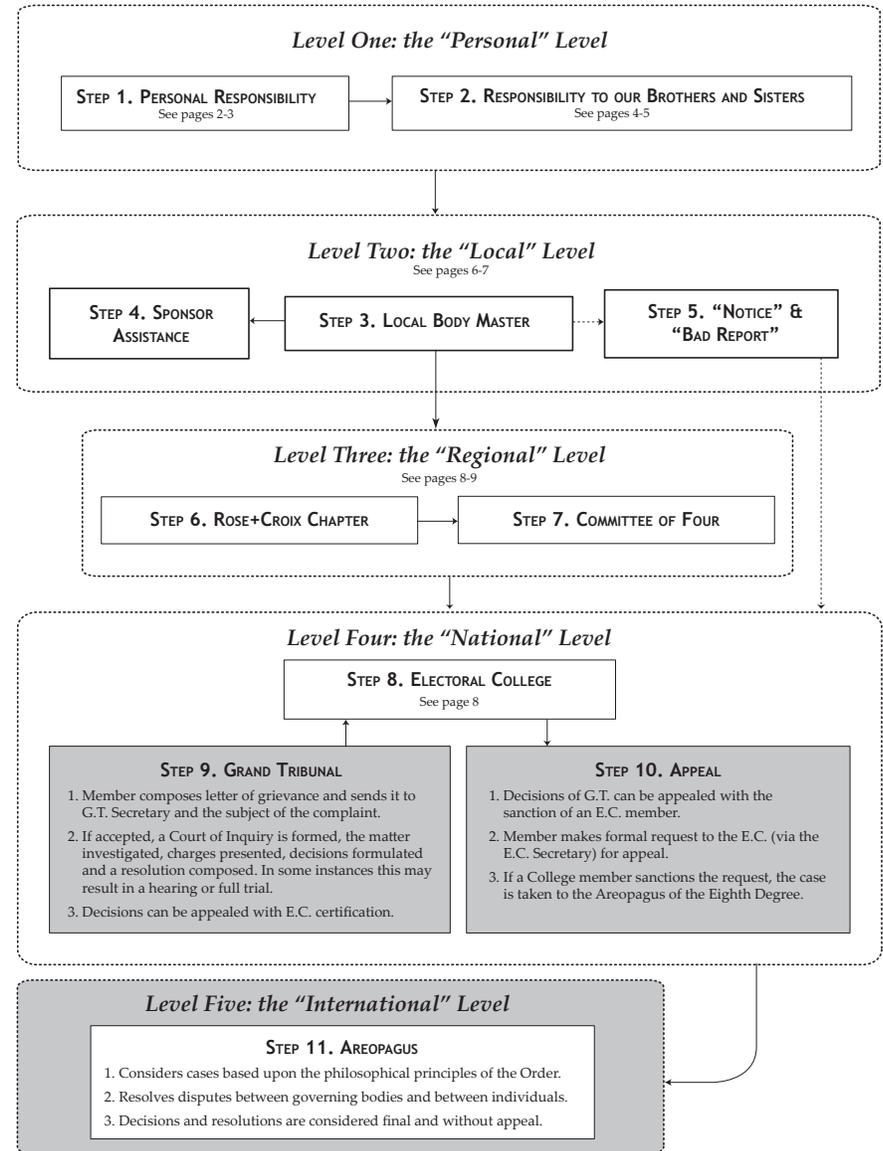
Liber 194, paragraph 20 tells us:

“The Eighth Degree is a Philosophical Body. Its members being fully instructed in the Principles of the Order, save in one point only, devote themselves to the understanding of what they have learned in their initiation. They have power to reverse the decisions of the Grand Tribunal, and to compose all conflicts between any of the governing bodies. And this they do upon the great principles of philosophy. For it will often occur that there is contention between two parties, both of whom are right from their own point of view. This is so important that an illustration is desirable. A man is smitten with leprosy; is it right that men should circumscribe his liberty by isolating him from his fellows? Another holds back land or some other necessity from the common use; is he to be compelled to surrender it? Such cases of difficulty involve deep philosophical principles; and the Areopagus of the Eighth Degree is charged with the duty of resolving them in accordance with the great principles of the Order.”

The Areopagus thus represents the 11th or final step on the *Path of Mediation*, and is in every sense the “Supreme Court” of our Order. Should a conflict or dispute make it this far along the path, it is weighed and considered utilizing the philosophical principles of this dignified body, which is constituted under the authority of O.T.O. International. Not only is this body charged with resolving the disputes of individuals in this manner, but it also composes disputes between the governing bodies within the Order. Once its decision and resolution is formulated and delivered to the members in question, the matter is considered closed. Members must abide by its decision or face expulsion from the Order.

Conclusion

Such is the *Path of Mediation* within our august and sacred Order. It involves self-



examination and responsibility, in addition to honesty, integrity, accountability, forthrightness, and discretion between us and our brothers and sisters. It offers a variety of useful steps and resources that can be utilized at every level in the processes of mediation and dispute resolution, and in fostering and developing a greater sense of harmony and fraternity among our ranks. It utilizes an intricate and integral system of checks and balances incorporating justice and equity while allowing for an effective appeals process where the matter may be referred and considered unto the highest grade of our Order. It is my sincerest hope, my brothers and sisters, that you may never have need of this *Path* as you sojourn among us. Yet, should you find

that you do, it is my sincerest wish that this presentation will have assisted you in the Way of your Going.

Should any member wish to learn more about the *Path of Mediation* or require assistance about how to proceed in a specific matter of mediation or dispute resolution, they are strongly encouraged to contact the office of U.S. Grand Lodge Ombudsman at:

ombudsman@oto-usa.org

562-685-4722

Love is the law, love under will.

In the Bonds of the Order,
Frater Hrumachis
Past Ombudsman, U.S.G.L.