

COMPANIONS OF THE STONE

GENERAL LETTER #3

On The Protection of the Order

Several members of our Order have asked questions concerning the Protection of the Order, the special "associated" status which can be conferred by subordinate lodges of the Companions of the Stone on those who are not initiated Companions. The following notes may help to clarify this part of our Order's work.

The Companions of the Stone, like many magical Orders, is in some ways a hybrid organization. On the one hand, it is a group of practicing magicians training themselves and each other in the teachings of Western esotericism. On the other hand, it is a fraternal Order, offering many of the same benefits of fellowship and mutual support which are the stock in trade of ordinary fraternal Orders such as Odd Fellowship.

These two aspects interweave and interact in a plethora of ways, but they are distinct in function. Nor is everyone equally suited for both. There are likely to be people who can contribute to, and benefit from, the fraternal aspect of the COTS, but who are not ready for or interested in the specific, rather demanding course of magical study and practice followed by Companions. There are also likely to be situations in which the secrecy required of Companions may create needless suspicion and discomfort -- for example, if the spouse of a Companion feels himself or herself shut out completely by the blank walls of a secret Order.

One part of the Order's response to these issues is the provision made in the bylaws for granting the Protection of the Order. A person who has been granted the Protection of the Order by a subordinate lodge of the COTS is termed a "Friend of the Order," and has the right to participate in the fraternal side of the Order's activities. He or she enters into the obligations of fidelity, friendship and secrecy which unite the Companions of our Order, but does not vote in lodge or take part in the magical work of the Companions in any direct manner.

The "protection" granted to such a person is twofold. On the one hand, the obligation of friendship taken by Companions and Friends of the Order alike directs the active efforts of the entire Order, if need be, to the aid of a Friend of the Order in danger or distress. This corresponds to the fraternal side of our Order.

There is also an inner, magical sense to the Protection of the Order. The Companions of the Stone is a school for magicians, offering as comprehensive a course of training in the Western esoteric tradition as our collective efforts can manage. It is also, however, a context of energies in which its initiates learn

and practice magic. This context is often conceptualized as the egregor or Sphere of Sensation of the Order, and in the tradition we follow it is deliberately charged, strengthened and equilibrated through ceremonies such as the Equinox Ritual. Working within this context of balanced energies, the initiated Companion is helped by the equilibrium of the Order's energies to maintain his or her own equilibrium through the sometimes harrowing experiences of the path of magical development. These energies also form a more direct defense, a potent one, against certain kinds of hostile energies.

This same protective and balancing context of energies is also communicated to those under the Protection of the Order, and has a similar effect.

This can be particularly important in the case of spouses and children of Companions. Because of the close energy links formed by sex and reproduction, members of the immediate family of a practicing magician routinely end up experiencing, willy-nilly, some level of activation of the subtle body centers. The same thing can also happen, to a lesser degree, with close friends or unrelated housemates. While this process can have many positive results, it can also cause some severe negative reactions, especially when the person thus affected is unprepared, unprotected and unwilling to deal with the magical side of experience. The granting of the Protection of the Order, although it is not a panacea, can simplify matters by seeing to it that the awakening of magical perceptions happens in a relatively balanced context.

Candidates for the Protection of the Order must be sponsored by a Companion in good standing. The spouse or minor children of a Companion in good standing shall be granted the Protection of the Order on the request of that Companion; any other person proposed as a Friend of the Order shall be investigated and voted on by the lodge in the same manner as a prospective lodge member.