# SANCTUARY ETHICS REVIEW BOARD

## SERB-004 — THE BURNING HELLS

### On Infernal Sovereignty, Coercive Agreements, and the Presumption That Power Confers Consent

*An Institutional Inquiry into the Governance of the Burning Hells, the Manipulation of Mortal Populations, the Temple of the Triune, and the Enforcement of Interplanar Agreements*

**Issuing Authority:** Sanctuary Ethics Review Board (SERB)
**Docket:** SERB-004
**Classification:** Institutional Ethics, Interplanar Governance, Coercion, Treaty Compliance, and Mortal Autonomy
**Date:** October 24, 2026
**Status:** Preliminary Findings, Institutional Determination, and Notice of Continuing Investigation

**Principal Respondents:**

- Mephisto — Lord of Hatred
- Diablo — Lord of Terror
- Baal — Lord of Destruction
- The Prime Evils, collectively
- The Burning Hells, insofar as an identifiable institutional authority may be established

**Additional Interested Parties:**

- Andariel — Maiden of Anguish
- Duriel — Lord of Pain
- Belial — Lord of Lies
- Azmodan — Lord of Sin
- The Angiris Council
- Inarius
- The Temple of the Triune
- The Horadrim

- The Mortal Population of Sanctuary

**Principal Questions:**

Whether the rulers of the Burning Hells possessed legitimate authority to recruit, manipulate, possess, or otherwise direct the inhabitants of Sanctuary in furtherance of the Eternal Conflict.

Whether agreements obtained through coercion, deception, or threats of destruction may establish legitimate obligations upon persons who did not participate in their negotiation.

Whether the noninterference agreement negotiated between Mephisto and the Angiris Council created enforceable institutional duties, and whether subsequent infernal conduct was consistent with those duties.

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# I. NOTICE OF INVESTIGATION

The Sanctuary Ethics Review Board hereby opens an institutional inquiry into the conduct of the Burning Hells and their governing powers.

The Board recognizes that the Burning Hells constitute an ancient realm whose inhabitants possess capabilities, customs, and governing structures substantially different from those of mortal civilization.

The Board further recognizes that the rulers of the Burning Hells may reject the premise that their actions are subject to independent ethical scrutiny.

This objection is anticipated.

It does not resolve the questions presented.

The Board's inquiry does not depend upon a respondent's willingness to acknowledge the moral legitimacy of the reviewing institution.

Nor does refusal to participate establish the respondent's culpability.

Rather, the Board will examine available evidence concerning the respondent's conduct and the consequences of that conduct for affected persons.

The Board acknowledges that infernal governance may differ fundamentally from mortal governance.

Nevertheless, differences in institutional culture do not, by themselves, establish that coercion, deception, and involuntary domination are ethically permissible when imposed upon persons outside that institution.

The central question is not whether the Burning Hells regard such measures as acceptable.

It is whether the measures can be justified in relation to those subjected to them.

**An institution's internal acceptance of cruelty does not establish cruelty as a legitimate principle of external governance.**

The investigation shall therefore proceed.

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# II. PRELIMINARY JURISDICTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Board distinguishes between two separate matters.

The first concerns whether the Burning Hells are subject to a recognized legal jurisdiction empowered to compel compliance with the present proceedings.

The second concerns whether their conduct may properly be examined according to ethical principles applicable to sentient persons.

The Board makes no claim to possess recognized enforcement authority under the laws or customs of the Burning Hells.

Nor does it presume that infernal authorities have consented to its jurisdiction.

Its inquiry is ethical, historical, and institutional.

The inability to compel a respondent's attendance does not eliminate the possibility of examining that respondent's conduct.

The Board further notes that questions concerning the use of force, deception, and domination remain meaningful even where the actor responsible expressly disavows moral obligations.

An actor's rejection of a standard may be relevant to understanding that actor.

It does not conclusively determine whether the standard is defensible.

Accordingly, the Board recognizes the existence of the Burning Hells as a factual matter within the historical record.

It does not recognize infernal sovereignty as an unlimited entitlement to exercise authority over Sanctuary.

**Sovereignty within one realm does not automatically establish sovereignty over another.**

This principle shall apply equally to the High Heavens and Burning Hells.

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# III. THE PRIME EVILS AND THE STRUCTURE OF INFERNAL AUTHORITY

The Burning Hells have historically been associated with seven principal demonic powers.

Among these, the three Prime Evils—Mephisto, Diablo, and Baal—occupied positions of extraordinary influence.

Four additional powers, commonly designated the Lesser Evils, exercised substantial authority within the infernal realm.

The Board recognizes that the designations *Prime* and *Lesser* describe an established hierarchy.

It does not adopt those designations as ethical evaluations of the persons or institutions concerned.

The distinction between superior and subordinate power is not necessarily a distinction between greater and lesser moral worth.

Nor does command over a population automatically establish the legitimacy of that command.

The Board therefore requests clarification concerning the institutional structure of the Burning Hells.

In particular, it seeks evidence identifying:

1. The basis upon which the Prime Evils claimed governing authority.
2. The relationship between the Prime Evils and Lesser Evils.
3. Procedures for resolving disputes among infernal authorities.
4. The status of subordinate demonic populations.
5. The existence of any limits upon the exercise of infernal power.
6. The conditions under which an infernal ruler may be displaced.
7. Whether participation in the Eternal Conflict is compulsory.
8. Whether inhabitants of the Burning Hells possess any recognized capacity to refuse service.

The Board acknowledges that such information may be difficult to obtain.

It further acknowledges that an institution organized around violence and domination may possess little incentive to preserve records demonstrating limits upon its authority.

Nevertheless, these difficulties do not justify presuming that no meaningful distinctions exist among infernal inhabitants.

The Board declines to treat every demon as individually responsible for every act undertaken by the Prime Evils.

Responsibility must be established according to conduct, participation, authority, and relevant knowledge.

**The existence of an infernal hierarchy does not eliminate the distinction between those who issue commands and those compelled to obey them.**

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# IV. THE DISCOVERY OF SANCTUARY

The discovery of Sanctuary presented the Prime Evils with a population possessing extraordinary strategic significance.

Humanity descended from both angelic and demonic progenitors.

Its members retained the potential to exercise powers capable of influencing the Eternal Conflict.

The Prime Evils recognized this potential.

Rather than merely observing the development of an independent civilization, they sought to influence its allegiance.

The Board acknowledges that foreign powers may possess legitimate interests in understanding the capabilities of neighboring civilizations.

Observation, diplomacy, and voluntary exchange are not inherently unethical.

The conduct under review, however, extended beyond those activities.

The Prime Evils established institutions intended to direct mortal belief and behavior toward infernal objectives.

The Board identifies a substantial distinction between offering a population an opportunity to enter an alliance and manipulating that population into serving purposes it does not understand.

A legitimate alliance requires some meaningful capacity to understand the nature of the arrangement.

A person cannot evaluate allegiance to a power whose identity and intentions have been deliberately concealed.

The Board therefore identifies the Prime Evils' strategy as presenting substantial concerns regarding deception, autonomy, and the instrumentalization of mortal persons.

**Humanity's usefulness in the Eternal Conflict did not establish that humanity existed for the purposes of that conflict.**

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# V. THE TEMPLE OF THE TRIUNE

The Board turns to the establishment and operation of the Temple of the Triune.

The historical record indicates that the Prime Evils established the Temple as a means of influencing humanity.

The institution presented itself through religious structures and teachings accessible to mortal believers.

Its three principal branches were associated with the following identities:

| Infernal Principal | Concealed Identity | Institutional Function |
|---|---|---|
| Mephisto | Mefis | Object of religious devotion |
| Diablo | Dialon | Object of religious devotion |
| Baal | Bala | Object of religious devotion |

The Board acknowledges that the freedom to adopt, express, and practice religious beliefs may constitute an important aspect of personal autonomy.

It further recognizes that sincere religious participation can provide meaning, community, and ethical guidance.

The present inquiry does not concern whether particular theological claims can be independently verified.

It concerns whether the persons directing the institution deliberately concealed material facts about their own identities and objectives.

The distinction is important.

A religious organization may possess beliefs concerning supernatural powers.

Such beliefs do not, by themselves, constitute evidence of misconduct.

However, an institution knowingly established by concealed agents of a foreign power for the purpose of manipulating a population into serving that power presents a different question.

The Board therefore requests that the Temple's organizers address whether adherents were informed that their objects of devotion were the Prime Evils themselves.

It further requests clarification concerning whether adherents understood that the institution served strategic purposes associated with the Eternal Conflict.

The Board finds that deliberate concealment of these facts would materially compromise the ability of adherents to evaluate their participation.

### Preliminary Finding

The Temple of the Triune appears to have employed religious authority as an instrument of concealed infernal influence.

The Board therefore identifies substantial grounds for concluding that its recruitment practices were ethically deficient.

The investigation shall distinguish among the responsibilities of its founders, informed officials, subordinate participants, and ordinary adherents.

**The Board does not presume that a believer deceived by an institution bears the same responsibility as the institution that deceived them.**

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# VI. ON RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY AND CONCEALED SPONSORSHIP

The Board considers whether deception concerning an institution's sponsors invalidates every act undertaken by its adherents.

It concludes that the answer requires careful distinction.

A person may participate voluntarily in an institution whose leadership has concealed material information.

The person's subjective willingness to participate may be genuine.

Nevertheless, the quality of that willingness depends in part upon the information available.

The Board does not hold that every incomplete disclosure eliminates meaningful consent.

No institution can communicate every fact concerning its history, purposes, or administration to every participant.

However, deliberate concealment of facts likely to affect a reasonable person's decision presents a substantial ethical concern.

The identity of the Prime Evils and their intention to recruit humanity into the Eternal Conflict were material to the character of the Temple.

The Board therefore considers concealment of those matters especially serious.

The problem was not merely that the Temple possessed undisclosed interests.

It was that the institution's public identity appears to have obscured the nature of the powers directing it.

The Board recognizes that adherents might have joined the Temple even with full knowledge of its infernal sponsorship.

Such persons would present different questions concerning voluntary allegiance and responsibility.

Their possible existence does not establish informed consent among those who were deceived.

**An individual's freedom to choose a dangerous allegiance does not establish another's authority to manufacture that choice through deception.**

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# VII. THE CATHEDRAL OF LIGHT AND THE QUESTION OF EQUIVALENT SCRUTINY

The Board acknowledges that the Temple of the Triune did not operate in isolation.

Inarius established the Cathedral of Light under the guise of the Prophet, seeking to counter infernal influence and maintain his control over Sanctuary.

The Cathedral's activities form part of the historical context in which the Temple operated.

The Board recognizes that competing institutions may employ similar methods while pursuing different objectives.

Such similarities warrant examination.

However, the misconduct of one institution does not excuse the misconduct of its rival.

Nor does the existence of infernal manipulation establish that every opposing intervention was legitimate.

The Board therefore reserves a separate inquiry into the Cathedral of Light.

It anticipates examination of:

- Concealment of institutional leadership.
- Recruitment under conditions of incomplete knowledge.
- The use of theological authority to advance political objectives.
- The relationship between professed protection and actual control.
- The treatment of dissenters.
- The extent to which adherents could meaningfully withdraw.

The Board emphasizes that its inquiry shall apply comparable standards to celestial and infernal institutions.

This does not require treating their conduct as equally harmful.

Rather, it requires evaluating each according to the available evidence.

**The existence of two competing systems of manipulation does not establish that humanity was obliged to choose one.**

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# VIII. THE PROBLEM OF COERCIVE AGREEMENTS

The Board next examines the use of agreements obtained under conditions of threat, deception, or domination.

The Burning Hells have repeatedly sought to influence mortal persons through offers of power, promises of advantage, intimidation, corruption, and other coercive means.

Such conduct raises questions concerning the distinction between agreement and submission.

The Board recognizes that persons may voluntarily enter arrangements involving substantial risks.

Not every unequal bargain is necessarily invalid.

Nor does superior power automatically render every agreement coercive.

However, the existence of overwhelming power may affect whether refusal is meaningfully available.

A person who agrees to a demand solely because the alternative is immediate destruction occupies a different position from a person able to negotiate freely.

The Board therefore distinguishes three circumstances.

**Voluntary agreement:**
A person understands the material nature of the proposed arrangement and possesses a meaningful ability to refuse.

**Constrained agreement:**
A person acts under substantial pressure but retains some capacity to evaluate alternatives.

**Coerced submission:**
A person's apparent agreement is obtained through threats or conduct that effectively eliminates meaningful choice.

These categories are analytical rather than exhaustive.

Their application depends upon the circumstances.

The Board does not find that every agreement involving a demon is automatically invalid.

It does find that agreements procured through material deception, threats of annihilation, or involuntary possession present serious defects of consent.

The respondent's identity is relevant to assessing risk.

It is not a substitute for examining conduct.

**The Board recognizes that the words "I accept" may be spoken under circumstances in which acceptance is not meaningfully free.**

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# IX. ON THE INSTITUTIONAL USE OF FEAR

The Board considers the particular role of Diablo, Lord of Terror.

Fear may arise as a natural response to danger.

It can assist persons in recognizing threats and taking protective action.

The existence of fear is therefore not inherently unethical.

However, deliberately producing fear for the purpose of controlling another person's judgment presents a separate ethical question.

Where an authority creates or magnifies a threat and subsequently offers submission as the means of escaping that threat, the resulting decision cannot be evaluated as though the authority were an uninvolved protector.

The Board therefore distinguishes:

1. Warning a population of a genuine danger.
2. Using accurate information to encourage reasonable protective action.
3. Exaggerating danger to obtain compliance.
4. Deliberately creating danger in order to manufacture dependence.

These actions possess materially different ethical characteristics.

The Board recognizes that a respondent may employ fear in circumstances involving legitimate defensive necessity.

However, the use of terror against persons who have not committed harmful acts cannot be justified solely by the effectiveness of terror in obtaining obedience.

The Board therefore requests that Diablo clarify the purposes underlying his interference with mortal populations.

The Board anticipates that the respondent may decline to provide such clarification.

The absence of cooperation shall be recorded.

It shall not be treated as an independently sufficient determination of responsibility.

**Terror may compel compliance.**

**It does not thereby establish consent.**

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# X. ON HATRED AS AN INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNANCE

The Board next considers Mephisto.

The Lord of Hatred occupied a central position in the negotiation of the noninterference agreement following the Sin War.

He also exercised substantial influence through the Temple of the Triune.

His historical conduct raises a question extending beyond individual acts of violence.

It concerns the use of division, resentment, and hostility as instruments for directing populations.

Hatred may cause persons to interpret others primarily as threats, enemies, or obstacles.

When deliberately encouraged by a governing power, it may reduce the possibility of independent judgment.

The Board recognizes that anger and resentment may sometimes arise from legitimate grievances.

The expression of such emotions does not, by itself, constitute wrongdoing.

The concern arises where an authority deliberately exploits those emotions to prevent individuals from evaluating their own interests or the conduct of the authority itself.

A population divided against itself may become less capable of questioning the power manipulating that division.

The Board therefore requests evidence concerning the extent to which Mephisto's agents deliberately cultivated conflict among mortal communities.

The Board further requests clarification concerning whether religious recruitment through the Triune employed hostility toward opposing groups as a means of securing allegiance.

The distinction between acknowledging a grievance and manufacturing an enemy shall be central to this inquiry.

**The Board observes that an institution which benefits from perpetual hostility may possess an interest in preventing the conditions necessary for peace.**

That interest warrants scrutiny.

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# XI. ON DESTRUCTION AS AN ASSERTED NECESSITY

The Board turns to Baal, Lord of Destruction.

The historical record establishes Baal's involvement in campaigns causing extraordinary harm to Sanctuary.

The Board recognizes that destruction may occur in circumstances involving legitimate defensive action.

It further recognizes that some objects, institutions, or structures may need to be destroyed to prevent greater harm.

However, destruction cannot be presumed necessary merely because it is available.

The Board distinguishes between the removal of an identifiable threat and the indiscriminate destruction of affected populations.

Where destruction becomes an institutional objective in itself, the ordinary justification of defensive necessity becomes particularly difficult to establish.

The Board therefore requests evidence identifying the strategic or protective purpose, if any, underlying actions that caused widespread devastation.

The respondent is further requested to address whether less destructive means could have achieved any legitimate objectives asserted.

The Board acknowledges that the Lord of Destruction may regard destruction as an intrinsic good.

Such a position may explain conduct.

It does not establish that the conduct was justified in relation to those harmed.

**A preference for destruction is not a finding of necessity.**

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# XII. THE SIN WAR AND THE EXPLOITATION OF MORTAL CONFLICT

The Board considers the Sin War as an example of competing extraordinary powers attempting to direct the future of humanity.

The Prime Evils sought to manipulate humanity through the Temple of the Triune.

Inarius sought to maintain control through the Cathedral of Light.

Lilith subsequently intervened through Uldyssian and the restoration of nephalem capabilities.

These interventions transformed mortal society into a contested arena for powers whose objectives were not identical to those of the affected population.

The Board recognizes that individual mortals participated in these conflicts through choices of their own.

Their agency must not be erased merely because extraordinary powers attempted to influence them.

Nevertheless, manipulation may materially affect the conditions under which choices are made.

The existence of human participation does not automatically establish that the institutions directing that participation acted legitimately.

The Board therefore identifies a central concern.

**The Eternal Conflict was repeatedly pursued through persons who had not initiated it.**

Humanity became strategically valuable because its capabilities could alter the balance between Heaven and Hell.

That value did not establish an obligation to participate.

Nor did it confer upon the Prime Evils a right to determine humanity's allegiances through concealed institutions.

The Board therefore enters a preliminary finding that the recruitment strategy associated with the Triune represented an ethically deficient attempt to subordinate mortal autonomy to infernal objectives.

The nature and responsibility of individual participants remain subject to evidence.

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# XIII. THE AGREEMENT OF NONINTERFERENCE

Following the Sin War, Mephisto and the Angiris Council entered an agreement concerning Sanctuary.

Under the arrangement, Heaven and Hell were to refrain from interfering in humanity's affairs.

The purpose was to allow subsequent generations of humanity to determine their own allegiances without direct manipulation by either power.

The agreement also provided for Inarius's imprisonment in the Burning Hells.

The Board acknowledges that the arrangement represented a significant departure from earlier attempts to control Sanctuary.

It established, at least as an expressed commitment, a principle of noninterference.

The Board considers that commitment ethically significant.

It recognized that humanity's future should not be determined through continuous celestial or infernal manipulation.

Nevertheless, the agreement raises several substantial questions.

## A. Representation

Humanity does not appear to have participated directly in negotiating the agreement.

The Board therefore questions whether the signatories possessed authority to impose obligations upon humanity.

## B. Noninterference

The agreement required restraint by the signatory powers.

The Board requests clarification concerning whether the prohibition included direct invasion, indirect manipulation, possession, recruitment through concealed agents, and other means of influence.

## C. Enforcement

The Board seeks evidence identifying the remedies available following a breach.

## D. Institutional Continuity

The Board questions whether the agreement bound only the Prime Evils or extended to other infernal authorities.

## E. Duration

The Board requests clarification concerning whether the noninterference commitment was indefinite or subject to particular conditions.

### F. Inarius's Transfer

The Board reserves separate examination of the legitimacy of transferring Inarius to Mephisto as part of the settlement.

The Board emphasizes that these questions concern the terms and authority of the agreement.

They do not eliminate its potentially beneficial purpose.

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# XIV. ON WHETHER HUMANITY WAS A PARTY OR AN OBJECT

The Board identifies a recurring difficulty in the historical arrangement.

The agreement concerned humanity's freedom.

Yet humanity was not represented as an equal negotiating party.

The Board therefore distinguishes between an agreement that benefits a population and an agreement that binds that population.

Heaven and Hell could undertake obligations to refrain from interfering with Sanctuary.

Such commitments might protect humanity without requiring humanity to authorize every term.

However, the signatories could not thereby be presumed to acquire authority to impose reciprocal duties upon humanity.

The distinction is fundamental.

A promise by two powerful institutions to cease harming a third party does not necessarily confer upon those institutions the right to regulate the third party's independent choices.

Nor does a population become indebted to powers merely because those powers agree to refrain from destroying or manipulating it.

The Board therefore provisionally interprets the noninterference arrangement as establishing, to the extent supported by the historical record, obligations of restraint upon its signatories.

It does not presume that the arrangement established permanent governing jurisdiction over humanity.

**An agreement not to interfere is not an agreement by the affected population to be governed.**

The Board further observes that a promise to refrain from wrongful conduct cannot automatically establish a right to compensation from those who would otherwise suffer that conduct.

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# XV. THE TRANSFER OF INARIUS

The Board now considers the surrender of Inarius to Mephisto.

The historical record identifies the transfer as an element of the settlement concluding the Sin War.

Inarius was delivered into the custody of the Burning Hells for eternal imprisonment.

The Board recognizes that Inarius possessed substantial responsibility for actions undertaken during Sanctuary's founding and subsequent governance.

Those actions remain subject to investigation.

However, culpability and the conditions of punishment are separate questions.

The Board therefore requests clarification concerning:

1. The specific allegations upon which Inarius was detained.
2. The authority under which the transfer occurred.
3. Whether Inarius received notice of the allegations.
4. Whether any opportunity existed to contest the transfer.
5. Whether the terms of confinement were established in advance.
6. Whether the confinement was punitive, preventive, or both.
7. Whether any mechanism for review existed.

The Board does not presume that mortal standards of criminal procedure operated within the High Heavens or Burning Hells.

Nevertheless, indefinite punishment imposed without discernible limits presents substantial ethical concerns.

The Board further recognizes that Mephisto possessed interests potentially adverse to Inarius.

The legitimacy of transferring an individual to the custody of a hostile power therefore requires examination independent of the individual's alleged wrongdoing.

The Board makes no final finding concerning the transfer.

**The Board acknowledges that Inarius may have committed grave misconduct.**

**It does not follow that every measure undertaken against him was therefore justified.**

The Board reserves the matter for separate investigation.

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# XVI. THE DARK EXILE

Following the noninterference agreement, the four Lesser Evils challenged the authority of the Prime Evils.

Their dissatisfaction culminated in an uprising within the Burning Hells.

The Prime Evils were subsequently exiled into Sanctuary.

Their presence produced extensive suffering and renewed infernal intervention in mortal affairs.

The Board identifies this sequence as particularly significant.

An agreement had been reached to permit humanity to develop without direct interference.

Thereafter, the principal infernal signatories became physically present within the realm whose autonomy the agreement purported to protect.

The Board recognizes that the circumstances of the Dark Exile complicate the attribution of responsibility.

The historical record establishes that the Lesser Evils expelled the Prime Evils.

It does not, by that fact alone, establish that the Prime Evils voluntarily chose the circumstances of their arrival.

The Board therefore declines to treat the mere occurrence of exile as conclusive proof of an intentional breach by each Prime Evil.

However, the involuntary circumstances of arrival do not automatically justify every subsequent action undertaken within Sanctuary.

The Board distinguishes:

**Initial displacement:**
The circumstances by which an individual is forced into a territory.

**Subsequent conduct:**
The actions undertaken after arrival.

**Continuing obligations:**
Duties that may remain applicable despite the circumstances of displacement.

The Prime Evils' subsequent campaigns within Sanctuary must be assessed independently.

The Board therefore requests evidence concerning whether the Prime Evils sought to minimize interference following their exile, or instead employed their presence to pursue objectives inconsistent with the earlier agreement.

The surviving record indicates extensive destruction and manipulation.

These actions present substantial grounds for further investigation.

**The Board recognizes that involuntary exile may explain an individual's arrival.**

**It does not automatically justify what that individual does upon arrival.**

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# XVII. THE LESSER EVILS AND INFERNAL INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY

The Board considers the institutional consequences of the uprising led by the Lesser Evils.

The overthrow of an existing governing authority may alter the persons who exercise power.

It does not necessarily eliminate every obligation previously undertaken by the institution.

However, the extent to which obligations survive a change in leadership depends upon the character of those obligations and the authority by which they were established.

The Board therefore identifies an unresolved question concerning the noninterference agreement.

Did Mephisto bind himself and the other Prime Evils personally?

Did he purport to bind the Burning Hells as an institution?

Did the agreement extend to authorities who had not participated in its negotiation?

The historical record does not conclusively establish the full terms necessary to resolve these questions.

The Board therefore declines to assume that every Lesser Evil became bound by the agreement merely through membership in the infernal hierarchy.

Nevertheless, the absence of a valid agreement would not establish a general ethical right to attack Sanctuary.

The underlying duties to refrain from unjustified violence, coercion, and manipulation remain separate from the contractual question.

The Board further observes that an institution cannot automatically eliminate responsibility for prior conduct through changes in leadership.

Nor does the displacement of its rulers retroactively erase the consequences of actions undertaken while they exercised authority.

The Board requests any surviving records concerning the uprising and subsequent redistribution of infernal power.

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# XVIII. ON THE LIMITATIONS OF TREATY-BASED PROTECTION

The Board considers whether the noninterference agreement provided adequate protection for Sanctuary.

The arrangement depended upon the willingness and capacity of extraordinary powers to refrain from intervention.

It apparently lacked an independent enforcement institution representing humanity.

The Board recognizes that enforcement mechanisms may be difficult to establish where the parties possess vastly unequal capabilities.

Nevertheless, an agreement whose observance depends exclusively upon the discretion of its strongest parties presents significant vulnerabilities.

The Board identifies the following concerns.

### A. Verification

How could humanity determine whether either power was complying?

### B. Disclosure

Were mortals informed that such an agreement existed?

### C. Remedies

What response was available if interference resumed?

### D. Representation

Who could raise a complaint on humanity's behalf?

### E. Institutional Succession

What happened when the leadership of Heaven or Hell changed?

### F. Concealed Intervention

What mechanisms could distinguish ordinary mortal activity from manipulation by concealed celestial or infernal agents?

The Board recognizes that perfect compliance may be impossible.

It does not require institutions to guarantee outcomes beyond their capacities.

However, the absence of effective monitoring may undermine an agreement's ability to protect the persons whose interests it concerns.

The Board therefore enters a preliminary observation.

**An agreement designed to preserve the autonomy of a population is substantially weakened when that population lacks the information necessary to recognize a violation.**

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# XIX. ON THE USE OF MORTAL BODIES AS INSTRUMENTS

The Board identifies demonic possession as a matter requiring separate ethical review.

The historical record includes instances in which infernal powers attempted to exert control over mortal bodies.

Such conduct presents substantial questions concerning bodily autonomy and the distinction between influence and domination.

A person may voluntarily undertake dangerous acts.

A person may also consent to forms of assistance or cooperation involving substantial physical consequences.

However, the forcible occupation of another person's body presents a fundamentally different question.

Where possession overrides the individual's control, the conduct cannot be characterized as ordinary persuasion.

The Board therefore identifies the following preliminary concerns:

- Involuntary displacement of personal agency.
- Physical injury.
- Psychological and metaphysical harm.
- The use of persons as instruments for external objectives.
- The possibility of irreversible consequences.
- The absence of meaningful withdrawal mechanisms.

The Board does not presume that every fictional or historical instance of supernatural influence possesses identical characteristics.

Specific cases require specific evidence.

Nevertheless, the Board enters the following provisional principle.

**A mortal body is not an available vessel merely because an extraordinary power possesses the ability to occupy it.**

The Board reserves a dedicated investigation into possession and the use of soulstones.

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# XX. ON THE ETHICAL STATUS OF INFERNAL PERSONS

The Board considers a potential objection concerning the application of ethical principles to demons.

The Burning Hells are associated with beings whose conduct frequently involves cruelty, domination, and destruction.

The Board recognizes this historical pattern.

However, the inquiry concerns responsibility for actions.

It does not require a categorical determination that every infernal being possesses identical intentions, capabilities, or degrees of moral agency.

The Board therefore rejects collective attribution of individual wrongdoing without supporting evidence.

This position does not excuse the Prime Evils.

Their documented conduct provides substantial independent grounds for inquiry.

Rather, the distinction preserves the integrity of the Board's method.

If wrongdoing is established solely by ancestry or metaphysical nature, examination of conduct becomes unnecessary.

The Board declines to adopt that method.

Its earlier proceedings rejected the proposition that humanity's mixed ancestry justified collective destruction.

The same principle requires restraint in assigning responsibility to individual infernal persons.

**The Board will not condemn a population solely because of its origin while simultaneously criticizing the High Heavens for contemplating precisely that practice.**

This does not create an artificial equivalence between the conduct of Heaven and Hell.

It establishes consistency in the standard of inquiry.

Conduct remains subject to evaluation.

Institutional responsibility remains subject to evidence.

And serious wrongdoing remains serious regardless of the respondent's nature.

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# XXI. QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO THE PRIME EVILS

The Board hereby issues the following requests for explanation.

## To Mephisto

**Question One:**
What authority did you possess to negotiate the future of Sanctuary?

**Question Two:**
Did the noninterference agreement bind the Prime Evils individually, the Burning Hells institutionally, or both?

**Question Three:**
What conduct did you understand the term *interference* to prohibit?

**Question Four:**
Were the mortal adherents of the Temple of the Triune informed of the identities of the powers directing their institution?

**Question Five:**
What legitimate purpose, if any, justified the concealment of those identities?

**Question Six:**
What terms governed the transfer and imprisonment of Inarius?

**Question Seven:**
What provisions existed to prevent renewed infernal manipulation of humanity?

## To Diablo

**Question Eight:**
What authority justified the use of fear and domination to obtain compliance from mortal persons?

**Question Nine:**
Did you recognize any limitation upon the use of mortal bodies as instruments of infernal power?

**Question Ten:**
What distinction, if any, did you observe between voluntary allegiance and submission obtained through terror?

## To Baal

**Question Eleven:**
What legitimate necessity justified campaigns of destruction affecting populations that had not initiated hostilities against the Burning Hells?

**Question Twelve:**
Were less destructive alternatives considered?

**Question Thirteen:**
Did the respondent distinguish between military objectives and civilian populations?

## To the Prime Evils Collectively

**Question Fourteen:**
Did humanity possess any independent right to refuse participation in the Eternal Conflict?

**Question Fifteen:**
What ethical obligations, if any, did the respondents recognize toward the inhabitants of Sanctuary?

**Question Sixteen:**
Could a mortal person meaningfully refuse infernal allegiance without retaliation?

**Question Seventeen:**
Did the respondents recognize the noninterference agreement as creating obligations enforceable against themselves?

**Question Eighteen:**
What measures were taken to comply with that agreement following the Dark Exile?

**Question Nineteen:**
Did the respondents regard Sanctuary as an independent civilization or principally as a strategic resource?

**Question Twenty:**
By what principle did the respondents claim authority to determine the purposes for which humanity might exercise its inherited powers?

The Board welcomes responses supported by evidence or reasoned argument.

Threats against the Board, its officers, witnesses, or associated mortal populations shall not be regarded as responsive answers.

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# XXII. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Upon consideration of the available historical record, the Sanctuary Ethics Review Board enters the following findings.

### Finding 1 — Lack of Established Infernal Jurisdiction

The Burning Hells possessed no demonstrated general authority to govern Sanctuary merely by virtue of their power, antiquity, or participation in the Eternal Conflict.

### Finding 2 — Concealed Institutional Manipulation

The Temple of the Triune functioned as an instrument of infernal influence whose concealed sponsorship materially affected the ability of adherents to evaluate their participation.

### Finding 3 — Deficient Consent

Agreements obtained through material deception, overwhelming coercion, or involuntary domination cannot be presumed to reflect meaningful consent.

### Finding 4 — Strategic Instrumentalization

The Prime Evils sought to employ humanity's extraordinary potential in furtherance of the Eternal Conflict.

Humanity's strategic usefulness did not establish an obligation to participate.

### Finding 5 — Significance of Noninterference

The agreement between Mephisto and the Angiris Council represented a substantial commitment to permit humanity greater independence from celestial and infernal manipulation.

## Finding 6 — Unresolved Authority to Negotiate

The signatories' authority to determine humanity's future without mortal representation remains insufficiently established.

## Finding 7 — Distinction Between Benefit and Obligation

An agreement that benefits humanity does not necessarily impose reciprocal obligations upon humanity.

## Finding 8 — Responsibility Following Exile

The circumstances of the Dark Exile require distinction between involuntary displacement and subsequent voluntary conduct.

The former does not automatically excuse the latter.

## Finding 9 — Unresolved Institutional Succession

The extent to which the noninterference agreement bound the Lesser Evils or successive infernal authorities remains uncertain.

## Finding 10 — Bodily Autonomy

The involuntary occupation or domination of mortal bodies raises serious ethical concerns independent of the strategic objectives asserted by the possessing entity.

## Finding 11 — Individual Responsibility

Infernal ancestry alone does not establish responsibility for particular wrongdoing.

Documented conduct must remain central to ethical assessment.

## Finding 12 — Insufficiency of Coercive Authority

The capacity to compel obedience does not establish that obedience was freely given.

### Finding 13 — Deficiencies in Institutional Oversight

The historical record does not establish adequate independent mechanisms by which Sanctuary could challenge infernal interference or obtain remedies for violations.

### Finding 14 — Continuing Responsibilities

The cessation, displacement, or reorganization of infernal leadership does not automatically resolve questions concerning the consequences of its previous conduct.

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# XXIII. INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINATION

The Board finds substantial grounds for concluding that the Prime Evils pursued institutional strategies inconsistent with the meaningful autonomy of Sanctuary's inhabitants.

The use of concealed religious sponsorship to influence mortal allegiance presents particularly serious ethical deficiencies.

The Board further finds that the noninterference agreement represented an acknowledgment, however limited, that humanity should not remain perpetually subject to celestial and infernal manipulation.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy of that agreement's negotiation and the effectiveness of its implementation remain unresolved.

The Board therefore enters the following determination.

**The Burning Hells possessed no established ethical entitlement to recruit humanity through deception, compel allegiance through terror, or direct mortal civilization solely because humanity's powers might influence the Eternal Conflict.**

The Board does not conclude that all interactions between mortals and infernal persons are necessarily impermissible.

It does conclude that meaningful consent requires more than submission to overwhelming power.

The Board further determines that the noninterference agreement cannot be interpreted as granting Heaven or Hell permanent authority over humanity merely because the parties agreed to restrain themselves.

The agreement's protective value is recognized.

Its jurisdictional limitations remain subject to examination.

The Board orders no alteration to the metaphysical structure of the Burning Hells.

The Board makes no claim to possess a means of compelling infernal obedience.

Nevertheless, the respondents are invited to address the findings.

**The absence of enforceable authority does not establish the absence of an ethical obligation.**

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# XXIV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

The Eternal Conflict preceded humanity.

It shaped the ambitions of powers whose struggles extended across ages beyond ordinary mortal comprehension.

The High Heavens defended their conception of order.

The Burning Hells pursued dominion through fear, destruction, and hatred.

Between them emerged Sanctuary.

Its inhabitants did not choose the original conflict.

They did not negotiate its beginning.

They did not determine the principles upon which Heaven and Hell would contend.

Yet their existence became a subject of extraordinary strategic interest.

Their capabilities offered possibilities that neither celestial nor infernal institutions could comfortably ignore.

And so the powers intervened.

They founded institutions.

They concealed their identities.

They offered allegiance, protection, purpose, and power.

They threatened destruction.

They negotiated over the future of a civilization that had not authorized them to do so.

The Board recognizes that some interventions produced benefits.

Others produced immense suffering.

The distinction matters.

Nevertheless, the history presents a recurring institutional problem.

Powerful actors repeatedly treated the potential of humanity as something to be directed toward their own purposes.

The inhabitants of Sanctuary were valuable because of what they might accomplish for Heaven or Hell.

But the Board finds no sufficient basis for reducing their moral standing to that value.

A person may possess abilities useful to an institution without owing those abilities to it.

A civilization may affect the security of another without becoming that other's property.

And the possibility that an individual might someday choose an objectionable allegiance does not establish a right to coerce that choice in advance.

The Board therefore returns to the question of consent.

An agreement may be spoken.

A pledge may be given.

A body may bow.

An army may march beneath a banner.

Yet none of these acts, considered in isolation, conclusively establishes voluntary allegiance.

The circumstances matter.

The information available matters.

The ability to refuse matters.

The consequences of refusal matter.

Where terror supplies the alternative, obedience may reveal little about consent.

Where deception conceals the nature of an institution, participation may reveal little about informed choice.

Where extraordinary power occupies a mortal body, physical action may reveal nothing about the wishes of the person whose body is used.

The distinction is not trivial.

It is the difference between a person acting and a person being used.

The Board recognizes that the Burning Hells may consider this distinction irrelevant.

It does not.

For if the Eternal Conflict is pursued through the involuntary service of persons who did not choose it, the conflict becomes more than a struggle between its original participants.

It becomes a means by which the powerful impose the burdens of their disagreements upon others.

The antiquity of that practice does not establish its legitimacy.

The magnitude of the powers involved does not eliminate the moral standing of those affected.

And the apparent inevitability of conflict does not relieve its participants of responsibility for the means by which they continue it.

Sanctuary was created as a refuge from an ancient war.

Its inhabitants should not be presumed to have inherited an obligation to fight that war merely because their existence might influence its outcome.

Nor should their refusal be treated as proof of hostility.

A person may decline to serve Heaven without thereby consenting to serve Hell.

A person may reject infernal authority without thereby granting unlimited authority to celestial institutions.

And a civilization may insist upon its own interests without first establishing that those interests are useful to either.

**The Board recognizes the existence of the Eternal Conflict.**

**It does not recognize the Eternal Conflict as a perpetual claim upon every life that follows it.**

**The Board recognizes the power of the Prime Evils.**

**It does not recognize power as a substitute for consent.**

**The Board recognizes the capacity of terror to compel obedience.**

**It does not recognize obedience obtained through terror as proof of legitimate authority.**

The inquiry remains open.

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# XXV. DISPOSITION

**SERB-004 shall remain open pending further evidence concerning infernal governance, coercive recruitment, the Temple of the Triune, and the implementation of the noninterference agreement.**

The Board reserves separate proceedings concerning:

- The individual conduct of the Prime Evils.
- The authority and responsibilities of the Lesser Evils.
- The Temple of the Triune.
- The Cathedral of Light.
- Inarius's confinement.
- Demonic possession.
- The Horadrim and the use of soulstones.

- The consequences of the Dark Exile.

The Board further reserves the right to investigate institutional conduct affecting populations outside Sanctuary where sufficient evidence becomes available.

The respondents may submit written explanations, jurisdictional objections, or requests for reconsideration.

No adverse inference shall arise solely from refusal to recognize the Board's institutional authority.

The Board nevertheless reserves the right to evaluate independently documented conduct.

**So entered.**

*Sanctuary Ethics Review Board*
*Office of Infernal Governance and Interplanar Accountability*
*Division of Coercion, Consent, and Institutional Misrepresentation*

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# ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM A

## Regarding the Respondents' Institutional Titles

The Office of Records has reviewed the titles associated with the Prime Evils.

The Office acknowledges the following designations:

**Mephisto — Lord of Hatred**

**Diablo — Lord of Terror**

**Baal — Lord of Destruction**

The titles have been entered into the administrative record.

The Office notes that they describe the respondents' established identities within the infernal hierarchy.

They do not constitute substantive answers to questions concerning the legitimacy of their conduct.

In particular, the title *Lord of Destruction* does not establish that destruction is legally or ethically authorized in every circumstance.

Likewise, *Lord of Terror* does not constitute a general exemption from requirements concerning voluntary consent.

The respondents are invited to submit any additional institutional titles they consider relevant.

**The Office respectfully requests that titles not be submitted in place of evidence.**

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# ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM B

## Regarding the Temple of the Triune

The Office of Institutional Disclosure has reviewed the identities presented to mortal adherents of the Temple.

The Office acknowledges the use of the names Mefis, Dialon, and Bala.

It further acknowledges their correspondence to Mephisto, Diablo, and Baal.

The Office has identified a substantial concern concerning undisclosed institutional sponsorship.

The respondents are therefore requested to explain why the identities of the governing powers were not adequately disclosed.

A response asserting that disclosure would have reduced recruitment is not, without additional justification, sufficient.

The Office recognizes that deception may be operationally effective.

**Operational effectiveness is not the standard under review.**

The Office further requests clarification concerning whether adherents were informed that the institution's ultimate objectives included their potential use in the Eternal Conflict.

For avoidance of doubt, the Office does not consider the existence of three organizational branches sufficient disclosure of the identities of three Prime Evils.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM C

### Regarding the Noninterference Agreement

The Office of Treaty Review has received an inquiry concerning the meaning of *noninterference*.

The Office provisionally understands the term to concern the obligation of the signatory powers to refrain from manipulating the development and choices of Sanctuary's inhabitants.

The Office requests confirmation that the parties did not intend to exclude the following conduct from the agreement:

- Involuntary possession.
- Covert recruitment.
- Corruption of mortal institutions.
- The use of concealed agents.
- Threats designed to compel allegiance.
- Direct military intervention.
- The involuntary transformation of mortal populations.

The Office recognizes that the precise historical terms of the agreement may affect its interpretation.

The above list is therefore submitted as a request for clarification rather than as a conclusive statement of contractual obligations.

Nevertheless, the Office advises that a commitment to noninterference would possess limited protective value if interpreted to permit every established method of infernal manipulation.

**The Board respectfully requests that the respondents identify what conduct, if any, they believed themselves prohibited from undertaking.**

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# ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM D

### Regarding the Dark Exile

The Office of Institutional Continuity has received notice that the Prime Evils were expelled from the Burning Hells by the Lesser Evils.

The Office acknowledges that this event may have occurred without the voluntary participation of the exiled parties.

Accordingly, the Board will distinguish the circumstances of their arrival in Sanctuary from their subsequent conduct.

The respondents are invited to submit evidence of any measures undertaken to comply with the earlier noninterference agreement following their exile.

The Office notes that widespread destruction, corruption of mortal institutions, and attempts to dominate human hosts may be inconsistent with such compliance.

The relevant evidence shall be evaluated in subsequent proceedings.

**The Office respectfully observes that involuntary relocation does not constitute an unrestricted license to devastate the receiving jurisdiction.**

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## ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM E

### Regarding the Use of Mortal Persons as Vessels

The Office of Personal Autonomy has received preliminary information concerning the infernal practice of possessing mortal hosts.

The Office acknowledges that the precise metaphysical operation of possession may vary.

However, where possession substantially deprives a mortal person of control over their own body, the resulting conduct raises significant ethical concerns.

The Office therefore requests documentation concerning consent, reversibility, and the treatment of affected persons.

A statement that the host was physically capable of containing the respondent will not be considered sufficient evidence of consent.

**Capacity is not authorization.**

The Office further advises that the availability of a mortal body does not establish that it is vacant.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM F

### Regarding the Respondents' Objection to Ethical Review

The Office of Jurisdictional Review has received a preliminary objection asserting that the Burning Hells recognize no superior ethical authority.

The Office acknowledges the objection.

It further acknowledges that the present Board lacks an identified mechanism for compelling compliance within the infernal realm.

Nevertheless, the Board's inability to impose a sanction does not determine whether the respondent's conduct can be ethically examined.

The Office therefore distinguishes between enforcement and evaluation.

The respondents may decline participation.

Their conduct remains subject to examination using available evidence.

**The Board recognizes that the Burning Hells may reject its authority.**

**The Board does not require their approval to ask whether they have harmed others.**

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# FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE NOTICE

### SERB-004 — NOTICE CONCERNING VOLUNTARY CONSENT

The Board recognizes that the Prime Evils may regard domination as a legitimate expression of superior power.

It further recognizes that mortal persons may submit to infernal demands under conditions involving fear, desperation, or material deception.

The Board therefore requests that the respondents distinguish between persons who freely choose infernal allegiance and persons whose apparent allegiance results from coercion.

The existence of a spoken agreement shall not be treated as conclusive proof of consent.

The capacity to enforce an agreement shall not be treated as proof that the agreement was freely entered.

The respondent's power to punish refusal shall not be treated as evidence that refusal was meaningfully available.

**The Board respectfully reminds the Prime Evils that obtaining an answer is not equivalent to obtaining consent.**

The proceeding remains open.

**END OF SERB-004**

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# RESERVED FUTURE PROCEEDING

## SERB-MUN-001 — THE TRISTRAM CATHEDRAL DISCLOSURE INQUIRY

### Whether "Ancient Evil Beneath the Cathedral" Constitutes an Adequate Municipal Disclosure Notice

**Proposed Classification:** Public Safety, Land Use, Hazardous Artifacts, Religious Facilities, and Municipal Administrative Negligence

**Status:** Referred for Future Investigation

**Interested Parties:**

- The Horadrim

- The Historical Custodians of Tristram Cathedral
- The Municipal Authorities of Tristram
- Archbishop Lazarus
- The Estate of King Leoric
- Surviving Property Owners and Residents
- Diablo, Lord of Terror

**Preliminary Questions Reserved:**

1. Whether the placement of a corrupted soulstone beneath a religious structure required disclosure to municipal authorities.
2. Whether the historical concealment of Diablo's soulstone constituted a continuing condition materially affecting public safety.
3. Whether subsequent property occupants received adequate notice of the structure's known metaphysical hazards.
4. Whether the phrase *ancient evil* provided sufficient information to permit a reasonable person to evaluate the nature and severity of the danger.
5. Whether cathedral authorities established adequate procedures for restricting access to subterranean areas containing extraordinary hazards.
6. Whether the existence of a sealed Prime Evil affected the premises' suitability for public religious assembly.
7. Whether the eventual corruption of Archbishop Lazarus constituted evidence of inadequate containment, inspection, or institutional oversight.
8. Whether the absence of an identified municipal licensing regime excuses the failure to consider foreseeable risks to adjacent residents.
9. Whether the subsequent deaths of persons entering the cathedral's catacombs raise questions concerning emergency access, public warnings, and reasonable reliance upon religious authorities.
10. Whether the expression *ancient evil beneath the cathedral* is materially distinguishable from an adequate notice identifying the presence of an imprisoned Lord of Terror.

**PRELIMINARY ADMINISTRATIVE OBSERVATION:**

The Board acknowledges that the phrase *ancient evil beneath the cathedral* communicates the existence of a potentially dangerous condition.

It does not identify the relevant entity, the mechanism of containment, the likelihood of escape, the existence of corruptive influence, or the consequences of unauthorized entry.

The Office of Municipal Disclosure therefore considers the phrase potentially insufficient as a standalone warning.

The Board makes no final finding concerning the liability of any historical institution.

It does, however, request clarification concerning the procedures by which the presence of an imprisoned Prime Evil was communicated to persons responsible for the safety of the structure and its surrounding community.

**The Office respectfully observes that a cathedral constructed above an imprisoned cosmic entity may present concerns not adequately addressed by ordinary building maintenance.**

The inquiry is reserved.

**No occupancy determination is entered at this time.**

*Sanctuary Ethics Review Board*
*Office of Municipal Safety and Extraordinary Premises Hazards*

**END OF RESERVED NOTICE**