

## The Order of the Solar Temple

By Marty Butz

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**Founders:** Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro

**Founding Date:** 1986

**Official Publications:** *Medicine and Conscience* (a book by Jouret), *Fundamental Time of Life: Death* (audio cassette by Jouret).

**Organizational Structure:** Various organizations founded by Jouret functioned as arenas for recruiting members into distinct and secretive levels of initiation. Both Jouret and Di Mambro exercised authoritarian control.

**Unique Terms:** Christic Fire, Voyage, Departure, Golden Circle, Wise Men

**Other names:** OTS, The Rose and the Cross, and The International Chivalric Organization of Solar Tradition.

### HISTORY

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In his earlier years, Joseph Di Mambro, co-leader of the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS), was known as

a confidence trickster who made a successful career out of masquerading as a psychologist. In 1972...he was charged with fraud, breach of confidence and bouncing cheques. He soon recovered from this setback and within two years had founded the Centre for the Preparation for the New Age, sometimes called the School of Life.... Students were encouraged to divest themselves of worldly goods, particularly cash, in order to achieve a particular stage of meditation. By 1976 he had made sufficient money to buy a 15-room house...but trouble with the French tax authorities obliged him to move his activities across the border into Switzerland and then to Canada.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to Di Mambro, Luc Jouret, the other leader of the OTS, had started out his career with a legitimate credential in the health field, having obtained “a medical degree in 1974 from the Free University of Brussels.”<sup>2</sup> Afterward, however, Jouret quickly became “disillusioned with modern medicine” and reportedly spent some ten years traveling about the world searching for and practicing alternative forms of healing, including homeopathy.<sup>3</sup> In his spiritual search, Jouret spent some years drifting “in and out of a veritable solar system of ‘ancient wisdom’ sects—among them Solar Tradition, Templar Renewed Order, International Arcadian Clubs of Science and Tradition—until, sometime between 1979 and 1981, he hooked up with Joseph Di Mambro...”<sup>4</sup> In 1984, they both founded the International Chivalric Organization Solar Tradition in Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>5</sup>

Jouret then “began to operate at different levels. He formed the Amenta Club to serve as host to his paid lectures on topics like ‘Medicine and Conscience’ and ‘Love and Biology.’ Those won over by his message might then be introduced to a set of beliefs, rituals and a hierarchy by joining the Arcadia Club.”<sup>6</sup> Lastly, a select few of those recruited into the Arcadia Club would be recruited into the secretive Order of the Solar Temple. “To join they had to contribute money and accept severe discipline.”<sup>7</sup>

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In 1986 Jouret moved to Quebec, establishing a chapter of the Order of the Solar Temple there with Di Mambro.<sup>8</sup> Together, the leaders “bought a chalet complex ... which served as headquarters...”<sup>9</sup> To this place, Jouret brought with him some of his more loyal followers from Switzerland, having described the new establishment as “the promised land.”<sup>10</sup> Within a couple of years, Jouret began to declare that “the world would soon be engulfed in warfare and famine. Only Quebec would be spared...”<sup>11</sup> Eventually, a “giant concrete nuclear air-raid shelter” was built.<sup>12</sup>

By 1990, “some of Jouret’s own colleagues in the order were questioning his stability. They complained that his predictions about the end of the world were becoming too specific, and they resented the hold he appeared to have over some of his followers.”<sup>13</sup> In time, “Jouret’s behavior became increasingly eccentric. ‘Money and sex—that’s all Luc Jouret was interested in,’” a former member related. “Before every ritual, he would have sex with one of the women to give him spiritual strength for the ceremony. He wasn’t married, but he had many wives—he changed women all the time.”<sup>14</sup> Joseph Di Mambro also came to manifest authoritarian tendencies. “Whatever he told his followers to believe, they believed. Whatever he told them to do, they did. Nothing was too outlandish or degrading: if he instructed a female *chevalier* to perform a sex act, she obeyed without question .... He had no hesitation in interfering in relationships and breaking up marriages if he decided that couples were not ‘cosmically compatible.’”<sup>15</sup>

Gradually, the OTS began to experience turmoil and become fragmented. One disaffected member, Tony Dutoit, “discovered that Di Mambro was appropriating cult funds for his own use and was deeply shocked.”<sup>16</sup> Tony was someone who had previously “installed electronic and mechanical gadgets in the cult’s inner sanctuaries to project images that tricked members into believing they were seeing spiritual beings conjured up by Jouret.”<sup>17</sup> Reportedly, Tony “told cult members about the devices, causing some to leave the sect.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, Tony and his wife, Nicky, became the chief objects of Di Mambro’s fierce anger as did their infant son, Emmanuel, whom Di Mambro declared to be the Antichrist.<sup>19</sup>

Not content to just rely upon OTS’s practice of casting spells and hexes against their enemies, “Di Mambro selected two members of the ‘golden circle’ to carry out the their ritual murder,” one of whom traveled all the way from Switzerland for the assault.<sup>20</sup> On October 4, 1994, in a calculated attack, Tony Dutoit was stabbed 50 times. Nicky Dutoit was stabbed eight times in the back and four times in the throat (where conception was believed to occur) and once in each breast. Their infant son, Emmanuel, was stabbed six times. After the two assassins left, two other devout OTS members came to make final arrangements at the crime scene. They wrapped the infant in a black plastic bag and left a wooden stake on his chest before meticulously preparing for their own suicide and the incineration of all the bodies. Meanwhile, the assassins made their way back to Switzerland to rejoin their comrades and also Jouret and Di Mambro, who had left Quebec months previous under increasing scrutiny.<sup>21</sup>

Within 12 hours, 3500 miles away from Quebec, a chalet was found burning in a tiny Swiss village. As the firemen forced their way “into what they thought was a basement garage, they found themselves in a mirrored chapel draped with crimson fabric and with a Christ-like painting on one wall. On the floor, arranged in a sun-shaped circle with their feet pointing inwards, were 22 bodies: nine men, 12 women and a 12-year old boy.... Some of the dead were wearing the coloured ceremonial robes of the OTS; 19 had been shot in the head... ; nine were hooded with black plastic bags.”<sup>22</sup> As the bodies were being removed from the still smoldering building, investigators discovered that the whole facility was booby-trapped to go up in flames.

Within hours, another fire would break out — this time at a Swiss farmhouse belonging to the OTS. Here, police discovered 25 more bodies, apparently dead from

drugs administered either intravenously or by injection. All the adults were members of the OTS. Five of the dead were children, the youngest being four years of age. Among the dead would be the Dutoits' assassins as well as Luc Jouret, Joseph Di Mambro, and his "cosmic child" Emmanuelle, aged 12.<sup>23</sup>

In December of 1995, just over a year later, "16 more people, including three children, died in a second suicide-murder in France."<sup>24</sup> The bodies were laid out in a star-shaped pattern, like the bodies which were found in Switzerland. Again, "most were drugged and had plastic bags pulled over their heads..."<sup>25</sup> Each body "had at least one bullet wound and had been doused with flammable liquid before being burned."<sup>26</sup>

Almost a year and a half later, on March 22, 1997, fire broke out at a home near Quebec City. While firemen fought the blaze, children emerged from a nearby woodshed and later explained how "their parents included them without their knowledge" in the group's failed suicide attempt two days prior.<sup>27</sup> When incendiary devices failed to ignite at that time, the children were able to negotiate for their lives and thus be spared from being found among the five dead in the burned down home.

So far, 74 people have died in the wake of the Order of the Solar Temple. Questions remain unanswered as to how many of these individuals committed suicide and how many were actually murdered. It has been speculated that other deaths may still come.

## DOCTRINE

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Comparatively, little is known about the doctrines of the Order of the Solar Temple. It was a highly secretive organization and the patchwork of many of its beliefs remained hidden to all except those who were part of the inner circle. Nevertheless, a rough outline can be made with regard to some of the elements of the Solar Temple's belief system.

**Historical/Religious Context:** The Order of the Solar Temple has been described by cult observers as falling within the context of an "ancient wisdom' group, claiming a private understanding of the divine and subscribing to a secret set of occult rituals rooted in Roman Catholicism, combined with elements of eastern mysticism and mythologies surrounding UFOs, medieval knights and the search for the Holy Grail."<sup>28</sup> Regarding those medieval knights, "Di Mambro and Jouret believed that they and their inner 'golden circle' were once members of the Knights Templar, an order of soldier-monks formed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land."<sup>29</sup>

Various contemporary movements have perceived themselves as fulfilling the tradition of the Knights Templars. In France specifically, "Historians say the modern orders...began with the French esoteric author Jacques Breyer, who in 1952 established the Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple. In 1968, the order became the Renewed Order of the Solar Temple under the leadership of French right-wing political activist Julien Origas (Some reports have claimed that Origas was a Nazis SS member during World War II.)"<sup>30</sup> Jouret eventually found his way into Origas' Renewed Order of the Solar Temple, "one of at least 30 groups claiming to be successors to the Knights Templars..."<sup>31</sup> Significantly, Jouret presided over Origas's funeral in 1993.<sup>32</sup>

**Claims to Authority and Cosmic Purposes:** According to documents received via postal delivery from the Solar Temple after the death ritual, it has been surmised that the Solar Temple embraced and held "the traditional theosophic belief in a heavenly occult hierarchy," which the OTS referred to as the "33 wise men or big brothers."<sup>33</sup> Regarding these 33 wise leaders, "Luc Jouret believed that he and 32 of the members of the Order of the Solar Temple were the reincarnations of elders of an ancient sect called The Rose and the Cross."<sup>34</sup> They held that "Members of The Rose and the Cross

were required to reveal themselves at critical times in history by borrowing human bodies, warning of the apocalypse and then departing.”<sup>35</sup>

**Apocalyptic Designs:** According to Jouret, civilization was presently at a critical juncture for experiencing the apocalypse. Specifically, he believed the world was headed toward “environmental catastrophes.”<sup>36</sup> He “spoke endlessly of ‘the final end’ brought on by Man’s destruction of Nature and he promised ‘purification’ to his followers.”<sup>37</sup> Those who were not part of the elect could expect severe judgment in the days to come. For this reason, the suicide document mailed out and received after the ritual deaths, warned, “Men, do not cry for our fate, but cry for your own.”<sup>38</sup>

**Spiritual Transformation through Death:** Part of the “purification” which Jouret preached to his followers involved ritual death and the fiery burning of the body. As Jouret himself explained in one of his audio cassettes sold in New Age stores, “Death is the ultimate stage of personal growth.”<sup>39</sup> And on postmortem documents released by Di Mambro, it was stated, “We leave this world to reach the Absolute Dimension of Truth...to realize the seed of our future generations.”<sup>40</sup> Through the ritual death experience with “Christic fire,” OTS members believed they could make their “departure” or “voyage” and complete the journey of their spiritual transformation. As a means, fire was important as “a purifying ordeal through which members returned to the ‘Grand White Lodge of Sirius.’”<sup>41</sup> According to Carl Raschke, an expert on obscure religious movements, the Star of Sirius is significant to adherents of UFO mythology. According to that belief system, it is where “certain lords of the universe abide.”<sup>42</sup>

## CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

As the Bible warns, false christs will come and reveal themselves in secrecy and obscurity, but the one and only true Christ, when He comes again, will reveal Himself publicly and in power (Matthew 24:23–27).

One’s purification is not obtained through the burning of one’s body with “Christic” fire, rather it is through faith in Jesus Christ and trusting in His gracious atoning sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16, Hebrews 10:19–22, Ephesians 2:8, Revelations 1:5).

The Bible warns against false prophets and false teachers like Jouret and Di Mambro, who are enslaved to their own vices, work false miracles and deceive others while being deceived (2 Peter 2:19, Matthew 24:24, 2 Timothy 3:13).

### Notes

- 1 Russell Miller, *Sunday Times*, [London] January 29, 1995, 28.
- 2 Ross Laver, *MacLeans*, October 17, 1994, 16.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 *Sunday Times*, 28.
- 5 Alan Riding, *New York Times*, October 9, 1994.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 *MacLeans*, 16.
- 9 *New York Times*.
- 10 *MacLeans*, 16.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Johannes Aagaard, *Update & Dialogue*, December 1994, 7.
- 13 *MacLeans*, 17.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 *Sunday Times*, 29.
- 16 Ibid., 23.
- 17 *Montreal Gazette*, October 29, 1994.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 *Sunday Times*, 23.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., 24.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 *MacLeans*, April 7, 1997.
- 25 *Rueters News Service*, Dec. 15.
- 26 *Christian Century*, February 7–14, 1996, 126.
- 27 *Chicago Tribune*, March 28, 1997.
- 28 *The Sunday Times*, 23.

- 29 Ibid.
- 30 *Montreal Gazette*.
- 31 *New York Times*.
- 32 Michael Serrill, *Time Magazine*, October 24, 1993, 42.
- 33 *Update & Dialogue*.
- 34 *Montreal Gazette*.
- 35 *Sunday Times*, 23.
- 36 Charles Trueheart, *Washington Post*, October 14, 1994, A29.
- 37 *New York Times*.
- 38 *Christian Century*, November 2, 1994, 1010.
- 39 *MacLeans*, 15.
- 40 *Update & Dialogue*, 8.
- 41 *Montreal Gazette*
- 42 Ibid.



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