

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE
**Correspondence Course in The Elements of
Traditional Western Esotericism**

Lesson 1

Welcome to the Companions of the Stone study course. As an associate member of our order, you have the right to work with this course as a free benefit of your membership, as well as the responsibility to learn the material presented and incorporate it into your own life.

In this first lesson we will deal with many things that on one level are matters of practical routine, but which also will lay the groundwork for everything you will do while working on the course.

Like the tradition from which it derives, this course is intended to be experienced, not merely studied in an intellectual way. A large part of the material we'll be covering will involve doing practical exercises. To do these, and to get as much as possible from them, you'll need to provide yourself with certain things.

First among these is a suitable place to practice. Many of the old books in this tradition assume that the student can go to great extremes in this connection; fortunately, this isn't necessary, as disused castles and desert hermitages are in short supply nowadays. A private room, not too brightly lit, where you can be undisturbed for half an hour at a time, is quite sufficient. It should have enough open floor space to allow you to walk in a circle without bumping into furniture.

You'll also need a chair with a straight back — a folding chair is suitable for this. Some other things can be obtained from the school supplies section of the local drugstore: a three-ring binder for these lessons; a ruler; a pair of compasses (the sort used in geometry classes, with a pencil clipped to one side, will do); a set of colored pencils (the more colors the better) and a blank book or journal for your magical record.

Two other things, however, may take a visit to a specialist bookstore. The first is a copy of The Mystical Qabalah, by Dion Fortune. The Qabalah is the core symbolic system of the Western esoteric tradition as it has come down to us, and Fortune's book, despite certain flaws, is the best modern introduction to it. Readings from this book will be assigned in future lessons. Some people feel that The Mystical Qabalah is outdated, because they find certain ideas antiquated or foolish. The major texts of Western esotericism, however, have been written over a period of about twenty-five centuries, while Fortune's book was written just a bit over half a century ago. Learning to see behind the veil of a text that is almost contemporary can be good practice for learning to see beyond the outward forms of texts that are much older, and written from points of view that are far more unfamiliar.

The second item is an appropriate Tarot deck. You will need to make sure you have a Tarot deck that is suitable to the course. For any esoteric work you're doing outside of this course, you're free to use any deck you prefer, but for the purposes of the correspondence course we ask you to use one of the following: the deck designed by A E Waite (often known as the Rider, or Rider-Waite, or Waite-Smith deck); the Universal Waite deck, a version of the above re-colored by Mary Hanson-Roberts; the Magickal Tarot; The Thoth Tarot; the Gareth Knight Tarot; the Servants of the Light

Tarot; the Golden Dawn Tarot; or the Golden Dawn Ritual Tarot. The work in these lessons will require you to use a Tarot deck with the symbolism appropriate to the tradition we teach, and the decks listed here contain the proper symbolism in the proper form.

If you already own one of the decks listed above, and are comfortable working with it, you're set. If not, the most important thing to do is to find and use whichever one of these decks you feel the most comfortable with. Go to an occult bookstore that offers sample decks for the customer to look at and handle. Examine the appropriate decks one by one and select the deck that you would prefer to work with. If you dislike all of them, choose the one you dislike the least. If at all possible, you should use the same deck throughout the course, so keep this in mind when you make your choice.

Once you have your cards, you'll need to store them in some place where they will stay clean, dry, and undisturbed. If you want to wrap them in a cloth, or keep them in a bag or box, feel free, but a bureau drawer full of soft clothing will do just as well. It's also best not to allow another person to handle your cards, and you should *never* lend them to anyone.

The next step is to familiarize yourself with the cards. Even if you've used your deck for years, do the following exercise and try to look at your cards with new eyes. Each day, set aside five to ten minutes to spend working with your deck. Look at each card in turn, going through the deck as you would leaf through a photo album. Take a moment to absorb the image on each card, and then go on to the next. Record the practice in your journal, including anything you may have noticed or learned. Don't go on to do divinations yet; that will come later. Simply look through your cards each day.

Drawing the Tree of Life

If you have had any previous contact with the Western esoteric tradition, you will probably have encountered the diagram known as the Tree of Life. The ten Sephiroth (the word is Hebrew, the traditional language of Qabalah, and means "numerations" or, more figuratively, "spheres") and the twenty-two paths of this diagram form a map or system of coordinates for the universe and the human soul alike — that is, in the traditional terms, of the macrocosm (great world) and microcosm (little world).

Those who have had little contact with esoteric thought may find this idea unfamiliar at first. Perhaps one of the easiest ways to begin to grasp this idea of macrocosm and microcosm is to treat the Tree as a map of the structure of consciousness, since in one sense we can say that consciousness, or the "sphere of sensation," is like a magic mirror that reflects the world. But there is also the deeper sense in which this is true because consciousness is the stuff of both microcosm and macrocosm.

Those who have studied the subject in the past may recognize this diagram of the Tree of Life as one of the key borrowings from the Jewish esoteric and mystical tradition called Qabalah. Although this diagram, and much lore associated with it, was adapted outside the Jewish world during the Renaissance, it was not taken over because it was new and different, but because it was new and familiar: many of the concepts, images, and structures were already well known to non-Jewish esotericists; in fact, very similar maps of the structure of existence could already be found in eastern Asia by the time that they first became well known in Europe.

Nowadays the Tree of Life is used by a great many different schools and systems of magic; few, however, are aware of the geometric plan that underlies the diagram, and which derives from ancient

traditions of sacred geometry and mathematics central to Western esotericism. The following exercise will help you to begin exploring this aspect of the tradition. To do it, you'll need paper, a ruler and compasses, and a pencil.

1. Draw vertical straight line on the paper (in diagram 1, this is the line ADGJK).
2. With the compasses set at any convenient width, placing the sharp point near the top end of the line (A) to locate the center, draw a semicircle (BDC).
3. Keeping the compasses at the same width, move the center to the point where the semicircle crosses the vertical line (D), and draw a full circle around this point (circle ABEGFC).
4. Now repeat this operation twice more, tracing each new circle around the point where the before it crosses the central line (G and J). The result should look as shown in Diagram 1.
5. Finally, set the compasses to a smaller width, and trace a small circle around each point marked with a letter *except* point D. These circles are the spheres or Sephiroth (numerations) of the Tree of Life.

If you wish, you can go on to erase the larger circles, and then connect the Sephiroth with Paths, as shown in Diagram 2. For this lesson, however, this isn't necessary. The focus here is the geometrical relationship between the Sephiroth and the process by which they are generated.

These relationships and this process have an extensive symbolism, and a wealth of meaning. For this lesson, however, simply work on drawing the Tree in this way a number of times (at least five) without trying to work up any conceptual or verbal interpretation.

Exercises

One of the things that sets the Hermetic tradition most sharply apart from the mainstream Western religions, especially in their popular forms, is its insistence on practical work. In most faiths, it is enough merely to accept some set of propositions about the supernatural, and perhaps follow some rules about how to behave. This rather simple approach to the world beyond the realm of the senses probably has much to do with the popularity of these faiths, but it is not, ultimately, satisfactory.

Learning to experience and work with the hidden side of reality is a skill, much as learning to deal with the world of meaning behind marks on paper is a skill. Few people who wanted to learn to ride a bicycle would be satisfied with a set of instructions that insisted that all a bicyclist needed to do is to lead a good life and believe in the existence of two-wheeled vehicles. Yet a very similar approach is taken by many people to issues that are among the most important that any human being can encounter.

Ethical questions do have an important place in this work, and in lessons to come we will cover the main elements of the Hermetic approach to ethics. This does not involve learning lists of things to do and things not to do, however. Here, as elsewhere, the Hermetic approach takes as its basis personal experience and understanding. Our goal, when dealing with ethical issues, will be to challenge you to find out what right and wrong mean to you — and then to put your discoveries to the test in your own life.

According to the Hermetic tradition, *faith and a rule-keeping morality are not enough*. Without personal experience of the hidden side of existence, in fact, they can be all but meaningless. Because of this, Hermetic teachings (and this course, which is an introduction to them) tend to focus mainly on ways of attaining and assessing such experience.

For this reason, we wish to begin right away with practical work. By doing this work, you will prepare yourself to deal more effectively with the theoretical aspects of the teaching that will be presented in the lessons that follow.

OPENING AND CLOSING

One very simple but very important practice, the omission of which has caused quite a bit of trouble, is the use of opening and closing gestures. In the *Companions of the Stone*, we use a simple set of gestures that can be performed easily under most circumstances without drawing undue attention.

The opening gesture begins with the hands placed together, palm to palm at about chest level, held at an angle of about 45 degrees. Next, the hands are opened, as though they were a book; the palms face you. Third, the hands are separated and turned slightly so that the palms are facing each other, at a distance of about ten inches. Your gaze should move past your hands into the space between and beyond them, and you should at this point formulate the intention that your inner faculties are opening.

The closing gesture has the same steps, but in the reverse order. The hands, held apart but palm to palm, are rotated until both palms face you. They are then brought together, edge to edge, palms still facing you, as though you were supporting an open book on your hands. Finally, they are snapped together, as though you were snapping a book shut, with the firm intention of closing down your inner faculties. This last movement has a percussive quality; if you can actually get your hands to clap, so much the better. The opening should be performed at the beginning of an exercise; the closing at the end.

RELAXATION

Systematic relaxation is nowadays widely taught, and it is quite likely that you have already encountered it. It is a very useful skill to have, whether or not one has any esoteric interests. Furthermore, as with many skills, some mastery is better than none at all. The most important thing is to get started.

One method involves lying down on a flat, hard (or at least firm) surface, and trying to become as limp as possible. Then, beginning with one end or extremity of the body (your scalp, say, or the fingers of one hand), tighten one small segment of your musculature for a moment, until you are sure that it is in fact tight. Then release the tension. Repeat this systematically from that point through all the others, until you have done this with your whole body. Then go back and find the locations where tension has re-emerged, and go through the whole process again. This is almost never something one learns to do completely on the first try; do not worry about achieving complete relaxation at first. Just give this a few minutes. When it is clear that you have become *more* relaxed, then go on to the sitting or standing exercise.

Another, very different, approach involves sitting in a comfortable, padded chair, or on a sofa, and taking three sharp breaths one after another and, on the last breath, allowing oneself to fall backwards. While the first method can eventually bring about a very complete relaxation, it can be time-consuming, especially if one has never done anything of the sort. The second method is more rough and ready, but produces a very satisfactory general relaxation.

People differ. You may wish to try both methods, or you may already have a method that works for you. Feel free to experiment, but do not forget the goal, which is to achieve a greater degree of relaxation, and greater awareness of the state of one's body. And do not forget to keep a record of your sessions, and describe them in your report to your tutor.

ATTENTION

Although esoteric systems are notorious for their complexity, all their elaborate apparatus is in an important sense unnecessary, or beside the point — ideally, at least. It is in the space between the ideal and the actual that the systems flourish; it is the general (though not universal) human inability to do things the simple and direct way that makes them necessary.

The following exercise is a concrete example of that idea. From one perspective, it is one of the basic five-finger exercises of the esotericist. From another perspective (some would say an impossibly optimistic one!), it is the only thing one needs to know or do. All other means, exercises, teachings and devices are for those who cannot do this exercise as it should be done.

From a certain point of view, again, this exercise is the key to the development of the magical will. That description, though, can be either helpful or confusing depending on how one thinks of “will”. Esoterically understood, will is not exactly a matter of effortful striving; nor is the cultivation of will a matter of building up some distended, flaming, throbbing mental faculty that imposes itself on all and sundry like some big, over-familiar dog. Developed will is effortless, simple, almost unconscious, and effective without needing a lot of fuss. The same thing is true of concentration. Effective concentration is not a matter of gripping one thing tightly, but of simply letting everything else go, as though you scooped up a handful of sand and rocks from the bottom of a stream, and let the water carry away everything but the one pebble you wanted.

This exercise should be done if possible at the same time every day, or at the same time in your daily cycle — for example, just after waking, or just before dinner. At the beginning of your work on this lesson, you should not do it for more than five minutes; by the end, you should be doing it for at least ten, but certainly not more than twenty, minutes at a time.

The exercise itself, as we have said, is simple: Stand, or sit, without moving, for the period of the exercise. Alternate standing and sitting: that is, on one day stand for the allotted time; on the next day sit; on the next day stand, and so on.

Before beginning the exercise, practice relaxation, either as your main relaxation practice for the day, or as a brief “warm-up”. When you are doing the exercise, do not try to do nothing, or think nothing, or feel nothing — but at the same time do not let yourself follow any thoughts or feelings that lead you away from being aware that you are sitting or standing (as the case may be). Instead, simply attend to the sensations of being in your physical body.

A good position for sitting — it is, in fact, the usual position for seated meditation in this tradition — is to sit in a straight-backed chair that allows you to have your feet flat on the floor, and your thighs parallel to the floor, so that your back is straight and your hands can rest on your thighs. Similarly, most people will find it best to stand with their feet parallel and as far apart as their hips or shoulders. You may find it useful to experiment with different variations on these positions, and to pay attention to the changes that such variations bring about. The experimentation, though, does not count as part of the exercise time unless you do not move for the whole allotted time you are trying out that particular position.

At this point, do not worry about whether you are relaxed or tense. If you find uncomfortable or intrusive tensions, you may relax them if you can do so without changing position. Don't, however, try to maintain a rigid immobility — if nothing else, simply breathing will make your body move, and you will notice perhaps other movements as well.

Try always to bring your attention back to your body, without focusing on any particular part of it. Feel it as a unified whole, both in tactile (touch) and kinesthetic (the inner awareness of muscles and position) terms. Certain sensations may intrude: you may find yourself feeling discomfort, or restlessness, or itching, for example. Do not try to flinch away from these sensations, but attend to them calmly and easily, putting them in the context of all your other sensations.

Record the times and results of this exercise in the journal you send in to your tutor.

DAILY REVIEW

Every night, before you fall asleep, think back over the events of the day in reverse, as though you were watching a film running backwards. Start with the events that took place just before beginning the review, go to the events before those, and so on, back to what you did on waking up that morning. At this stage, do not try to judge or assess the things you remember. Just observe them. A reasonable amount of detail is appropriate, but the exercise should not take more than fifteen minutes or so. If you should fall asleep while doing the exercise, this is not a failure; your mind will have continued to go back over the day's activities while you slept.

In your magical record, note the approximate time at which you began this exercise, as well as how much of the day you reviewed before falling asleep.

THE MAGICAL RECORD

Throughout this course, you'll be keeping a magical record. This is a journal of your esoteric training, in which all of the practices and readings you do are noted down. Each entry should include the date, time, circumstances and results of your work, as well as any feelings or reactions you may have from doing it. Your magical record will become an important resource for your training; make a habit of writing up each piece of work as soon as possible after doing it.

The specific format is up to you, but using a standard format makes it much easier to keep such a record. Here is an example.

12 June 1993

6:30 AM: Practiced opening and closing. Vague effect, nothing definite.

7:15 AM: Went through Tarot deck after breakfast.

8:00 PM: Did the relaxation and attention exercises. Relaxation went fairly well. In the attention exercise, which I did standing, I wobbled all over the place and actually lost my balance at one point.

10:45 PM: Began review. Got as far as lunch, I think, then fell asleep.

To recapitulate, then, the activities for this lesson are as follows:

First, to buy the necessary supplies.

Second, to become familiar with the process of drawing the Tree of Life.

Third, to begin examining the Tarot deck.

Fourth, to perform the relaxation and attention exercises daily.

Fifth, to perform the daily review on going to bed.

Sixth, to keep an account of your work in your magical record.

Test

Each of the lessons in this course will include a test, which should be sent in when you complete the lesson's work. This test will not be "graded" in the usual sense; rather, it is intended to help us track your progress through the course, and to provide us with information that we can use to help respond to your particular needs. Along with the test, we encourage you to write us concerning any questions or difficulties you may have with regard to the course work.

Since these tests are the only means we have to gauge your progress in this work, you should be aware that if we do not receive your responses to the tests, no further lessons will be mailed.

Your responses to this and all other tests should be typed or written legibly on one side of one or more sheets of white 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Please write your name and address on the upper right-hand corner of the first page.

Test for Lesson 1

A. Copy out, from your magical record, your accounts of two practice sessions of the attention exercise.

B. Write down any factors you may have noticed which help or hinder the various practices in this lesson.

C. Construct a Tree of Life diagram using the method given in this lesson.

Please mail in your response to P.O. Box 95536, Seattle, WA 98145, and write Attn: Tutorial Committee on the envelope.

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Lesson 2

At this point in your training, you will have had two weeks of experience with the most basic level of practices we offer, and the same amount of time to note the way you respond to the discipline of regular practice. This discipline, and the self-knowledge and self-awareness that can be gained through it, have an important place in any system of esoteric work. Just as it's impossible to master a musical instrument without developing the habit of regular practice, so the infinitely more subtle instrument of human awareness can be mastered only through persistent effort.

At the beginning of this lesson's work, then, take some time to review your practice journal and assess the work you've done so far. Read through Lesson 1 again, and compare the way you did the exercises with the way they were presented. Try to gain some sort of sense of the way in which you've been approaching the course. This should not be an exercise in passing judgements or in self-criticism (or, for that matter, self-praise); simply review, assess, and determine if any changes in the way you handle the work are appropriate. This process — a sort of mid-course correction, so to speak — should be done after each of the lessons of this course.

People differ; so, too, do their reactions to the experience of taking up regular esoteric work. One pattern of reactions is relatively common, though, and worth discussing here. You may already have experienced something like it yourself.

In this pattern, the beginning stages of practical work seem interesting, even exciting; enthusiasm is easily come by and commitments, sometimes extreme ones, easy to make. The work goes well, often surprisingly so. After a certain time, though, the first rush of enthusiasm fades. Initial successes give way to frustration, fatigue, boredom. The commitments made so eagerly a short time before start to feel like annoyances, then hindrances, then intolerable burdens. Practices are postponed or forgotten, readings skimmed or neglected, and fairly often the whole process of practical work comes to a halt. Far too often, the pattern ends with the student, once so enthusiastic, dropping out entirely and either taking up something different or abandoning the idea of esoteric training altogether.

This pattern has many phases and many disguises, but a single source, and the name of that source is fear. The mind and the personality often fear and resist change, particularly when that change puts at risk the carefully balanced fabric of compromises, inattentions and little lies that we all so often use to cover over the unacceptable aspects of our world and ourselves. By teaching the conscious use of the powers of human awareness, esoteric training opens up possibilities of growth and healing, but it also opens up self-knowledge — and this is by no means always a comfortable experience.

In many magical writings, this fear is symbolized by the somewhat florid image of the Watcher at the Threshold, a monstrous shadow-presence which must be overcome in order to pass the threshold of esoteric training. Aside from the real value of a name and a symbolism for this common experience, the image and lore of the Watcher has something of use to offer the student of esoteric tradi-

tion; like all legendary monsters, the Watcher has a chink in its armor, a secret vulnerability. If it is faced with simple persistence, it submits.

If you find yourself going through some form of the pattern described above, then — or, for that matter, if you are already in the middle of it — the one way out is to **continue with the practices**. Sometimes all that is necessary is a single effort of will, a decision to keep going despite the pressures to give up. Sometimes, a more extended effort is needed. Either way, the experience is itself a part of the process of training, and an important step toward the higher reaches of esoteric work.

Levels of Being

One of the central concepts of the Western esoteric tradition, and one of the major differences between that tradition and current materialist ideologies, is the idea that the universe exists, and can best be understood as existing, on many levels of being. The universe of matter and physical energy, which moderns tend to see (whether they realize it or not) as the only reality, is from this perspective only one of several realms of existence. The relationship between these realms can be likened to that between the colors of the spectrum, or the different frequencies of radio waves, forming a continuum between spirit and matter or, to use another way of expressing the same thing, between pure potentiality and complete manifestation.

This continuum of being can be illustrated by using two interpenetrating triangles, as shown in the diagram below. The un-shaded triangle represents spirit, potentiality, or form (understood as different ways of talking about the same thing), while the shaded triangle represents matter, manifestation or substance. Whatever the terminology used, it is important to keep in mind that these two triangles are not different things, but distinguishable states or modes of the same thing — the “One Thing” spoken of in alchemical texts, of which all other things are adaptations.

It is convenient for practical purposes to divide this continuum of being into several levels. The Four Worlds and ten Sephiroth of Qabalistic theory can be used in this way; the tradition contains several others as well. One very useful division involves marking out five levels of existence, corresponding to five realms of human experience and thus to five realms of magical work, as well as to five natural divisions of the diagram above. These are described in Table 1.

Table I:
Levels of Being

PHYSICAL (E)	The material world as perceived through the five ordinary senses. In Hermetic theory, the furthest outward extent of the process of Creation, consisting of entirely passive and formless substance, without life or form unless affected by the higher levels. Qabalistically, it can be aligned with Malkuth, especially the farthest, limiting aspects of Malkuth. Among the Elements, it aligns with Earth.
ETHERIC (D)	The subtle structuring energies that lie immediately behind the world of matter, corresponding to what students of Yoga know as <i>prana</i> , and students of martial arts know as <i>ki</i> or <i>ch'i</i> . Often apparently perceived through the ordinary senses, though actually perceived through their etheric counterparts; many aspects of the body that seem at first to be properties of the physical body can better be ascribed to this energy body. Qabalistically, the etheric level can be aligned with Yesod primarily, as well as with aspects of Malkuth. Among the Elements, it aligns with Water.
ASTRAL (C)	The realm of concrete consciousness, perceived by the imagination (and, less directly, by other aspects of the mind). Most often the level of ordinary human thought, and also the level of most magical workings. In the Hermetic tradition, the transmission fluid, so to speak, between matter and spirit. Qabalistically, it aligns with Tiphareth primarily, and with the Sephiroth from Hod to

Chesed more generally; in one sense, due to the importance of images in astral perception, the astral realm aligns with Yesod, the “treasure House of Images”, as well. Among the Elements, it aligns with Fire.

- MENTAL (B) The realm of abstract consciousness, containing the basic patterns or “forms” upon which Creation is founded, perceived by the intuition and by the highest aspects of thought. A characteristic feature of this realm is its impersonality or trans-personality; thus it can be associated Qabalistically with Daath, the quasi-Sephirah astride the Abyss, which is in one of its senses the conjunction of Chokmah and Binah. Among the Elements, it aligns with Air.
- SPIRITUAL (A) The realm of pure creative power emanating from the Divine, beyond all definition or limitation. The highest mode of experience accessible to human beings, perceived only in the inmost core of the Self. Qabalistically Kether, though Chokmah and Binah are echoes of it, and it does not stop with Kether but extends indefinitely beyond. Among the Elements, it aligns with Spirit.

This system will be used extensively in the following lessons, but it should not be taken as anything more than a convenient classification. Its one real advantage is that it provides a common language with which we can talk about, and point out, things that are otherwise hard to express. Please familiarize yourself with the terms and the way they are used here, and think about the ways that your own experience fits into these categories.

The continuum of realms can be divided in other ways. For example, it can also be seen as ranging not between form and substance, but between energy and form, each level being a reflection or inversion of the one before it.. If level A, then, is pure energy, B is that energy coalescing into forms; C represents the energies of those forms. This means that D, the etheric aspect of things, is actually a mode of form, and that E, the material world, is actually a mode of energy. This fits very well with the Neoplatonic idea that matter is, at root, an idea of limit, of refusal, that its energy is an energy of negation or resistance to the organizing forms. During this course, however, we will focus on the first scheme.

Another system of classification you will be using extensively is based on the traditional concept of the magical elements. Many people have heard something to the effect that people once believed there were four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. This information is often associated with a certain amount of mockery but, like the mockery associated with the claim that people once believed that the Earth was flat (and that by going too far on could drop off the edge), the mockery says more about the limited knowledge of those who indulge in it than it does about what people actually once believed.

The four “elements” were not understood in the sense of the elements of modern chemistry and physics. They were not, in fact, originally a set of four, nor did they remain so. Among the early Greek philosophers, various substances were put forward at times emblems of the basic substance of which everything was made. One philosopher proposed that water was the best emblem for the basic substance or existence; another philosopher proposed fire for the same role; other philosophers felt that the qualities of the world could not be reduced to any one basic quality, and so looked to some set of essential, irreducible qualities as the basic substrates which, in combination, could represent the fundamental root matter of the world.

The final model, which lasted for almost two thousand years in one form or another, is associated with Aristotle. It involves the four familiar elements, Earth, Water, Fire and Air, and a fifth, known as the “Quintessence” (from the Latin for “fifth element”), or simply as Spirit. This is a scheme that we will be using in this course.

The five elements have a special relationship with the Hermetic art of alchemy, because they are not static, unchanging counters: they are phases of transformation, and the rules that govern their transformations are important in alchemical work. Each element can be seen as the resultant or product of two qualities. Thus, Fire is Hot and Dry, while Water is Cold and Wet. They are clearly opposites, and can be arranged as in the diagram below, while Fire is at the top and Water at the bottom. It is clear, then, that the two other elements are the products of Cold and Dry (at the left), and Hot and Wet (at the right) — and these qualities are traditionally ascribed to Earth and Air, respectively.. The Quintessence is in the middle: it is the common substrate of all the elements. It is what remains constant as the elements change one into another through changes in the balance of qualities.

The elements can also be arranged in a circle, as in the next diagram. When the Quintessence is put at the center of the circle, there are many (in fact 24) ways of arranging the remaining four at the quarters of a circle. The arrangement in Diagram 2 links the elements with the seasons and directions: Air with East and Spring, Fire with South and Summer, Water with West and Autumn, and Earth with North and Winter.

And again, the elements are associated with the suits of the Tarot deck: Fire with Wands, Water with Cups, Air with Swords, and Earth with the suit called in various decks Coins, Disks or Pentacles. Finally, the elements can also be thought of as vertically arranged, and thus aligned with the Four Worlds of the Qabalah, which are discussed in this lesson's reading, or the five levels of being set out above.

The Four Worlds themselves form yet another system of classification of the universe, although their role in Qabalistic thought is somewhat more complex than this. They relate not only to the structure of the universe, but also to the processes of its origination and its end; furthermore, they have a range of subtle relationships with the Tree of Life. With this in mind, you may find it of interest to return to the process of drawing the Tree of Life which you practiced in the last lesson. This process, which involves generating four mutually defining curves, provides a clear graphic image of the emergence and interrelationships of the Four Worlds. The semicircle at the top can be seen as the World of Atziluth, opening upwards toward the Infinite; the three circles descending from it, each centered on the outermost edge of the one above, can be seen as the worlds of Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah.

It is worth noting that in this diagram, the circles representing the Worlds and the points representing the Sephiroth are defined by, and define, one another. This relationship mirrors that between the Worlds and the Sephiroth themselves.

Reading

At this point, you have obtained a copy of *The Mystical Qabalah* and have no doubt looked it over. Since we are using this book as a resource and as an example, and not as our sole guide to the subject, we will not be working through it in order, but will be looking at individual sections as they become relevant. (This doesn't mean that you can't read the book on your own, of course.)

For this lesson, the assigned reading is Chapter III, "The Method of the Qabalah," and Chapter IV, "The Unwritten Qabalah." If you have it by you now, it would be good to read these chapters first, before going on with the lesson. You will note that in the third paragraph of Chapter IV, Fortune

says, “upon matters of historical accuracy” she stands “subject to correction to those who are better informed than I am in these matters (and their name is legion).” With the amount of research into the history of esoteric thought and practice in Europe that has gone on since her day, this is even more true now, when the work of such scholars as Frances Yates and Gershom Scholem can be bought in paperback editions. But her other point is also still good: she did not see these traditions as objects of academic study, but as a living world, from within which she wrote as a full citizen.

As you go through chapters III and IV of *The Mystical Qabalah*, compose a brief paragraph (of about five sentences) describing the ideas in each chapter which seem most interesting or important to you. Use your own words, or use phrases and sentences taken from the text, as seems best to you. Write them down; you will be including them in the test for this lesson.

Exercises

THE TAROT: WORKING WITH THE TRUMPS

This exercise can be done in a single sitting, or broken up into two sections, as you prefer. Allow about 90 minutes for the entire exercise, or about 45 minutes for the two sections if done separately. You only need to do this exercise once, but you may do it as many as four times before you begin the next lesson.

A. Lay out the Trumps in the pattern given below. Study each vertical pair, beginning with 0-XI. What does each pair express as a pair? As two separate cards interacting? What light does each card in a pair cast on the other? Take notes on what you’ve observed.

0	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX	XX	XXI

Next, reverse the order of the second row of cards, so that the numerical order runs right to left. Repeat the study process as above, starting with 0-XXI. Take notes as before.

Finally, compare the implications of the two different pairings for each of the Trumps. This step doesn’t need to take much time or effort; simply compare the notes you’ve made. Make any additional notes you need to make.

B. Lay out the Trumps in a circle, beginning with the Fool, reversed, about 3 to 5 card-lengths in front of you. Place Justice, upright, in front of you, directly beneath the Fool. Fill the space between with the other trumps in numerical order, continuing around the circle clockwise (see Diagram 4). Each card should face outward from the center of the circle.

Get up and walk around the circle. Look at the flow of images from one card to another. Walk around the circle again, but this time, as you pass each card, scan the circle to find the two cards it was paired with in the first part of the exercise. Look at the interactions between the cards, and where the cards are located in the circle. Write up your observations in your magical record.

CONSTRUCTING THE LITTLE WORLD

Much of the work you’ll be doing in lessons to come will focus on the Tree of Life and its symbolism. You will want to make, as a tool to help you with this work, a drawing of the Tree sized to contain notes on the symbolism. As you fill it in, this diagram will truly become a “minutum mundum,” a miniature world that will be far more than a mere list of symbols and correspondences.

Start with a large piece of heavy paper or tag board. Construct a Tree of Life using the method you learned in Lesson 1. Make it big, but make it as exact as possible. Draw the constructing arcs lightly, since you'll need to erase them.

At each of the ten points on the diagram that mark the Sephiroth, draw four nested circles as approximately shown below. (To draw these, set the point of the compass at 1/4 inch, 1/2 inch, 3/4 inch, and 1 inch, respectively.) These will hold the symbols of the Sephiroth in the Four Worlds of Qabalistic theory.

The Paths should be drawn to match those on the Tree of Life shown in Lesson 1. They should be at least 1/4 inch wide, to allow you to write in the Path symbolism. To center them properly, draw a light guideline lined up on the centers of the two Sephiroth that the Path connects; then draw another line to each side of the guideline, parallel with it, say an eighth of an inch away. The guideline can then be erased. All lines should end cleanly at the outer edge of each Sephirah.

It may take several tries to make this diagram, but this should not be seen as a waste of time. The experience of constructing the Tree has lessons to teach which are well worth the time and effort involved.

This diagram must be completed and ready to use by the time Lesson 4 arrives.

ATTENTION:
RELAXATION AND BREATHING

For this lesson, you will continue with the exercise you practiced in the first lesson, but with the additional of rhythmic breathing. Sit in the traditional meditation position described in the last lesson, and while you are sitting, breathe in a particular way — inhaling, holding your breath, exhaling, and again holding your breath before inhaling. The periods of inhalation, exhalation, and stillness may all be equal (this is sometimes called “the fourfold breath,” as each phase is done for a count of four), or the periods of inhalation and exhalation may be twice as long as the periods of stillness (thus 8-4-8-4). You should pick one of these, and stick with it for the duration of these lessons.

There are several points to remember in doing this. The first, and most important, is not to try to force yourself to maximum capacity or maximum compression. We are all so familiar with breathing that we take it for granted, but the sheer mechanical forces involved can actually cause damage if they are forced to extremes. The second is never to jam the throat shut during the phases of stillness. Stillness should come from stopping the movement of the muscles of the chest and abdomen (again, not by jamming them to extremes!), rather than by blocking the airway. Third, do not rely on external timers (for example, metronomes). Try to rely on your own internal counting to establish the length of the phases. Ideally, you would time the phases by your pulse or heartbeat. Naturally, the pulse does not occur with mechanical regularity — but achieving mechanical regularity is not the point. Learning to focus one's attention is.

Breathe in and out through your nose, and use your abdomen as well as your diaphragm, filling and emptying your lungs as much as you can without strain.

You should be doing the exercise for five to ten minutes at a time at the beginning of this lesson's work. Do not increase the time beyond twenty minutes during this lesson. Be sure to keep an account of this work in your magical record.

RITUAL

Ritual is one of the great tools of magic, and the following, known as the Qabalistic Cross, is one of the five-finger exercises of magical ritual, yet also itself a ritual that repays careful work and study. This should be done once a day, as much as possible at the same time each day. Do this at the end of your attention exercise each day, before you do the closing.

1. Stand facing East, feet together, arms at sides. Visualize yourself expanding upwards and outwards into space, until the earth can be seen like a sphere about a foot in diameter beneath your feet.
2. Raise your right hand above your head, then draw it down to your forehead. Visualize a beam of brilliant white light coming down from infinitely far above you to a point just above the top of your head, where it forms a sphere of white light, also about a foot across. Vibrate **Ateh**.
3. Draw your hand down to your solar plexus, and visualize the beam of light descending all the way down to the center of the Earth beneath your feet. Vibrate **Malkuth**.
4. Bring your hand up and across to your right shoulder, and visualize the light extending outward from the center of your chest to the right, forming one arm of a cross. An arm's length beyond your shoulder, it forms another one-foot sphere, this time of brilliant red light. Vibrate **ve-Geburah**.
5. Bring your hand across to your left shoulder, and visualize the light following to form the other arm of the cross. Just an arm's length beyond that shoulder it again forms one-foot sphere, this time of brilliant blue light. Vibrate **ve-Gedulah**.
6. Fold your hands across your chest, crossing at the wrists, right over left. Visualize the entire Cross shining with light. Vibrate **Le-Olam**.
7. Bring your hands together, palms and fingers touching, forearms parallel to the ground (so that your wrists form right angles with your forearms). Breath inward, and feel the expansion of your chest this position allows. Breathing out, visualize a sphere of light expanding from the center of the cross to encompass your body and the four spheres, surrounding you with an egg of brilliant white light within which the spheres shine. Vibrate **Amen**.

“Vibration” here refers to a special way of speaking. For current purposes, you should find the tone and manner of speaking (not necessarily particularly loud) that produces a vibrating or humming feeling in your body. With some practice, you may find that this feeling can be localized at the spots touched by your right hand when doing this ritual. Again, write up your results in your magical record.

At this point, do not worry too much about the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew words, which represent the perhaps familiar “Thine (Ateh) is the Kingdom (Malkuth). and the Power (ve-Geburah) and the Glory (ve-Gedulah). Pronounce the consonants as in English, except for the “th,” which can be taken as simply “t”, and the “g”, which here should be hard, as it is in “get”. Pronounce the vowels in the “Italian” way, more or less as short English vowels.

To recapitulate, then, the activities for this lesson are as follows:

First, to perform the relaxation and attention exercises daily, with the Qabalistic Cross.

Second, to perform the daily review on going to bed.

Third, to do the Tarot exercises .

Fourth, to build the Tree of Life as described.

Fifth, to keep a record, and prepare an account of your work to send your tutor.

Test

The following questions will help us track your progress through this lesson's work. As before, your answers should be typed or written legibly on 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of plain white paper, with your name and address written in the upper right corner of the first sheet.

A. Summarize, from the account in your magical record, your experience with the Tarot exercise from this lesson. What did you learn from it?

B. Copy out your accounts of two sessions of the attention exercise.

C. Compare your experiences with the attention exercise from this lesson to those with the equivalent practice from Lesson 1. What differences, if any, did the addition of rhythmic breathing seem to make?

D. Copy out the paragraphs you composed to summarize the ideas of the assigned reading.

Please mail your responses to P.O. Box 95536, Seattle, WA 98145. "Attn: Tutorial Committee" should be written on the envelope.

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE
**Correspondence Course in The Elements of
Traditional Western Esotericism**

Lesson 3

This lesson, which concludes the first unit of this course, will also complete a first pass through the essential techniques we will be introducing at the associate level of the Companions of the Stone. Each unit has its particular practical emphasis, and by the end of each unit we will have introduced a set of practices or ideas that will be developed, with some variations, during later units. These initial practices, though, will be central to all of the work of this course — as, in fact, they are central to the training methods used in the branch of the Western esoteric tradition we teach. Take the time, therefore, to be sure you have a solid grasp of the methods covered in these first three lessons. Especially at the beginning, it is important to lay a good foundation — one that will not have to be taken apart and rebuilt later!

There is a wide range of traditional practical methods: some work well for nearly everyone, while others are effective for only a small percentage of people; most are entirely safe, though some can cause psychological or physical damage. In this course, we are going to introduce you to a set of basic techniques that are both effective and safe, and we'll also discuss some of the more advanced areas of work.

Eventually, you will be able to select your own methods from the armory of the Hermetic tradition; for the time being, however, we suggest that you work with the specific exercises that we present, and not mix them with others. Some combinations of practices tend to cancel each other out, and some may even be harmful if done in combination with others. (If you have any questions about specific practices you may be doing, please let us know.)

The most important practice we'll be teaching you is *meditation* — a word that has by now been applied to so many things that it may very well convey nothing at all. In this course we mean something very specific by the term. One way of describing it, is to say that is a way of focusing the mind on a spiritual topic so that the higher senses can begin to enter one's awareness. (This is often called "discursive meditation," because, especially at first, it can take the form of an interior discourse or conversation.) Although at first it may seem like ordinary musing, it is actually something quite different. Although it is simple, and at times may even be boring, it is one of the most important skills you can learn.

On beginning esoteric work, it can often be very difficult to assess the results one is getting — or even whether or not one is getting results. This is one reason it can be much more effective to study with someone who has already done similar kinds of work. One of the more common perplexities arises from the results of doing work with the focus of attention. Students often wonder if some phenomenon is real or illusory. Things are not, however, quite so straightforward.

One type of exercise involves fixing one's gaze on an object for some period of time. If you do this, and really succeed in holding your gaze steady, you will find that the object, and indeed much

of your visual field, undergo a kind of transformation, a blanking out. Unless and until, of course, you become startled by the effect, and shift your gaze even slightly.

This is a well known physiological effect of fixing the gaze. The retina and the nerves that serve it are constructed so that any constant stimulus — any stimulus that occurs precisely and unvaryingly in a particular place on the retina — becomes, so to speak, invisible. This is why we usually do not see the blood vessels that supply the retina, for example. Usually, our eyes are constantly making slight motions, so that even objects that are not moving do not cast their images onto exactly the same place from moment to moment. With relaxation, however, and the fixation of vision that can come with the stabilization of attention, it is not hard to stop this vibrating motion, and experience a temporary blanking of vision.

The same thing is true of other sensory systems. A constant touch or constant scent will also disappear — and not simply as a result of “getting used to it” (as background music, say, disappears). Even more important, this is true as well of consciousness itself, although this is not as easy to demonstrate, since we are so used to seeing through consciousness that it can be very difficult to bring it into the forefront of our attention, as it were. Nevertheless, when Fortune speaks of the art of creating “willed changes in consciousness,” she is referring not only to changing the *contents* of consciousness, or the *quality* of consciousness, but also to the possibility of changing what we might call the *focal length* of consciousness, or the *tuning* of consciousness. Many types of magical activity effect such changes almost by accident, and people can do magic without being able to articulate what is happening when things work well or do not work well, like the famous fellow who one day found out that all his life he’d been speaking prose. Since our aim is not simply to teach a bag of tricks, but to preserve and pass on what is a very full magical, meditative and philosophical tradition, we think it is important to point these things out, even though they may at first seem like very abstract propositions. When these effects of focused attention are seen from the physiological standpoint, they are mere curiosities of the bodily mechanism; understood from the esoteric point of view, however, they can be keys that open doors into an illimitable region of experience and meaning.

The Companions of the Stone was founded by people who had each pursued the study of the Hermetic and magical traditions in a variety of ways, and who each came to the conclusion that the traditions, and the continuity of the traditions, deserved to be kept alive, and not simply be given over on one hand to the quibbling of academic critics and on the other to the fiddling of magical mechanics and tinkerers. None of us would want to claim to be gurus or masters — and fortunately the tradition does not depend on gurus or masters for its continuing life, though in fact its history is studded with great souls whose achievements are undeniable. We see ourselves as students of the Hermetic and magical traditions, hoping to assist other students to appreciate and work with those traditions as fully as possible.

One small point might be mentioned here, and that is our spelling of certain key Hebrew words. Some wag once observed that a “tradition” in the modern Western esoteric world is any group of people who can agree on how to spell “Qabalah”, and this remark has a certain truth to it. If you have studied any Western European language, you will know that even within the group of languages using the “same” alphabet, letters can have very different sounds. This is even more true when going from one alphabet to another, and English presents special difficulties because many of its letters can have several sounds, depending on context. When Hebrew words were brought into Latin texts during the Renaissance, the usual strategy was to represent the sound of the words as best as possible in roman letters using their Latin values. The spelling “Cabala” dates from this period. The spelling “Kabbalah” is generally used in the academic world, except when referring to the

Christianized (or at least de-Judaized) versions of the tradition that developed during the Renaissance; these are often called “Christian Cabala,” using the spelling that was used within their texts. The spelling “Qabalah” was developed by nineteenth century occultists as a result of a desire to have romanized spellings that reflected the the actual Hebrew letters that had originally composed the word. The main impetus here was the need to be able to work with the number-and-letter manipulations of the “literal Qabalah”.

One of the main conventions that has been adopted is to transliterate the Hebrew letters (without the vowels, which are indicated by a system of “vowel points” above or below the letters in modern Hebrew) into Roman letters on a one-for-one, and somewhat arbitrary, basis. This provides the reader with information about what the original letters were, though it doesn’t necessarily tell much about how to pronounce the words. We will be introducing the Hebrew alphabet and some systematic notes on pronouncing Hebrew words at a later point in this course; at this point, though, we will only be bringing up certain Divine and Angelic names, most of which should not be difficult to pronounce adequately. We will provide both the conventional transliterations, so that students who have not seen them before can become familiar with them, and some notes on pronunciation.

As you have noticed, we have chosen to spell the word “Qabalah.” We are not writing either as historians or as claimants to authority in the world of Judaica. We follow the usage of our textbook, and we chose our textbook because of the particular way the author positioned it with respect to the sources of the esoteric traditions it transmits.

Reading

For this lesson, the assigned reading is Chapter V “Negative Existence,” and Chapter VI, “Otz Chiim, The Tree of Life.” These chapters provide one way to begin to gain a sense of what is meant by the Qabalistic Tree of Life. It is not the only way to approach the subject, and we will present others in the course of these lessons.

As you go through Chapters V and VI of *The Mystical Qabalah*, compose a brief paragraph (of about five sentences) describing the ideas from each chapter which you find most interesting or thought-provoking. Use your own words, or use phrases and sentences taken from the text, as seems best to you. Write them down in your magical record.

Exercises

Tarot

The Small Cards

Set aside half an hour to forty-five minutes for this exercise. You’ll need to do the exercise a total of four times over the next two weeks; as long as you don’t more than once a day, you can choose how you space these sessions.

Lay out the minor arcana (the 40 pip or number cards, as they are often called) and the court cards (16 altogether), as in Diagram 1, leaving enough space in the center you to stand. Make sure the cards are properly oriented to the four directions. Step into the circle, and turn to face East. Open, and do a minute or two of regulated breathing.

Focus your attention on the suit of Swords. While focusing on these fourteen cards, summon up al

the feelings and thoughts associated with the East and springtime: the yellow light of sunrise; a freshening breeze; sprouting seedlings; a feeling of clarity and lightness. Let these rise up within you and around you like a sea of energies, and let yourself be immersed in that sea. Keep your attention on the Swords, and remain in the presence of these energies, for several minutes; then release the energies, close your eyes, and clear your mind.

Turn to face South. Repeat the above process with the suit of Wands and the energies of the South and Summer: the heat of noonday; the redness of flame; plants in lush, full growth; a feeling of drive and ambition. Again, after several minutes, release the energies, close your eyes, and clear your mind.

Turn to face West, and repeat with the suit of Cups and the energies of Autumn: dusk falling, gentle rain; leaves turning color and drifting down from the trees; harvest; fields set to lie fallow for the coming winter. After several minutes, close your eyes, release the energies, and clear your mind.

Turn now to face North, and repeat with the suit of Pentacles and the energies of Winter: a black midnight full of sharp, glittering stars; snow and bare earth; the dark shapes of tree trunks; the storing up and maintenance of what has been harvested. After several minutes, again release the energies and close your eyes, and clear your mind.

Turn last to face the East again. Release your awareness from the cards. Close your eyes, clear your mind, and do several minutes of regulated breathing. Then close, collect the cards, and write up your work.

Meditation

By this point, you have had a month more or less to explore, through the attention practices, the most basic form of the method of meditation you'll be using as you work through this course. Depending on your prior experience, and on various subtle factors, you have been more or less successful at clearing and stabilizing your mind, and keeping it focused on the practice. Whatever the results, the experience will be of value in your later work. At this point, however, a more complete form will be presented. This new practice should be done at least twice a week; every day would be best, but not everyone can arrange this. It will be done along with a brief version of the relaxation and attention work, so that it is nested within the pattern of opening, relaxing and breathing, paying attention, and then, afterward, of closing.

Decide at the beginning which days you will set aside for the additional meditation work. If at all possible, *never* skip these pre-scheduled sessions, even though your mind will be quite creative in coming up with excuses for doing so. A vital part of the Hermetic way is learning to discipline your mind — and this is an excellent place to begin.

To begin, then, sit in the meditation position given in Lesson 1. Let your body relax without losing the balance or symmetry of the position. Then, for approximately five minutes, do the attention practice as given in the last lesson, with rhythmic breathing.

When this period is finished, turn your mind to the topic as given below. Think about it in a general way for a time, and then choose some particular aspect of the topic, or a train of thought connected with it, and follow that out as far as it will go, considering all the ideas that your mind associates with it.

For example, if the topic for your meditation is the element of Earth, you might decide to consider Earth as soil, as the source of plant life and growth; this might lead you to think of the yearly cycle of vegetative life, or of fertility in general, and either or both of these might lead on to the thought of the lunar cycle, and of the Moon; and these ideas in turn might lead you on to others. However far afield the connections go, try to link them back to the original topic, and to other ideas you have come up with in the course of the meditation.

For this lesson, the topic for your meditations will be the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Even if you have learned the traditional symbolism of these elements previously, try to focus on the actual physical experience of the elements themselves, and let ideas arise from this, rather than from correspondences you may have learned. In this way, you will begin to develop your own personal grasp of the meaning of these important symbols.

For the time being, you should plan on spending ten minutes or so doing actual discursive meditation in each session. When you are finished, repeat a few more cycles of rhythmic breathing and attention, and then close with the closing gesture. After each session, note down the ideas that have arisen in connection with the topic, as well as any factors which seem to have helped or hindered the meditative process.

Attention

The attention exercise for this lesson is to be done on each day in which you do not meditate. For approximately the same period, at about the same time, perform the relaxation and attention work of the last lesson. After some five minutes of regulated breathing, however, you may allow your breathing to proceed naturally, without trying to make it stay within any particular pattern. Notice how your attention changes with inhalation and exhalation, and notice when your attention seems to become more focused and when it seems to disperse. When you have achieved some sense of this, recall that energy follows consciousness, and feel the alternate ebb and flow of energy through you as you breathe.

As before, use the opening and closing gestures and the initial relaxation to provide a frame for this practice, and write up the results in your practice journal.

Ritual:

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram (Banishing)

This ritual exercise, which builds on the one assigned in the last lesson, should be done once a day, ideally after the attention exercise or meditation for the day. (You may wish to try it after the attention exercise for one week, and before the attention exercise for the next week, to see whether and how the results vary.) This is where the private space with “enough open floor space to allow you to walk in a circle without bumping into furniture”, mentioned in Lesson 1, will begin to be needed.

1. Stand facing East, in the center of the space around which you will be tracing the pentagrams, and perform the Qabalistic Cross.
2. Step forward to the East until you reach what will be the circumference of the circle. Using the first two (middle and index) fingers of your right hand, trace a banishing pentagram in the air. The banishing pentagram is traced by beginning at the lower left and drawing a line upward to the top, continuing down to the lower right, then to the left arm, the right arm, and back down to the lower left to complete the figure, which should be about three feet

across. While tracing it, visualize a line of blue-white light being traced by your fingers as they move through the air. Then point to the center of the pentagram and vibrate the Divine Name **YHVH** (Ye-ho-wah).

3. From the center of the Eastern pentagram, trace a blue-white line to establish the circumference of the circle until you reach the South. At the Southern point of the circle, trace a second banishing pentagram. Then point to the center of the pentagram and vibrate the Divine Name **ADNI** (Ah-doh-nai).
4. From the center of the Southern pentagram, trace the next segment of the circumference of the circle to the Western point of the circle; there trace another banishing pentagram, point to its center, and vibrate the Name **AHHH** (Eh-heh-yeh).
5. From there, continue to the North, and again trace a banishing pentagram and at its center vibrate the name **AGLA** (Ah-geh-la).
6. Complete the circle by tracing the line back to the center of the pentagram at the East. Return to the center, and face East. Extend your arms horizontally out to the side (toward the North and South), and say:

Before me, **Raphael** (Rah-fa-el)
Behind me, **Gabriel** (Gah-bree-el)
At my right hand, **Michael** (Mee-khah-el)
At my left hand, **Auriel** (Oh-ree-el)
For about me flame the pentagrams
And within me shines the six-rayed star.

While saying this, visualize the Archangels as towering winged figures at the quarters of the circle, radiant with light. Raphael, wearing yellow and purple, carries a sword; Gabriel, wearing blue and orange, carries a cup; Michael, wearing red and green, carries a staff; and Auriel, wearing citrine, olive, russet and black, carries a pentacle (a disk inscribed with a five-pointed star). As each name is pronounced, the figure expands or springs from the point at the center of the Name at the center of the pentagram, rising a little outward, but with the pentagram somewhat within it. When you refer to the pentagrams, direct your attention to their vivid presence around you. When you speak of the six-rayed star, see a Star of David on your chest, the upward-pointing triangle in red, the downward-pointing one in blue.

7. Complete the rite by performing the Qabalistic Cross once again.

The pentagram mentioned in the instructions is a conventional five-pointed star, with one point uppermost. It can be helpful to use the left and right hips, and top of the head, as reference points for the lowest and highest points of the pentagram.

To summarize, then, the work for this lesson is as follows:

First, to perform the relaxation and attention exercises daily, except as noted.

Second, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.

Third, to do the meditation at least once for each of the four elements.

Fourth, to do the Tarot exercises.

Fifth, to perform the Pentagram Ritual daily, as described.

Sixth, to keep a record, and prepare an account of your work to send your tutor.

Test

The following questions are intended to help us track your progress through the work of this lesson. As before, your responses should be typed or written legibly on 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of plain white paper, with your name and address written in the upper right corner of the first sheet.

- A. Copy out an account of one working of this lesson's Tarot exercise from your magical record. What did you learn from the exercise?
- B. Copy out an account of your experiences with one of the meditations from this lesson.
- C. Copy out an account of one working of the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram.
- D. Copy out the accounts of two sessions of the attention exercise from this lesson — one in which you feel you did well, one in which you feel you did poorly. What were the specific differences between the sessions? What factors affected the practice positively or negatively?
- E. Copy out the paragraphs you wrote to summarize ideas from the assigned reading from this lesson.

Please mail in your responses to P.O. Box 95536, Seattle, WA 98145. "Attn: Tutorial Committee" should be written on the envelope.

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE
**Correspondence Course in The Elements of
Traditional Western Esotericism**

Lesson 4

With this lesson, the focus of your studies in this course will be undergoing a certain amount of change. The emphasis of the last three lessons has been on the elementary techniques of Western esoteric training. In this lesson and the lessons to come, however, this emphasis will alternate with a focus on the elementary theory of the tradition. Both of these, theory and practice, are useful and necessary parts of the work, and you will find that each reinforces the other; a knowledge of the essential theoretical structure of Western esotericism will give context and meaning to the practical work, while the exercises will help turn the theory from a set of dry intellectual statements to an expression of living realities.

Number Symbolism

One of the barriers to understanding that modern students of ancient magical traditions must overcome is a major difference in the idea of number – what numbers are and what they mean. To the modern mind a number is simply a quantity of something. It has no particular meaning or importance of its own, and nothing but quantity sets it apart from any other number.

In ancient thought, and the magical traditions which derive from the ancient world, number is understood in a radically different sense. To this way of thought, any given number is a **quality** as well as a quantity; it has characteristics, symbolism, and meanings of its own, wholly apart from those of anything to which it might be attached. Thus the number three, for example, possesses a quality of its own, which we may as well call "threeness"; any time the quantity three appears, the quality of threeness is present; anything that naturally occurs in threes, or divides into three parts, partakes of that same quality. Time – which divides into past, present, and future – and the process of reproduction – which involves mother, father, and child – thus both are linked symbolically and magically with the number three.

Old books of Qabalistic magic contain tables of the "scales" of number symbolism, classifying an enormous range of things natural and supernatural in terms of the number-qualities they express. These gained much of their effectiveness, however, from traditional religious and cultural symbologies which have long since dropped out of use, and the present age has yet to create any coherent set of transformative symbols of its own. Each student of these traditions, therefore, must to some extent create a personal symbolic system of this sort, combining the still useful elements of traditional systems with other material derived from personal experience. The number exercise in this lesson, and other exercises in

lessons to come, will help you make a start on this phase of your magical training.

Symbolism of Kether

Chapter XV of The Mystical Qabalah, which you will be reading as part of this lesson, begins with a page of various symbols and correspondences associated with Kether, the first Sephirah of the Tree of Life. Such correspondences, often drawn up into complicated tables, have been a fixture of Western esoteric writings for hundreds of years. A number of modern magical writers have rejected this sort of thing as useless, but this rejection derives from a misunderstanding of the purpose and nature of correspondences.

The point of these tables is not to load down the mind of the student with materials suitable for some bizarre sort of esoteric Trivial Pursuit. Rather, correspondences serve as a way to unify and organize magical symbolism, to convert the often weird grab-bag of traditional images and ideas into a coherent alphabet of symbols that can be used to communicate clearly with the deep levels of the mind and the subtle aspects of the universe.

To some extent, the point raised earlier in this lesson, in the discussion of number symbolism, applies here as well: much of the traditional imagery derived its force from cultural beliefs and habits of thought that have long since fallen into disuse, and thus has limited relevance to the modern student. Certain elements of symbolism are still useful, though, either because they tie into still-living ways of thought, because they link up to basic aspects of human existence, or because the surviving materials of the magical tradition are all but incomprehensible without them. It is with this rather more limited set of symbols that you will be working at this stage in your magical training.

For this lesson's work, your assignment will be to learn a selection of symbols associated with the first Sephirah. These are as follows:

The Divine Name: AHIH (pronounced Eh-heh-yeh), "I Am";

The Archangel: Metatron, Prince of the Countenances;

The Order of Angels: Chaioth ha-Qodesh, "Holy Living Creatures";

The Astrological Correspondence: Rashith ha-Gilgalim, "Beginnings of Turnings" or Primum Mobile, identified with the Galaxy as the background of stellar and planetary forces;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Aces of the pack.

You will need not merely to familiarize yourself with these correspondences, but to commit them to memory; as you proceed with your magical training, they will become more and more important.

Finally, the first four of these symbols are to be written

onto the large Tree of Life you were instructed to make back in Lesson 2. In the innermost of the four circles of Kether, write in the Divine Name and its meaning; in the next, the Archangel; in the next, the Order of Angels; and in the outermost circle, the astrological correspondence. The end result will look something like Diagram 1. Once you have written in the symbols, use a white colored pencil to color in the rest of the space, or simply leave the space blank.

Reading

The assigned reading for this lesson will be Chapter VII, "The Three Supernals," Chapter XIV, "General Considerations," and Chapter XV, "Kether, The First Sephirah" from The Mystical Qabalah. If you have not previously worked with the Western esoteric tradition, the latter two chapters may be your first introduction to full-scale magical symbolism; you may find it useful to go over the chapters several times in order to get a clearer sense of how this material is organized and how it fits together.

As you go through the chapters, compose a brief paragraph (of perhaps five sentences) describing the main ideas of each chapter. Use your own words, or use phrases and sentences taken from the text, as seems best to you. Write them down and include them in the record you send in.

Exercises

Number Exercise

Over the next several lessons, you'll be starting to work directly with the numerical approach to symbolism described earlier. The number you'll be working with in this lesson is the number one. Your task will be to notice, and think about, everything in your experience that can be described by, or that is linked with, this number. You may find it useful to keep a list, either in your practice journal or elsewhere, of all the manifestations of the number one in your life.

As you sensitize yourself to the presence of unities within you and around you, you may notice that they tend to fall into two or more classes. For example, some things relate to the number one by being all-inclusive, while others relate to it by being uniquely rare. Think about the relationship between these classes; as always, keep notes on the results of your work in your practice journal.

Meditation and Attention

The method of meditation introduced in the last lesson is capable of a great deal of expansion and elaboration. For the time being, though, it will be of more value in your training for you to develop a certain level of skill with the basic technique, and with its use as a means of working with the traditional symbolism.

For this lesson, therefore, the meditation will follow the

same format and process we presented in Lesson 3. Only the topic will be different. Rather than working with the four elements in general, you will explore a specific aspect of their energies through the medium of the Tarot correspondence of the First Sephirah.

When you have finished the preliminaries to meditation, then, and are ready to begin working with the topic, call to mind one of the four Aces of the deck. Picture it in your mind's eye as clearly as possible, putting as many of the card's details into the image as you can. Next, consider the image, and think about its possible meanings. This image represents the way that Kether, the First Sephirah, manifests through one of the elements, and through one of the Four Worlds. What does it communicate to you?

Be ready to draw on your previous meditations on the elements, as well as Lesson 3's Tarot exercise and this lesson's readings, to build up your sense of the symbol's meaning. Be ready, too, to go out on a limb if your intuition leads you there. The conclusions you reach, at this point in your training, are less important than the experience of reaching them. Symbols such as these will mean something a little different to everyone who works with them.

One of the goals of these meditations is to come to a clearer understanding of the meanings of the Tarot Aces. When you have finished meditating on each of the Aces, therefore, you'll need to find a single word which, for you, sums up the card and its qualities as you understand these. For example, "Power" might be the word that best describes the Ace of Wands to you, or "Unity"; "Matter" or "manifestation" might best fit the Ace of Pentacles, and so on. The words you select should be committed to memory, and sent in with your journal entries for this lesson.

Do at least four of these meditations during the next two weeks, so that all four of the Aces and elements are covered; the meditations can be done more frequently if you wish, up to once a day. Begin with the Ace of Pentacles for Earth and Assiah, then the Ace of Swords for Air and Yetzirah, then the Ace of Cups for Water and Briah, and finish with the Ace of Wands for Fire and Atziluth. As with the last lesson's meditation, ten minutes of actual discursive meditation should be sufficient for each practice session.

The attention exercise given in the last lesson should be repeated on any day in which you do not do a meditation as described above. Review the instructions in Lesson 3 to make sure you have not forgotten details of the practice.

Ritual

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, as given in the last lesson, should be performed each day. As you work with this rite over the next two weeks, concentrate on making the visualized images as clear and bright as you can. Here, too, you'll find it useful to review the instructions given in Lesson 3 and adjust your performance as necessary.

To summarize, then, the work for this lesson is as follows:

First, to perform the meditation or the attention exercise each day.

Second, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.

Third, to perform the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram each day.

Fourth, to work on the number exercise throughout the next two weeks.

Fifth, to keep a record, and prepare an account of your work to send to your tutor.