

David Mingle

11/14/08

Genre?

- Fiction
- Biography
- Historical Fiction
- Mystery
- Science Fiction
- Fantasy
- Fairy Tale
- Non-fiction

“All of the characters and events in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.”

The Da Vinci Code, iv

The Da Vinci Code - Themes

- Religious symbology and iconography
- Sacred feminine and male/female relationships
- The Catholic Church – conspiracy to suppress truth in a patriarchal, paranoid power play
- Jesus married to Mary Magdalene, had children
- The present Bible and the Gnostic Gospels
- Constantine and the Council of Nicea



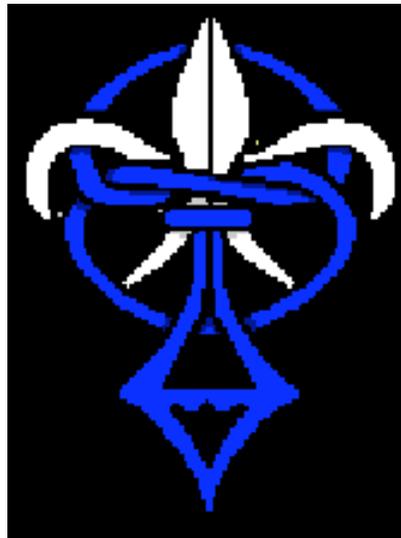
The Da Vinci Code - Themes

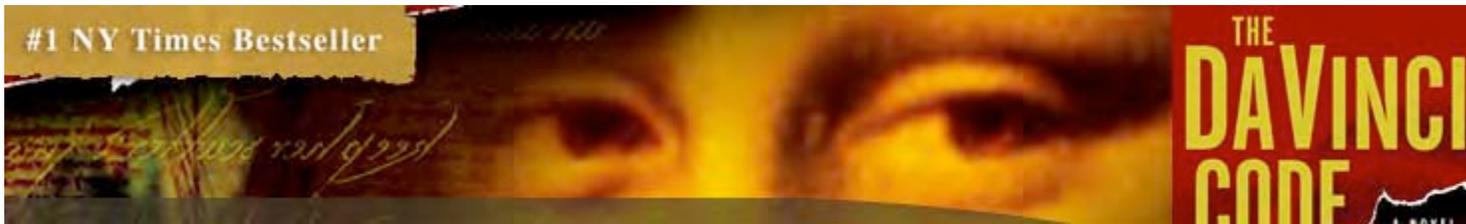
- Secret societies protecting world-shaking truth
- Opus Dei
- Knights Templar
- Art history
- The person of Jesus – human or divine?
- Priory of Sion



Our focus today:

The Priory of Sion





F A C T:

“*The Priory of Sion*—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975, Paris's *Bibliothèque Nationale* discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci.”

The Da Vinci Code, 1



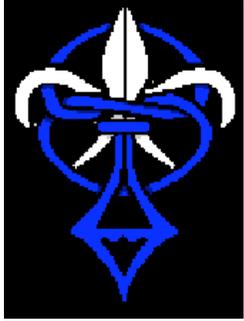
FACT:

“*The Priory of Sion*—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975, Paris discovered *Dossiers Secrets*, a collection of documents belonging to members of the Priory of Sion, including a letter from Isaac Newton to Leonardo da Vinci.

Fact = a thing done; the quality of being actual.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, 1998.

The Da Vinci Code, 1



Why The Priory of Sion?

- The Priory is the first of three core facts mentioned by Brown at the very beginning of the book.
- The Priory figures very large in the development of the whole story.
- Investigation into Brown's understanding of the Priory can be a useful model for evaluating his other major allegations.

First: a definition

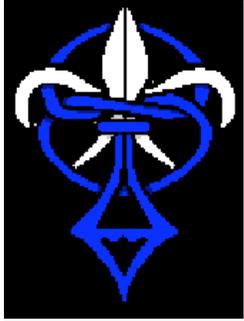
Priory = a religious house under the supervision of a prior or prioress

Prior = the superior of a house or group of houses of any of various religious communities

The Origin of the Priory of Sion

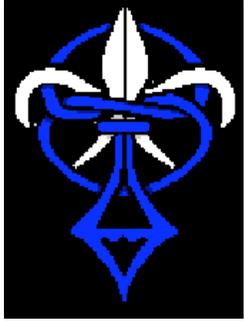
- Founded in 1956 in Annemasse, France
- Four officers, including Pierre Plantard as secretary-general.
- Subtitle: CIRCUIT = Chivalry of Catholic Rules and Institution of the Independent and Traditionalist Union.





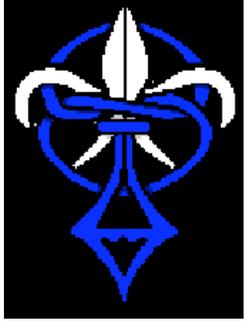
The charter

Article 3 of the statutes give the origin of the name, the Col du Mont Sion outside Annemasse, the hill where they were to construct “a priory which would be a center of investigation, meditation, rest and prayer.”



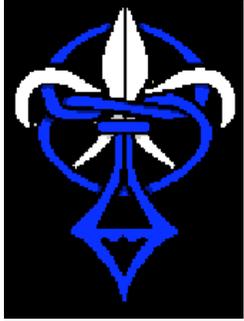
The charter

Article 7 of the statutes stated that members are expected “to carry out good deeds, to help the Catholic Church, teach the truth, defend the weak and the oppressed.”



The reality

- The major documented activity of the Priory in 1956 was advocating for low-income housing.
- The organization was dissolved sometime after October 1956.
- Revived by Plantard several times between 1962 and 1993.



The Plot Thickens

- In the early 1960's Plantard joins with author Gérard de Sède to tell the story of 19th century parish priest Father Berenger Saunière.
- Plantard alleged that Saunière became wealthy by the discovery of documents verifying some old French legends.

Saunière's "findings"

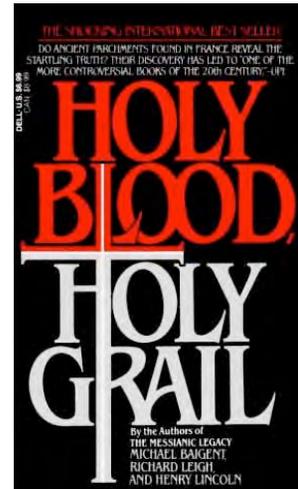
- Jesus survived to live in France with his wife Mary Magdalene.
- They had children, initiating a royal dynasty, the Merovingian kings.
- The legend of the Holy Grail is really about this Holy Blood.
- The Priory of Sion was formed to preserve this line when they fell from power.

Interesting coincidence:

The documents discovered by Saunière reveal that:
“the legitimate heirs to the throne of France to this very day are still the Merovingians, dethroned in 751 by the Carolingians. Furthermore, contrary to public opinion, the Merovingians are not extinct but have surviving descendants still alive, the last of which in 1967 was Pierre Plantard, who was therefore the only true contender to the role of King of France.”

The story continues . . .

- de Sède takes the story to three British journalists, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln.
- The result: *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, 1982, based on the discovery of important documents.



Two important documents:

- Saunière's alleged parchments, published by de Sède after receiving them from Plantard.
- *Les Dossiers Secrets*, “discovered” by library staff in the National Library in Paris in 1975.

But . . .

Both the parchments and *Les Dossiers Secrets* have been confirmed to be fabrications of the late 1960's:

- By researchers investigating the claims, and
- By Plantard and the men who helped him write them, deposit them in the library, and later “discover” them.

Plantard's downfall

- In 1993, Plantard comes to the attention of a French judge who is investigating dealings of a man Plantard had on his list of Priory grandmasters.
- On further investigation by the judge, Plantard confesses under oath that all of this was fabricated and is ordered to stop all Priory activity.
- Plantard then lives in obscurity until dying on February 3, 2000.

What about 1099?

- An “Order of Sion” was established as part of the Abbey (not Priory) of Our Lady of Mount Zion in 1099, related in some way to Godefroi de Bouillon, King of Jerusalem after the first Crusade.
- Ceased to exist in 1291 when overrun by the Muslim invasion.
- Remaining monks went to Sicily where the community was absorbed around the 14th century.



Claim

The Priory of Sion was founded in 1099 as a secret brotherhood charged with protecting the documents, the tomb and the bloodline.

The Da Vinci Code, 157-158, 258

Reality

The Priory of Sion was founded by Pierre Plantard and others in 1956, for which the only documented activity was advocating for low cost housing.



Claim

“Cataloged under Number 4° Im¹ 249, the *Dossier Secrets* had been authenticated by many specialists . . .”

The Da Vinci Code, 206

Reality

Les Dossiers Secrets are confirmed by evaluation and by Plantard’s own admission to be fake.



Claim

“You’re telling me that this group is a pagan goddess worship cult?”

“More like *the* pagan goddess worship cult”

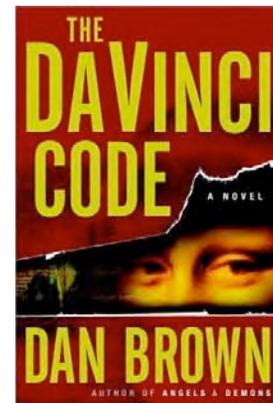
Reality

There is no evidence that Plantard’s Priory of Sion had any interest in goddess worship.

The Da Vinci Code, 113

Implications for *The Da Vinci Code*:

- A major “fact” has been exposed as largely untrue.
- A major premise on which the book hinges is found to be a fabrication.
- Investigation shows there to be a core of truth layered with much error and speculation.



Implications

“In short, *The Da Vinci Code* describes a world where Pierre Plantard's hoax was the truth, where the Secret Dossiers were genuine and not forgeries, and where people who support such ideas are reputable historians rather than conspiracy theorists and fringe researchers.”

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priory_of_Sion

My suggestion

These findings should be our guide when evaluating other claims made by Brown, for example:

- Secret societies
- Grand conspiracies
- The “sacred feminine”
- The Bible
- The Church
- The person of Jesus
- The Council of Nicea

Food for Thought . . .

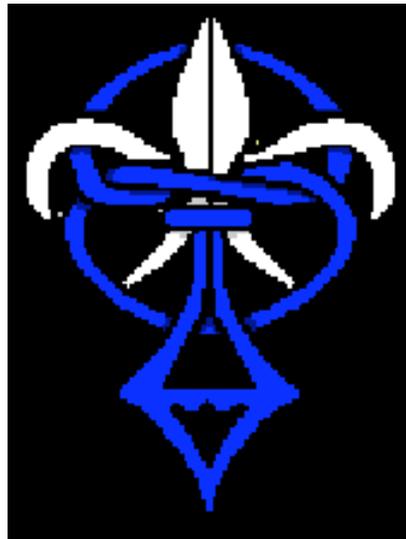
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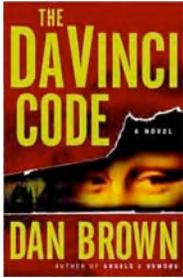
The Da Vinci Code, iv

Perhaps a useful model for looking at Brown’s book would be to truly see all characters and all events as fictitious, including those which have true historical counterparts.



The Priory of Sion





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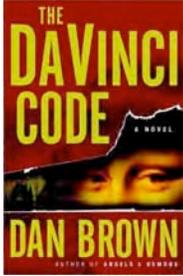
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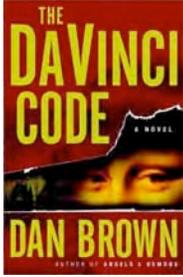
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