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ROUTLEDGE

The Order of the Solar Temple

The Temple of Death



Edited by
JAMES R. LEWIS

THE ORDER OF THE SOLAR TEMPLE

In October 1994, fifty-three members of the Order of the Solar Temple in Switzerland and Québec were murdered or committed suicide. This incident and two later group suicides in subsequent years played a pivotal role in inflaming the cult controversy in Europe, influencing the public to support harsher actions against non-traditional religions.

Despite the importance of the Order of the Solar Temple, there are relatively few studies published in English. This book brings together the best scholarship on the Solar Temple including newly commissioned pieces from leading scholars, a selection of Solar Temple documents, and important previously published articles newly edited for inclusion within this book. This is the first book-length study of the Order of the Solar Temple to be published in English.

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The Order of the Solar Temple

The Temple of Death

Edited by

JAMES R. LEWIS

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List of Abbreviations

ADFI	L'Association pour la Defense des Familles et de l'Individu
AEIMR	L'Association d'Etude et d'Information sur les Mouvements Religieux
AMORC	Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis
ARC	Alliance Rose Croix/Association for Cultural Research
ARCHS	L'Académie de Recherche et Connaissance des Hautes Sciences
CAN	Cult Awareness Network
CESNUR	Centro Studi Sulle Nuove Religioni (Turin)
CINR	Centre d'Information sur les Nouvelles Religions (Montreal)
ETEC	Etudes Techniques et Commerciales
KVMRIS	Ordre Kabbalistic du Rose-Croix
NMM	new magical movement
NRM	new religious movement
OICST	International Order of Chivalry Solar Tradition
ONT	Ordo Novi Templi (Order of the New Templars)
ORT	Renewed Order of the Temple
OSMTJ	Sovereign and Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
OSTS	Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple
OTO	Ordo Templi Orientis
OTS	Ordre du Temple Solaire
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SAC	Service d'Action Civique
SQ	Sûreté du Québec

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Introduction

James R. Lewis

In October 1994, 53 members of the Order of the Solar Temple (l'Ordre du Temple Solaire, or OTS) in Switzerland and Quebec, Canada, were murdered or committed suicide. On 4 October, a fire destroyed a villa in Morin Heights, Canada, belonging to Joseph Di Mambro, the group's leader. Police found five charred bodies in the ruins. Three had been stabbed to death before the fire. At 1:00 a.m. on 5 October, a fire started in Ferme des Rochettes, near Cheiry, in the canton of Fribourg, one of the centers of the Solar Temple in Switzerland. Police found 23 bodies in a room that had been converted into a temple. Some had been shot; many others were found with their heads inside plastic bags. At 3:00 a.m. on the same day, three chalets inhabited by members of the Solar Temple caught fire almost simultaneously at Les Granges-sur-Salvan, in the Swiss Valais canton. Here police found 25 bodies, along with the remains of the devices that had initiated the fires as well as the pistol used in the Ferme des Rochettes shootings.

For many months prior to this initial spate of murder-suicides, rumors of financial mismanagement had been circulating among Solar Temple members. On 30 September, shortly before the group's dramatic final "transit," a three-month-old infant was killed at their Canadian site by a wooden stake driven through its heart. The parents, who were ex-members of the Temple, were also brutally murdered. Surviving members explained that Joseph Di Mambro had ordered the killing because the baby was the Antichrist. Several days later, Di Mambro and 12 followers convened a ritual Last Supper together. The murder-suicides took place not long after this meeting. Fifteen members of the inner circle—referred to as the "awakened"—took poison; 30 others—the "immortals"—were shot or smothered to death; while another eight, termed "traitors," were also murdered.

The plan seems to have been for the fire to more or less completely destroy everything in the Swiss centers. This would have compelled investigators to focus on the group's self-interpretation of their actions—a self-interpretation embodied in four letters, or "Testaments," that were sent to 60 journalists, scholars, and government officials. However, because the incendiary devices at the main center in the Cheiry farmhouse failed to ignite, many documents and other artifacts remained intact. One of the Testaments, addressed "To All Those Who Can Still Understand the Voice of Wisdom," issued a call for other Solar Temple sympathizers to follow their example:

[F]rom the Planes where we will work from now on and by a just law of magnetism, we will be in the position of calling back the last Servants capable of hearing this last message ... may our Love and our Peace accompany you during the terrible tests of the Apocalypse that await you. Know that from where we will be, we will always hold our arms open to

receive those who are worthy of joining us. [See Appendix 1 for the complete text of the Testaments.]

This invitation from the Temple members to join them in the beyond found a receptive audience. On 16 December 1995, 16 of the remaining European members disappeared from their homes in France and Switzerland. Four left notes hinting at a second mass suicide. Thirteen adults and three children were later found dead in a remote forest in southeast France. Investigators concluded that at least four of them did not die willingly. Most had been drugged. Two of the 16 had shot the others, poured gasoline over their bodies, set them on fire, and then shot themselves so that they would fall into the flames. Finally, five additional adult members and three teenage children apparently tried to commit suicide on the spring equinox of 20 March 1997, in Quebec. The attempt failed due to faulty equipment. The teenage sons and daughter of one of the couples convinced their parents that they wanted to live. They were then allowed to leave, and the adults subsequently succeeded in burning down the house with themselves in it. Four of the bodies were arranged to form a cross. The teens were found drugged and disoriented, but otherwise safe, in a nearby building. A note was found describing the group's belief that death on earth leads to a transit to a new planet where their lives would continue.

The Solar Temple tragedies played a pivotal role in inflaming the cult controversy in Europe. Although European anticultists had been active for decades, the spectacle of the murder-suicides influenced public opinion to support harsher actions against new religious movements (NRMs). Interestingly, this came at around the same time that the North American anticult movement suffered a severe setback as a consequence of the bankruptcy of the Cult Awareness Network (Melton 1999: 229). The Solar Temple incidents were directly responsible for prompting European governments to begin issuing official reports on the dangers posed by nontraditional religions (Introvigne 2004: 207) and, particularly in France and Belgium, a growing campaign emerged to "combat" alternative religions (Hervieu-Léger 2004: 49; Palmer 2004: 65; Lucas 2004: 346). The incidents also helped bolster the North American anticult movement, which supplied consultants for European governments, as well as the mind control ideology that became a central element of European reports and subsequent legislation (Shupe et al. 2004: 198).

Neo-Templarism

The Solar Temple's founder, Joseph Di Mambro, had sampled a variety of esoteric groups, including the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC). In the 1960s, he came into contact with several persons who would later play a role in Solar Temple history, including Jacques Breyer, who had initiated a "Templar resurgence" in France in 1952. Several groups, including the Order of the Solar Temple, have their roots in Breyer's work.

"Templar" in this context refers to the Knights Templar, the medieval order to which groups in the neo-Templar tradition ultimately trace their lineage. (This

claimed lineage is spurious; instead, neo-Templar groups are esoteric organizations in the theosophical tradition.) A wealthy, powerful order, the Knights Templar had inspired envy among European rulers. As a consequence, in 1307 the Templars were accused (probably falsely) of heresy and arrested en masse. In 1310, 54 knights who had recanted earlier confessions were burned alive at the stake. And four years later, the Grand Master of the order and a provincial leader were similarly burned alive. The fires set or attempted by Solar Temple members during all the murder-suicide incidents recounted above seem to have been inspired by the fiery deaths of the original Templars. Some observers (for example Introvigne, in this volume) have noted that the 53 OTS deaths in October 1994 almost certainly represented an attempt to mimic the 54 original Templar deaths. However, this attempt was frustrated by the last-minute escape of Thierry Huguenin, a Swiss dentist and ex-member who had “sensed trouble at Granges-sur-Salvan and fled” before he could be murdered (Harriss 1997).

Though a secretive organization, the original Knights Templar were almost certainly Orthodox Christians. However, their secrecy—in combination with the charges of heresy leveled against them in the fourteenth century—provided fertile grounds for speculation, allowing later esotericists to hypothesize that the order was secretly an esoteric-magical group. This line of speculation—bolstered by the unlikely claim that the order secretly survived into modern times—underlies contemporary neo-Templarism.

Massimo Introvigne, a scholar of the western magical milieu (Introvigne 1990), observes that most modern neo-Templar groups trace their origin to the Order of the Temple founded in 1805 by Bernard-Raymond Fabr e-Palapat. “This French physician and Freemason claimed to represent an uninterrupted succession of Templar ‘Grand Masters’ operating secretly since the suppression of the medieval Order in the fourteenth century” (Introvigne 2000: 140). It was this tradition that Breyer revived in the mid-twentieth century. It is interesting to note that the same neo-Templar tradition that attracted the founders of the Solar Temple informs the fictional Templarism found in Dan Brown’s bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003).

Overview

Despite the obvious importance of the Solar Temple, there have been relatively few scholarly studies of this group. The present collection brings together some of the best research on the Solar Temple—a selection of articles previously published in English, translations of French articles, a set of original papers, and a selection of Solar Temple documents—to produce the first book-length study of the group in English.

The first five reprinted articles appear in the order in which they were originally published. Jean-Fran ois Mayer’s “Templars for the Age of Aquarius: The Archedia Clubs (1984–1991) and the International Chivalric Order of the Solar Tradition,”

which appeared in French in 1993, was the only academic treatment of the Solar Temple before the first tragedy in 1994. It is translated here into English for the first time.

Massimo Introvigne's "Ordeal by Fire: The Tragedy of the Solar Temple" was one of the first scholarly articles to appear in the wake of the initial Solar Temple incident. In addition to providing an overview of the murder-suicides, Introvigne places the OTS in the context of contemporary occult-esoteric movements, particularly the neo-Templar tradition.

In "Purity and Danger in the Solar Temple," Susan Palmer explores the Solar Temple within the framework of Mary Douglas's thinking about pollution fears and purity rituals. Palmer views this aspect of the OTS as an important factor in the murder-suicides, suggesting that "the magical aspect of the mass suicide expressed a concern for purity and for protecting the boundaries of their community."

John R. Hall's and Philip Schuyler's "The Mystical Apocalypse of the Solar Temple" is a reprint of the fifth chapter of Hall et al.'s *Apocalypse Observed*. To date, this overview is probably the most comprehensive account of the Order of the Solar Temple and the murder-suicides available in English. Readers with little or no background knowledge of the OTS might best be served if they begin with this chapter.

Jean-François Mayer's "The Dangers of Enlightenment: Apocalyptic Hopes and Anxieties in the Order of the Solar Temple"—originally presented at a conference in 1999—provides an overview of some of the apocalyptic beliefs of the Solar Temple. Mayer is also concerned to draw lessons from this case that might be applied to other, potentially violent apocalyptic groups.

In "Crises of Charismatic Authority and Millenarian Violence: The Case of the Order of the Solar Temple," John Walliss points out that, despite their vision of a planetary apocalypse, the Solar Temple's message was nevertheless optimistic. In the early days, OTS leaders not only believed they would survive, but also believed that they themselves would serve a role in the transition to the Aquarian Age. Walliss argues that this ideology of survival eventually gave way to one of death as a consequence of a series of crises in the group's charismatic authority.

In "Sources of Doctrine in the Solar Temple," George D. Chryssides discusses how the Solar Temple's worldview played a significant role in the events that led to the group's demise. He argues that there is a clearly identifiable worldview associated with the Order of the Solar Temple, and that the group's intellectual and spiritual pedigree can help to explain the notorious collective deaths of 1994, 1995, and 1997.

Henrik Bogdan's "Death as Initiation: Order of the Solar Temple and Rituals of Initiation" surveys Western esotericism and Masonic initiatory societies, focusing on the notion of death. Bogdan then examines the Solar Temple's initiatory system and analyzes a number of rituals. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the suicides in relation to Western esotericism and rituals of initiation, suggesting that these factors might provide us with a partial key for explaining the OTS murder-suicides.

In “The Ordre du Temple Solaire and the Quest for the Absolute Sun,” Marc Labelle begins by noting that many contemporary religious movements are preoccupied with the eschatological significance of the nuclear menace. He then discusses how the Solar Temple’s ideology was grounded in the desire to respond to—and, ultimately, escape from—nuclear and ecological disaster. This response was focused on a transformation of the human species. In his analysis, LaBelle draws on a variety of theorists, from Eliade to Freud.

Roland J. Campiche’s “Sects, Media and End of the World” is essentially a condensation of his 1995 book *Quand les sectes affolent: Ordre du Temple Solaire, medias et fin de millénaire*, which focuses on the representation of the OTS tragedy in the French-speaking media. Campiche is especially concerned with how the characteristic discourse of the modern mass media inevitably interprets religious organizations—especially groups like the Solar Temple—in non-religious terms.

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Chapter 1

Templars for the Age of Aquarius: The Archedia Clubs (1984–1991) and the International Chivalric Order of the Solar Tradition

Jean-François Mayer

Foreword (2005)

Before the 1994 “transit” of the Solar Temple made headlines across the world, few scholars were even aware of the existence of this small group. The following article was originally published in the January 1993 issue (no. 153) of the French newsletter *Mouvements Religieux*. Insofar as I know, it is the only research article ever published on the group before it became infamous. For this reason, it can be considered as historical material. Consequently, it has been translated into English for this volume without any changes, updates, or corrections. Of course, we know much more today about the group. Moreover, the article had not used all the information that I had already gathered at the time, and focused primarily on the person of Luc Jouret and his work as a representative case of the way the “cultic milieu” operated. The article was part of a wider research project on the history and sociology of alternative religions in Switzerland; the full results of that project were published in the form of a 400-page book, *Les Nouvelles Voies spirituelles. Enquête sur la religiosité parallèle en Suisse* (Lausanne, 1993).

Sometimes, the article was unknowingly premonitory—for instance when it claimed that the group would “draw researchers’ attention again one day,” although certainly not in the way the author had expected! The following article, published for the first time in English in this volume, provides an insight into the way the Solar Temple could be seen from outside before it became tragically famous.

As one will notice, the expression “Solar Temple” itself never appears. This reminds us that the group used several names (consecutively as well as simultaneously) over the years and launched several, partly overlapping structures, as can already be seen in several passages of this article. “Solar Temple”, however, became a convenient general label following the 1994 events. This paper covers what could have been described as the “exoteric” work of the organization in the late 1980s.

In contrast, most of the later articles on the Solar Temple have focused on its inner circle.

Original Foreword (1993)

As part of a large-scale study on new religious movements in Switzerland under the auspices of the Swiss National Foundation for Scientific Research (PNR 21), in 1987 we approached the Archedia Clubs active at the time in several cities of French-speaking Switzerland and France. In the fall of 1987, the “International Association of Sciences & Tradition Archedia Clubs” counted more than 350 members worldwide. The Archedia Clubs’ activities ceased during the summer of 1991. However, the movement embodied by the Archedia Clubs has not disappeared and could, in other forms, draw researchers’ attention again one day. The following case study is therefore intended as both a contribution to research on trends in contemporary alternative religiosity and an analysis of one stage in the history of a movement.

1. Observing and Participating in a Club

On 18 March 1987, homeopathic doctor Luc Jouret gave a lecture on the topic of “Love and Biology” in Lausanne (Switzerland) for “Archedia—Sciences and Tradition”. “In all existing forms, from the smallest to the largest, from the electron to the galaxy, we are witnessing a phenomenon of attraction,” read the flyer. “Can we speak ... of an awareness underlying all things that drives us to regain our original unity?” The hundreds of people from Lausanne and beyond pressing their way into the room were undoubtedly expecting answers to these questions.

A talented speaker, Luc Jouret knows how to captivate his audiences. He projects dynamism and youthfulness; he speaks in a friendly voice and does not use notes. The fact that he is a doctor also adds to his aura. However, his lecture soon strays from medicine and onto other topics. The main thread in his discussion is that humanity is on the cusp of the Age of Aquarius; religions will still exist in this new age, but will be “called to transform themselves in a unitary vision.” Luc Jouret discusses healthy eating (the majority of diseases are caused by not eating properly) as well as apocalyptic topics (forests are dying, volcanoes will erupt, and so on). He thus seems to possess both scientific knowledge and traditional wisdom.

At the conference exit, members of the Lausanne Archedia Club handed out flyers advertising an informational meeting about this group and its activities. I sent in my registration form and attended the 15 April information session in a rented room at a cultural center. The president of the local club began by explaining to the small audience that the Archedia approach was based on one fact: humanity was heading toward an impasse. Yet people can change the world only by changing themselves, and such was precisely the goal of the Archedia Clubs: “Everyone participates in the healing of the world at his or her own level.” He continued to explain that, as far as practical considerations were concerned, each club was managed by seven members

and concentrated on a particular theme—food was Lausanne’s. A plenary meeting was held once a month. Since Archedia International was in fact an international association, it supervised the local clubs and ensured that the Charter and club ethics were respected. Moreover, he said, a more interior and spiritual work existed; it was founded on the “Solar Tradition.” In addition to the “Exterior Relations Commissioner” (who was French), a Solar Tradition representative who had traveled from Geneva was also present at the meeting. During the question and answer session we learned that these spiritual teachings fall within a Templar tradition.

The Lausanne Club, founded three years earlier, counted 12 members at the time. The membership fees came to 142 Swiss francs per quarter, 105 of which went to Archedia International. The few newcomers present that evening were not asked to join the group immediately. Rather, the Archedia Clubs offered an “observer” membership as a first step; this permitted one to participate in activities without commitment (for three or six months, depending on the club) before making an informed decision. Of course, to respect certain thresholds in the progression, those with this temporary status were not allowed to participate in activities of the Solar Tradition branch (to which not all members of the clubs belonged, in any case). However, a three- to four-month preparatory course for entrance into the spiritual group was available.

This commitment-free trial period allowed contact to be maintained easily. On 6 May 1987, I was thus able to attend the monthly plenary meeting of the Lausanne Archedia Club. The meeting followed a precise order. In fact, that evening the club was inducting a new member. A vase containing a rose was placed on a table, and the new member read an “engagement of honor” aloud, promising to respect the ethics of the club and to work toward its growth.

There were about fifteen people present, including three “observer members.” The main topic of discussion was the first international convention of the Archedia Clubs, which had taken place in Tours in April. The results of Dr Jouret’s March conference in Lausanne were also discussed. Because of the large audience, they had tried to launch a variety of activities; but in light of the small number of “observer members” it seemed that the predictions had been too optimistic. We later learned that out of the 618 people present on 18 March, one member and five observer members joined two months later. The uncircumscribed nature of alternative religiosity makes it quite open to anything offered in the realm of the spiritual, but it does not lend itself to taking firm root: this was once again proven by the disproportionate number of enthusiastic audience members at Dr Jouret’s conference versus the number of those actually interested in joining the Archedia Clubs.

On 21 May 1987, another kind of event took place in Lausanne: an “inter-club” meeting for the clubs of the Lake Geneva region (French-speaking Switzerland and neighboring areas in France). Sixty to 70 people had traveled there to attend. The discussion focused mainly on exterior relations. Two main concerns were raised: communicating a *unified* image of the clubs and projecting an impression of *professionalism* to the outside world.

On 18 June 1987, the Lausanne Club organized a new information session. Of the 19 people present, nine were non-members. Several of the main topics of discussion from the 15 April session were picked up again, though in slightly different forms. At the 1 July 1987 club meeting, this information session was judged a success, even if it had resulted in only one observer member joining. However, it was noted in the minutes that, in order to meet the expectations of audience members, “it is necessary to further develop [the way we explain] the history of the club and what is really behind it.” The public is clearly interested in more than just the workshops on food—their curiosity is “above all piqued by the increasingly spiritual nature of Dr Jouret’s lectures,” as the president of the Lausanne Club explained at the 23 May “interclub” meeting.

On 27 June 1987, near Bonneville (the headquarters of one of the clubs), we attended the festival of St John along with the members of that region’s clubs. The event took place in a prairie, with a pole in the middle to mark the location of the bonfire—this spot had not been chosen at random, but according to cosmoteluric considerations. We made our way to the large circle, following a path marked by stakes to which ribbons had been attached. We were told that we should move within the circle only in the clockwise direction. A lot of attention had been given to the details: the harmonious arrangement of the buffet tables for example, as well as the trays of aesthetically pleasing food (freshly picked organic vegetables).

There was a friendly and relaxed atmosphere among the eighty or so adult and several dozen children and adolescents who attended this event. When it came time for the ceremony, everyone formed a circle around the pole, the symbolic representation of the earth’s axis. The lighting of the fire followed a precise order: seven people each brought a bundle of a different type of wood and read a short text summarizing the essential symbolic aspects of their wood before placing it on the pyre. The wood was then simultaneously set on fire by the club presidents in attendance. Chanting and dancing around the fire followed. All of this, combined with the nighttime and the magic of the fire, contributed to a very warm and sociable feeling. A certain number of people remained there until dawn to watch the sunrise, according to the ancient custom.

After these two months of attending Archedia Club events, it was already possible to summarize a few observations:

- a) *Triple structure in the movement’s activities*: at the Archedian conference in Tours the need to pursue “Operation Pelican” was stressed. This involved setting up a (Solar Tradition) lodge for each club in the near future. The triple structure was observable in:
 1. *External activity*: conferences, intended for large audiences attracted by Luc Jouret, and generally organized by Amenta (the name Amenta Club had been used by the group which had assembled around Luc Jouret before the Archedia Clubs were founded in 1984.)

2. *“Internal-exoteric” activity*: the Archedia Clubs proper, that had come into being in Geneva in 1984. According to Archedia leaders,

A group of men with different backgrounds and complementary abilities, aware of the deterioration of the world and the disappearance of traditional values, decided to gather together sincere men and women who were sensitive to the same concerns. At first existing in the form of experimental groups (Sciences & Tradition), they very quickly organized themselves into Clubs and, powered by their success and the desire to pursue further research into spirituality, the Solar Tradition Branch was born.

3. *“Internal-esoteric” activity*: the International Chivalric Order of the Solar Tradition, which was also created in 1984.

- b) *Structure already in place for a movement of much larger dimensions*: the number of activities led by the handful of Lausanne members was striking. What is more, it all took place in a very structured context, each activity being recorded in minutes, reports, etc. The text of the “Universal Charter of the Sciences & Tradition Archedia Clubs,” the “International Constitution of the International Association of Sciences and Tradition Archedia Clubs” and the “Rules for Application” of the latter confirmed this first impression: there were precise and detailed rules, projects organized geographically by “sector,” “region” and “country”: from the start, the founders of the movement had thought big, intending to progressively develop it into a large-scale organization.
- c) *Emphasis on practical activities in the Archedia Clubs*: anyone expecting long spiritual meditation sessions would have been rather surprised by the Lausanne Club’s activities. Its members placed a lot of importance on nutrition and organized cooking classes, workshops, etc. Although the Club had given up the idea of opening a vegetarian restaurant (too much of a commitment compared with the number of people willing to help out), one member was managing a health-food store in the heights of Lausanne. It had been created as a cooperative with the very active support of club members. This “practical” side was an explicit goal of the movement: “We are original in that we spread a Science of Concrete Life in the form of an initiatory spiritual teaching which can be applied to the Clubs’ practical projects (health, nutrition, education, cultural performances, etc.)” In fact, many spiritual seekers belong to esoteric organizations and apply different techniques, but in the end, very few change “in their everyday lives, their state of awareness and at the level of their being.” They discover new “ideas,” but “all these aspects ... remain at the level of their ‘heads’—they neither enter their ‘hearts’ nor are ‘integrated’ in their lives” (Roche de Coppens 1986: 4).

- d) *Social side of club life*: the club members working together to open a health-food store provides a glimpse of a level of social interaction going beyond simply belonging to a cultural club. Each new member, in principle, had a sponsor; this further reinforced personal connections. One of the advantages of Archedia Club membership given at the 18 June informational meeting was the fact that a traveling member would no longer have to stay in hotels but could be accommodated by other members.

At the end of June I decided to reveal the reasons for my participation to the club leaders I had met. This approach was well received and gave me the opportunity for even greater access, including the chance for a long private interview with Dr Jouret in December 1987. Of course, my sources have not been limited to the information coming from the Archedia Clubs themselves. I met some (occasionally very critical) outsiders who had followed certain stages in the development of the movement or Dr Jouret's activities. I also met at least one former member. Nevertheless, it is difficult to reconstitute the early history of the Archedia Clubs. Much of the data is vague, even contradictory, from one informant to another, and I do not claim that the following information is complete: I will gratefully accept any corrections.

2. The Archedian World and its History

If my information is correct, the Archedian movement has its origins in both a series of Geneva-area spiritual groups and an attempt to recreate the Order of the Temple. In Saconnex d'Arve, in Geneva, there was a very attractive conference center called the Golden Way Foundation. When Luc Jouret arrived in Geneva in the early 1980s he was invited there to give several lectures for the Foundation (he had begun a career as a professional speaker in Belgium two years before). In 1983, Jouret spoke there for the Amenta Club (cf. *La Suisse* newspaper, 11 March 1983). Apparently, this club was international from the beginning, since that same year it also listed an address in Quebec, where Dr Jouret would also lecture. (During my field investigation in 1987, I several times heard mention of a farm established by the movement in Canada. Swiss members would occasionally travel there to work.) In 1984, there were Amenta Clubs in Brittany, Angers and elsewhere. The Archedia Clubs seem to have been created that same year, but it is clear that they grew from a foundation that was already well developed even before Dr Jouret came onto the scene.

The International Chivalric Order of the Solar Temple was also born in 1984. It was the fruit of the 1952 attempt to bring about the resurgence of the Order of the Temple in France; it began its present phase of activities at a meeting held in Switzerland on 21 March 1981 (cf. Delaforge 1987: 136–7). The date of 1952 is significant if one takes into account that the Archedia Clubs willingly circulated

writings and cassettes by Jacques Breyer, whose work was frequently alluded to. Jacques Breyer then lived in Arginy Castle (in Rhône) and belonged to the group at the origins of the foundation of the Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple (founded 12 June 1952), although he left it in 1964 (cf. Bayard 1989: 43). Undoubtedly this is where the 1952 Order of the Temple resurgence efforts (to which the International Chivalric Order of the Solar Temple alluded) had taken place—the “solar” reference confirms this impression. Breyer is the author of a rather difficult work; his main book, *Arcanes solaires; ou les secrets du Temple Solaire*,¹ was published in 1959 (cf. *Destin*, March 1960, p. 1665). We also find an echo of his work in the journal *La Voix Solaire*² (founded in 1961), which often featured Jacques Breyer’s articles, all written in his very particular and rather hermetic style.

The Renovated Order of the Temple—founded in 1968 with Julien Origas at its head—would follow in the tradition of the Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple and AMORC.³ (It is interesting to note that, according to Luc Jouret himself, several members of the Solar Tradition had come from AMORC.) Luc Jouret was said to have met Origas (who had also been to the Golden Way Foundation) for the first time in a restaurant in Geneva. Jouret briefly succeeded Origas as head of the Renovated Order of the Temple after the latter’s death, but the hostility of some members soon forced him to resign. As in any conflict of this kind, severe accusations were made on both sides. In 1983 Luc Jouret joined the Renovated Order of the Temple, which was dissolved in the autumn of 1984. Its members received the first four issues of *Excalibur*, a journal being put out by Amenta at the time (it stopped publication in the summer of 1987).

Clearly, the origins of the Archedian activities had a background that was much more complicated than Dr Jouret’s audiences could imagine. Especially striking is the interaction between the different groups. But it can be said that their core group, as it appeared in 1987, was composed mainly of:

- a) ex-members of the Renovated Order of the Temple;
- b) patients of Luc Jouret (from his homeopathic practice in Annemasse);
- c) people who had been to Luc Jouret’s lectures.

Because of the large role played by Luc Jouret, one must examine his approach and message, such as they could be observed in 1987. I will deliberately emphasize in the following section the “spiritual” aspects of his approach, without attempting to cover the entirety of his discourse.

1 *Solar Mysteries or the Secrets of the Solar Temple*. After 1995 new evidence surfaced. The author today is certainly less persuaded that secret services really had a significant role in the event. For the author’s (so far) final conclusions about what happened see Introvigne and Mayer 2002.

2 *The Solar Voice*.

3 The Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis.

3. Dr Luc Jouret's message

A Belgian citizen, Luc Jouret was born in Africa on 18 October 1947. He studied medicine at the Free University of Brussels, earning his doctorate in 1974. He then practiced general medicine for three years. After this, dissatisfied by traditional medicine, he began a “personal quest through all medical practices and made many trips all over the world,” synthesizing the practices into a medicine that “treats man in his totality.” One learned from Luc Jouret's speeches that he lived in the Philippines from 1976 to 1977 and that he worked there with two or three well-known healers, acting “at the level of the energetic bodies of his patients.” In the second of a series of interviews broadcast in 1987 on Yvette Rielle's program *L'Eternel Présent*⁴ (Radio Suisse Romande), Luc Jouret declared “for me, the Philippines was an environment to learn my profession,” and that it was an experience that led him to “return to the West to accept my evolution.” He said his travels were the chance for him “to integrate different human components.” But Luc Jouret's experiences were not only medical in nature, he said: although his was a “non-religious education” and a “difficult youth”, he had had spiritual experiences at certain times:

There were some transcendent experiences in my life, some experiences that made me directly experience a superior aspect of man—to which I had previously been blind ... (*L'Eternel Présent*, 1987, 1st episode)

Dr Jouret acknowledges having been curious, having done multiple experiments, having gone to investigate many groups. He says, however, that he had not read much in the field of spiritualism. But, in his mind, the homeopathic approach necessarily had to lead to other dimensions, he explained during the private interview I conducted with him in December 1987. “Perhaps medicine needs to have a dimension that is—why not?—sacerdotal” (Conference of 5–6 October 1987 in Lausanne).

in all great civilizations we notice that doctors were always priests and vice-versa ... I am convinced...that a doctor who is not concerned with reintegrating himself into a dimension in which the spiritual is more important than the physical cannot understand his patient as such. And this is rather the tragedy of medicine today, not to denigrate its authentic value concerning what it has allowed as far as transformation of man, but it nevertheless still leads to a dead end ... because it refuses to integrate the spiritual man into the physical man, even though the spiritual has conditioned the physical (*L'Eternel Présent*, 4th episode)

The union of therapeutic and sacerdotal is key to understanding the philosophy that attracted Luc Jouret and several other doctors who ended up taking on the role of “spiritual guide” (even if they do not always define their work in these terms). The simple fact of being a doctor confers an aura of credibility. And, particularly if the doctor insists on a “holistic” approach or integrates spiritual considerations into his work, he can easily find himself slipping into a role similar to one that, in the

4 *The Eternal Present*, broadcast on Channel 2 of the Swiss National Radio.

past, a priest would have played for his congregation. This can happen even more easily when the doctor is already supposed to hold the answers to physical or even psychological problems: if he goes on to address other fundamental questions it is only a shifting or extension of his competence.

It is ... a common observation in the literature about social influence and decision-making that relatively high-status, especially when based on technical expertise, can easily be used to gain deference in areas beyond the scope of actual competence. (Ofshe 1986: 186)

In this particular case, the “sacerdotal” dimension that Luc Jouret insists upon perhaps manifests itself more concretely because, according to one participant, there are liturgical celebrations within the Templar branch, at least some of which include an “Essene rite.” On this subject, it is interesting to note that an “Essene rite” was already being practiced in the Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple (cf. Plume and Pasquini 1980: 338), the group that had resulted from the 1952 resurgence.

Although Dr Jouret claims to be “one of the representatives [of the Temple resurgence] in the secular world” (Geneva, 13 October 1987) and that he is guided by Templar superiors (interview of 15 December 1987), he does not present himself as an initiate, but as a person mandated to take care of work in a precise sector. However, at the seminars he hosts, Jouret clearly brings his audience to believe that they belong to a small chosen circle, and that they can understand the meaning of events and world changes: no one is here by chance; the people present have come because they are ready to understand certain things. I met people at seminars in Switzerland who had come from Belgium, Nice, and Brittany simply to hear Jouret speak for one or two evenings.

Like many others, the message propagated by Luc Jouret is intimately tied to the conviction that we are entering the Age of Aquarius: each astrological era is marked by a totally different rate of vibration; at the beginning of the Age of Aquarius we can no longer live with laws from two thousand years ago, a time when no scientific contributions had yet been made (Geneva, 5 October 1987). “If we do not consider tradition in light of scientific facts, it is useless; nothing can be learned from it. By the same token, if science does not incorporate tradition into its facts, it too is useless” (*L’Eternel Présent*, 3rd episode). We live in a period of fundamental transmutation: “We are in the reign of fire, everything is being burned” (Geneva, 13 October 1987). Gigantic upheaval is on the way, “we are making a leap into what I call macro evolution” (*L’Eternel Présent*, 3rd episode). Luc Jouret feels that humanity is currently in a very sad state; that it “has completely slipped” (*L’Eternel Présent*, 5th episode). Humanity’s brutishness is all the more tragic as it is occurring at the moment in evolution when new abilities can awaken, when man should transform himself and make a leap:

Our brains will undergo modifications, physical in the second phase, but certainly subtle and vibratory at first, which will cause man (the ones who are able) to react completely, and in a different way to events. (*L’Eternel Présent*, 2nd episode)

For, despite all humanity's deviations, "the worlds' energetic contingencies are such that there is hope that a group of men and women will rise up to live the experience" (*L'Eternel Présent*, 2nd episode). In two lectures (in October 1987) on the topic "Templar tradition and the modern world," Luc Jouret explained the nature and function of the Temple in a little more detail: it is the manifestation of a celestial archetype among men and will bring together men and women who are marked with the celestial seal and are willing to serve. Templars reappear during each phase of humanity's development. The Temple is at the origin of all the great currents of awareness—even religious movements and Masonry.

What then is the attitude toward religions? The tragedy of faith, Luc Jouret says, is that it isolates the Creator from His Creation, that it sees a God outside of us, even though according to mystic vision, "the Creator is fused with His Creation" (Lausanne, 5 October 1987). "... the essence of God is what makes things evolve ..." (*L'Eternel Présent*, 4th episode). Or, in other words: "My notion of God is that He is the essence of what makes all things happen" (Lausanne, 5 October 1987); "God cannot be defined in terms other than movement and evolution" (Lausanne, 6 October 1987).

Luc Jouret makes frequent reference to Christ, as he does to Christianity in general: he has given talks on the Apocalypse (Lausanne, October 1987) and "Parables throughout the Gospels" (Geneva, November 1991). But it is clear that Luc Jouret's interpretation is rather different from that of the Churches. Christ is presented as an initiate, as "a solar entity" (*L'Eternel Présent*, 5th episode). "All religions fall and have failed in their duty"; "the Vatican has certainly forgotten the primordial and basic teachings" (13–14 October 1987). Nevertheless, according to Dr Jouret, the Templar is fundamentally Christian. The Temple pursues seven core goals that we can attempt to summarize, according to Jouret, in the following ways:

- a) *Reestablish knowledge of authority and power* (power of the Spirit) in a period of dissolution;
- b) *Affirm the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal* (one must pass through exaggerated materialism to rediscover the value of the mind);
- c) *Make man aware of his dignity* (pull him out of his brutishness, laziness, unhealthy eating, consumer mentality);
- d) *Help humanity through its passage* by being aware that we will live through a dissolution on a collective scale;
- e) *Participate in the assumption of the Earth*: the Templar is aware that the Earth is his surrogate mother, and Templars have always been devoted to their earthly mothers, represented by the Virgin; the universal Virgin gave birth to the universe; one of the Temple's goals is to make the Earth sacred and preserve it.