

# THE KABBALISTIC ORDER OF THE ROSE-CROIX

*Christian Rebisse, FRC*

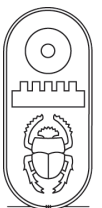
*In his book, Rosicrucian History and Mysteries, Christian Rebisse describes the many traditions that contributed to what would become the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC and to some extent the Traditional Martinist Order. The excerpt below briefly describes the history of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix and its founders who greatly influenced both traditions.*



The Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix. Seated in front, from left to right, are Papus, Joséphin Péladan, and Stanislas de Guaita.

While Joséphin Péladan was savoring the success of his first novel, his brother Adrien died on September 29, 1885, poisoned by a medicine improperly measured by his pharmacist. An article announcing his death, in the journal *Le Messager de Toulouse*, described him as a Rosicrucian. The text was signed “a Catholic R+C.” Behind this signature we must see Firmin Boissin, the editor-in-chief of this journal. Let us add that the latter knew the photographer Clovis Lassalle, whom he met through the printer Paul Édouard Privat. In turn, H. Spencer Lewis was to meet Clovis Lassalle many years later in Toulouse.

During this period, the friendship between Josephin Péladan and Stanislas de Guaita took shape, and upon the advice of the writer, the latter got in touch with Firmin Boissin. On August 12, 1886, Stanislas de Guaita informed Joséphin that he had received a long and learned letter from his friend “Bois+sin.” The way in which he wrote this name, with a cross in its center, is strange, and it is interesting to note that after this correspondence Stanislas de Guaita signed his letters with the expression “R+C” and called Joséphin Péladan “my dear Frater.”<sup>1</sup> Can it be concluded that he had been received into the order by Firmin Boissin?

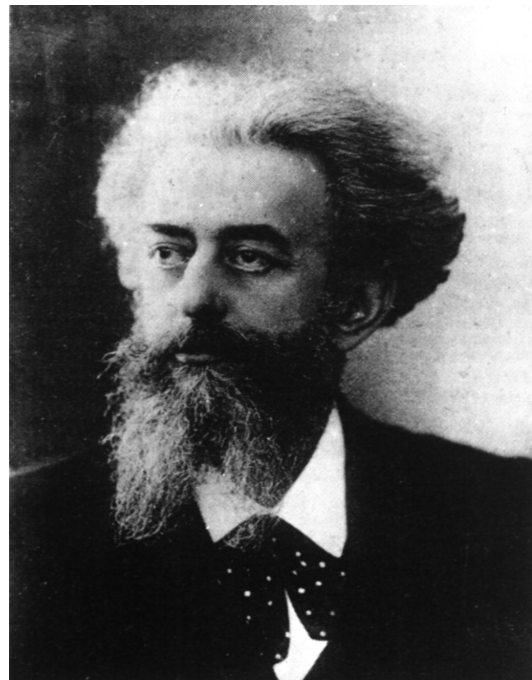


Events seem to have come to a head at this time. Many occultists then living in Paris were members of the Theosophical Society, but they remained disappointed by its excessively Eastern teachings. Included among them was Gérard Encausse (1865-1916), better known as Papus. As a student of medicine he had the opportunity to work with Dr. Jules Luys, who had done some research in hypnosis at La Charité Hospital in Paris. It was there that he met Augustin Chaboseau (1868-1946), with whom he soon reorganized the Martinist Order. In 1888, after the death of its president, Louis Dramart, the French division of the Theosophical Society fragmented. He published his *Traité élémentaire de science occulte* (Elementary Treatise on Occultism; 1888), a book with which he wanted to restore Western esotericism and to put occultism on an equal basis with subjects taught in the universities.

Afterwards, in September 1889, Pierre-Gaëtan Leymarie (1817-1901), who directed the spiritist movement since the death of Allan Kardec, organized an international spiritist and spiritualistic congress in which Papus, F.-Ch. Barlet, Augustin Chaboseau, and Chamuel participated. This important event allowed occultists to free themselves from the Theosophical movement, especially as the journal *L'Initiation*, launched by Papus and his friends in October 1888, began to experience some success. Seeking to place itself under the auspices of a secular tradition, the occultists attempted to make Rosicrucianism and Martinism the pillars of a new temple that they wished to erect. Joséphin Péladan and Stanislas de Guaita were associated with this project, and at the time when the Rose-Croix was ebbing away in Toulouse, they made the decision to restore it. "The ancient order of the Rose-Croix being on the point of going dormant, three years ago [the author wrote in 1890], when two direct heirs of

its august traditions resolved to restore it by consolidating it on new foundations ... and now life cycles throughout the mystical body of the rejuvenated colossus."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, moving from Toulouse to Paris (1887-1888), the restored Rose-Croix became the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix. This order was directed by a supreme council of twelve members, of whom six remained unknown, their role consisting of rebuilding the organization if it were to be dissolved for any reason whatsoever. Among those who were members of the "Council of Twelve" at one time or another, let us mention Stanislas de Guaita, Joséphin Péladan, Papus, A. Gabrol, Henry Thorion, F.-Ch. Barlet, Augustin Chaboseau, Victor-Émile Michelet, Sédir, and Marc Haven. The order was structured around a hierarchy of three degrees acquired by examination (Bachelor of Kabbalah, Master of Kabbalah, Doctor of Kabbalah), and entry



Joséphin Péladan.

into the order was reserved to Martinists having achieved the S.I. degree.

### The Rose-Croix of the Temple and the Grail

Thanks to the journal *L'Initiation*, the order became well known, and before long a troop of eager occultists came knocking at the temple door. Stanislas de Guaita, who lived like a hermit in his first floor apartment on Trudaine Avenue, allowed Papus to organize matters. But the capricious personality of an artist such as Joséphin Péladan was hardly suited for associating with such a strong-willed organizer as Papus. The latter wanted to open up the order and broaden it. In contrast, Joséphin Péladan wanted to reserve access to carefully selected initiates and was not at all in accord with the Masonic aspect that Papus wanted to impose upon the order. The positions of these two men were reconciled only with difficulty, especially as Joséphin Péladan

reproached Papus for his taste in occultism and magic. Along with Abbé Alta, one of the eminent members of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix, Joséphin reproached Papus for confusing occultism and esotericism. On February 17, 1891, Péladan wrote a letter to Papus, published in the April issue of the journal *L'Initiation*, that severed their relationship.

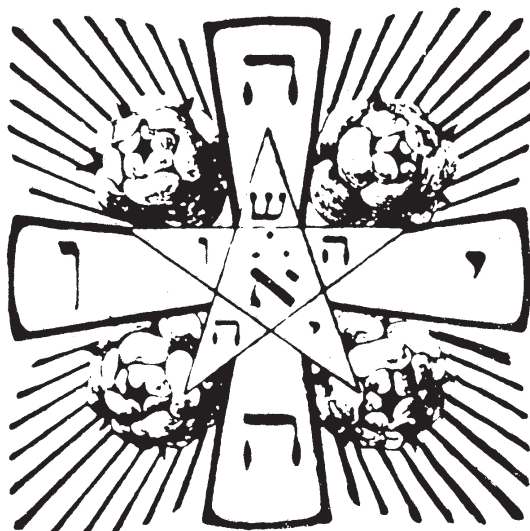
Heir to a tradition that he felt was on the verge of losing its mission, Péladan decided to work along different lines and thus founded in May 1891 the Order of the Rose-Croix du Temple et du Graal (also called the Order of the Rose-Croix Catholique du Temple et du Graal), which he had already outlined in *Le Vice suprême*, his first novel, in 1884. In June 1891, he designated himself as the Grand Master of this new order, using the name of Sâr Mérodack Péladan. This event was given considerable space in many articles for *Le Figaro*, and this great publicity profoundly irritated Papus and his friends who denounced Péladan's split.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. *Lettres inédites de Stanislas de Guaita au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, edited by Édouard Bertholet and Émile Dantinne (Neuchatel: Éditions rosicruciennes, 1952).
  2. Stanislas de Guaita, "Au seuil du mystère," *Essais de sciences maudites* (Paris: Geroges Carré, 1890) p. 158.
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Symbol of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix.

