

# ORDER OF THE ROSE AND CROSS

## PROGRAMMES OF STUDY: PARAMETERS AND PROCEDURES

### *Introduction*

The Order of the Rose and Cross is neither a Contemplative Religious Order – or any other form of religious Order – nor is it a Magical Order or Fraternity. The O.R.C. is essentially a study society of Christian esotericists, dedicated to the constructive, critical and creative study of, and research into, the broad spectrum of ideas, theories, doctrines and practices that constitute Christian Esotericism. That is, all that lies at the heart of the Western Esoteric, or Mystery Tradition that has grown from its roots in the Judaeo-Christian, Neoplatonic and Hermetic (Graeco-Egyptian) Mysteries.

The studies conducted by members of the Order have a dual aim. First, they will enrich our personal knowledge and understanding of the Western Esoteric Tradition, and in so doing will also enrich our spiritual lives and take us further on the road to Spiritual Regeneration. Second, they will add to the store of broader human knowledge and understanding of that Tradition. But in order for our studies to be of real value, to both ourselves and the world at large, they *must* be tightly focussed on our principal areas of concern.

From this, two questions arise: what *are* our proper studies, and *how* do we carry them out ?

### *Studies proper for a Rosicrucian Order*

Pre-eminently we are concerned with Rosicrucianism: its nature, its meaning, its origin and its course of development, together with Rosicrucian texts and the lives and work of individual Rosicrucians.

This, in turn, encompasses most aspects of Christian esotericism, especially the Christian expression of spiritual and mystical experience and the symbolic language by which this can be conveyed, both verbally, pictorially and through the medium of sound. Thus we should engage in the study of such subjects as spiritual alchemy; kabbalah; number, colour and Tarot symbolism; astrological symbolism; esoteric and exoteric religious art; spiritual philosophy (*e.g.* Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, Gnosticism); the purpose and practice of ritual and ceremonial; the lives and writings of the Mystics; the meaning of such terms as 'Regeneration', 'Illumination' and 'Reintegration'; and the nature and content of the Christian Mysteries. And this is by no means an exhaustive list !

The study of any of the above will require the formulation of appropriate questions to act as stimuli to both personal research and discussion, and at least a basic knowledge of the subject in question. To assist members in this a series of reading lists is being prepared, in the form of updated versions of earlier lists prepared by Frater I.D.V.A. Once these have been circulated it is hoped that members will comment upon them and offer suggestions as to additional titles that they have found to be helpful.

So, how best may we conduct such studies ?

### *Organising study within the Order of the Rose and Cross*

Private study is, of course, entirely a matter for the individual member and will be based upon personal taste. However, members who are relatively new to esoteric studies and who wish to be advised or guided in them are encouraged to ask more experienced members for assistance.

In a strict sense there is no corporate or communal *study* within the Order, as we are not a Teaching Order. What we do at formal meetings, whether of the Order as a whole or of individual Conclaves or Study Circles, is to receive papers, to hold discussions on specific topics, and to debate issues on which opinions may be divided. If possible there should be a written or audio record of the proceedings, but as this is not always feasible, members are encouraged to make their own written notes that can be subsequently collated. It should also be noted that audio-visual aids can be extremely helpful, when appropriate (*e.g.* when considering art or music), and where it is technically possible to make use of them.

To avoid duplicating our efforts, it is suggested that programmes of study are co-ordinated as far as may be possible. This can be done not by parcelling out topics of study, but by members making known their specific areas of greatest interest so that appropriate topics for meetings can be arranged that will complement each other and avoid re-treading the same ground (this is particularly desirable in the case of discussions with a large factual content as opposed to more speculative debate).

As we wish for the widest possible participation, it is desirable that all meetings are announced well in advance and the details – including the topics under discussion and any unavoidable limitations of numbers attending – are circulated to all members, whether or not they live or work locally to the venue of the meeting. Equally, anyone who may wish to attend should advise an officer of the relevant Conclave or Study Circle in advance, so that seating, catering and other arrangements can be made.

It is also essential that meetings should be conducted in a harmonious atmosphere. Differences of opinion can and should be aired politely, tolerantly and with due respect for all concerned. Recognising human frailty, and to render this the norm, potentially divisive topics should be avoided. Thus, purely political and socio-political issues should *not* be discussed or debated, nor should sectarian viewpoints (religious or political) be stressed or promoted – although it is perfectly proper for members simply to state their religious or political allegiances *if* this is relevant to their contribution to the issue at hand (but sectarian apologetics *must* be avoided). It would also be quite out of order to propagate doctrines, or promote organisations that are inimical to Christianity.

A further point to bear in mind is that discussions and debates require discipline: ideally self-discipline, but given human nature, more probably to be laid down at the beginning of a meeting and adhered to throughout. It is the duty of the member chairing the meeting to set and announce the format, and to ensure that reasonable and appropriate limits are placed upon the speaking time permitted to participants in discussion or debate.

### *Conclusion*

All of the above is set out for the benefit of members. It is intended to be helpful, not minatory or dictatorial. Your comments and suggestions are both sought and welcome.

Remember. Our studies are not just for ourselves, but for all those who are drawn to the path of Christian esotericism and who will be able to read and to benefit from the papers and reports that we publish on the Order website or in printed form.