

Morten Tolboll

The Priory of Sion Hoax (The Matrix Dictionary)

The Priory of Sion, is a fringe fraternal organisation, founded and dissolved in France in 1956 by Pierre Plantard as part of a hoax. The main point though, of the most popular version of the *Priory of Sion Hoax* dating from the 1980s, is that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene, and that they had children and moved to France. This is having no relation to the original group founded in 1956.

The Priory of Sion Hoax is a part of the large group of conspiracy theories within the Matrix Conspiracy that seek to blur the line between fiction and fact, falseness and truth. All as a part of its propaganda program.

The hoax says that the descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalena became French kings, while the Catholic Church sought to suppress the information.

Various bodies, groups and persons throughout history were possessors of this secret knowledge - which was never leaked to outsiders, despite the amount of paperwork that would be needed to keep track of who the heirs were and the likelihood of people gossiping or letting slip information on the subject. These include the Cathars, Leonardo Da Vinci (when not inventing flying machines), Father Bérenger Saunière (of Rennes-le-Château, to whom the Vatican was allegedly prepared to pay blackmail monies, rather than have sent to the local institution for the heretically delusional), and the Priory of Sion.

The truth of the tale was, seemingly, revealed in the book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* also tells the story in an apparently fictional form (I will return to that).

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail is a 1982 book by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, which claims to expose the true secret of the Holy Grail.

The theory proposed in the book is:

- 1) Jesus Christ's death was faked.

- 2) Jesus and Mary Magdalene married, had children, and moved to a nice little gîte in the south of France.
- 3) Jesus' descendants became the Merovingian dynasty and, through them, the basis for all of Europe's royal families.
- 4) This secret is that the "Holy Grail" is not, as traditionally accepted, a cup that once held the blood of Christ, but literally the blood of Christ itself. The idea comes from the similarity between the phrases, *san greal* (holy grail) and *sang real* (royal blood).
- 5) The Priory of Sion is a secret organization devoted to keeping this secret and helping Jesus' heirs.
- 6) The Roman Catholic Church is aware of all this and has been involved in covering it up.
- 7) The end goal is a pan-European government headed by one of these descendants; in particular, the current head of the house of Habsburg.

The claims made in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* have been the source of much investigation and criticism over the years, with many independent investigators such as 60 Minutes, Channel 4, Discovery Channel, Time Magazine, and the BBC concluding that many of the book's claims are not credible or verifiable.

Pierre Plantard (who is the man behind the original Priory of Sion Hoax) stated on the Jacques Pradel radio interview on 'France-Inter', 18 February 1982:

“I admit that 'The Sacred Enigma' (French title for 'The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail') is a good book, but one must say that there is a part that owes more to fiction than to fact, especially in the part that deals with the lineage of Jesus. How can you prove a lineage of four centuries from Jesus to the Merovingians? I have never put myself forward as a descendant of Jesus Christ.”

In the 1960s, Plantard created a fictitious history for that organization, describing it as a secret society founded by Godfrey of Bouillon on Mount Zion in the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, conflating it with a genuine historical monastic order, the Abbey of Our Lady of Mount Zion. In Plantard's version, the Priory was devoted to installing a secret bloodline of the Merovingian dynasty on the thrones of France and the rest of Europe. It is this myth that was expanded upon and popularized in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and later claimed as factual in the preface of the 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*.

After becoming a cause célèbre from the late 1960s to the 1980s, the mythical Priory of Sion was exposed as a ludibrium created by Plantard as a framework for his claim of being the Great Monarch prophesied by Nostradamus. Evidence presented in support of its historical existence and activities before 1956 was discovered to have been forged and then planted in various locations around France by Plantard and his accomplices. Nevertheless, many conspiracy theorists still persist in believing that the Priory of Sion is an age-old cabal that conceals a subversive secret.

There are no references to the Jesus bloodline in the "Priory of Sion documents" and the link exists only within the context of a hypothesis made by the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. From the *Conspiracies On Trial: The Da Vinci Code documentary*:

"The authors of the 1980s bestseller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* re-interpreted the Dossiers in the light of their own Biblical obsessions – the secret buried in the documents ceased to be the Merovingian bloodline and became the bloodline of Christ – the genealogies led to Christ's descendants."

While Pierre Plantard claimed that the Merovingians were descended from the Tribe of Benjamin, the Jesus bloodline hypothesis found in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* instead hypothesized that the Merovingians were descended from the Davidic line of the Tribe of Judah.

Historian Marina Warner commented on *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* when it was first published:

"Of course there's not much harm in thinking that Jesus was married (nor are these authors the first to suggest it), or that his descendants were King Pippin and Charles Martel. But there is harm in strings of lurid falsehoods and distorted reasoning. The method bends the mind the wrong way, an insidious and real corruption."

Prominent British historian Richard Barber, wrote:

"The Templar-Grail myth... is at the heart of the most notorious of all the Grail pseudo-histories, *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, which is a classic example of the conspiracy theory of history... It is essentially a text which proceeds by innuendo, not by refutable scholarly debate... Essentially, the whole argument is an ingeniously constructed series of suppositions combined with forced readings of such tangible facts as are offered."

In 2005, Tony Robinson narrated a critical evaluation of the main arguments of Dan Brown and those of Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, *The Real Da Vinci Code*, shown on Channel 4. The programme featured lengthy interviews with many of the protagonists. Arnaud de Sède, son of Gérard de Sède, stated categorically that his father and Plantard had made up the existence of a 1,000-year-old Priory of Sion, and described the story as "piffle." The programme concluded that, in the opinion of the presenter and researchers, the claims of Holy Blood were based on little more than a series of guesses.

The Priory of Sion myth was exhaustively debunked by journalists and scholars as one of the great hoaxes of the 20th century. Some writers have expressed concern that the proliferation and popularity of books, websites and films inspired by this hoax have contributed to the problem of conspiracy theories, pseudohistory and other confusions becoming more mainstream. And that is precisely the goal of *The Matrix Conspiracy*.

As mentioned, Dan Brown's massive best-seller novel *The Da Vinci Code* borrowed many aspects of these theories. The theories are not generally accepted by historians, or even most readers of wild-eyed fiction. The biggest flaw with the novel (among countless many) is that it takes the forged Priory of Sion documents at face value. In fact, the Priory of Sion never existed except as a small secret society (read: bored circle of friends) created by Pierre Plantard. Plantard and his friends then proceeded to forge numerous documents and plant them in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. All this is admitted by Plantard.

Dan Brown is a very successful writer of action/suspense novels, including *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons*, and *The Lost Symbol*. His plot-lines usually involve fact, pseudoscience and pseudohistory mixed in such a way as to leave less aware readers totally confused. This is precisely a part of the gaslighting and brainwashing methods used by *The Matrix Conspiracy*. You might say that Dan Brown shouldn't be blamed for doing this since he is a fictional writer, and in a certain sense this is right. But he uses a gaslighting technique which is typical for pseudohistorians, as well as is in many of the pseudohistorical works of *The Matrix Conspiracy*.

The gaslighting technique is in short: Dan Brown admits that his book *Da Vinci Code* is fictional. However, the Book and Website strongly suggest that his book is factual and historically accurate.

The book is in that way a piece of pseudohistory. Pseudohistory is purported history such as Afrocentrism, creationism, holocaust revisionism and the catastrophism of

Immanuel Velikovsky (see the Matrix Dictionary entry on [Robert J. Schadewald](#)). Pseudohistory should be distinguished from the ancient texts it is based on. The sagas, legends, myths and histories, which have been passed on orally or in written documents by ancient peoples are sometimes called pseudohistory. Some of it is pseudohistory, some of it is flawed history and some of it isn't history at all.

Pseudohistory should also be distinguished from historical fiction and fantasy. Anyone who cites a work of historical fiction as if it were a historical text is a practising pseudohistorian. There are also writers of historical fiction who intentionally falsify and invent ancient history. A technique to do this is to claim to find an ancient document and publishing it in order to express one's own ideas. An example is *The Celestine Prophecy*. A variation on this theme is to claim that one is channeling a book from some ancient being, e.g., *The Urantia Book*, *Bringers of the Dawn*, and *A Course in Miracles* (see my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen In Connection with Channeling](#) and my Matrix Dictionary entry on [A Course in Miracles](#)).

Today we see how secret history sometimes is used in a long-running science fiction or fantasy universe to preserve continuity with the present by reconciling paranormal, anachronistic, or otherwise notable but unrecorded events with what actually happened in known history; for instance in the fictional time travel theories.

For example, the New Age product *The WingMakers* story (see my article [Time Travel and the Fascism of the WingMakers Project](#)) combines this with the urban legend and alternate history from the Ong's Hat myth. Though the *WingMakers* website tries to avoid critique by saying it is a modern mythology (where urban legends are considered as a modern folklore) it also keeps on, precisely as in urban legends, and, like Dan Brown, insinuating that the story is true.

The Matrix Conspiracy is permeated with references to vibrations and energy, advices to avoid the negative (you can tell good people by their eyes), stop doubting, follow your intuitions and premonitions, flow with coincidences, believe in the purposiveness of everything, join thousands of others on the quest, turn into your feelings and evolve to a higher plane. Follow your intuitions and dreams as you go through your spiritual evolution. Fact or fiction, it doesn't matter. Truth is what you make it. Life's too short and too complicated to deal with reality. Make your own reality.

This New Age subjectivism and relativism encourage people to believe that reality is whatever you want it to be. The line between fact and fiction gets blurry and obscured. Subjectivism shuts down people's critical faculties, making them

suggestible for any Ideology. It involves making people quit thinking critically in order to open them up to thinking Magical about that Subjective validation and Communal reinforcement lead to bliss. Hypnosis is in New Age directly used as a means for inducing in people certain worldviews, or, actually, one ideology: The Matrix Conspiracy (also see my article [Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception](#)).

How far Dan Brown himself believes these ideas is a matter for conjecture. In a 2009 interview, Dan Brown described himself as a skeptic and that he "gravitated away from religion."

The Da Vinci Code follows symbologist Robert Langdon and cryptologist Sophie Neveu after a murder in the Louvre Museum in Paris causes them to become involved in a battle between the Priory of Sion and [Opus Dei](#) over the possibility of Jesus Christ having been a companion to Mary Magdalene. The title of the novel refers to the finding of the first murder victim in the Grand Gallery of the Louvre, naked and posed similar to Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing, the Vitruvian Man, with a cryptic message written beside his body and a pentagram drawn on his chest in his own blood.

The novel explores an alternative religious history, whose central plot point is that the Merovingian kings of France were descended from the bloodline of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, ideas derived from Clive Prince's *The Templar Revelation* (1997) and books by Margaret Starbird. The book also refers to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* though Dan Brown has stated that it was not used as research material.

The Da Vinci Code provoked a popular interest in speculation concerning the Holy Grail legend and Mary Magdalene's role in the history of Christianity. The book has, however, been extensively denounced by many Christian denominations as an attack on the Roman Catholic Church, and consistently criticized for its historical and scientific inaccuracies. The novel nonetheless became a worldwide bestseller that sold 80 million copies as of 2009 and has been translated into 44 languages. Combining the detective, thriller and conspiracy fiction genres, it is Brown's second novel to include the character Robert Langdon: the first was his 2000 novel *Angels & Demons*. In 2006, a film adaptation was released by Columbia Pictures.

The book generated criticism when it was first published for inaccurate description of core aspects of Christianity and descriptions of European art, history, and architecture. The book has received mostly negative reviews from Catholic and other Christian communities.

Many critics took issue with the level of research Brown did when writing the story. The New York Times writer Laura Miller characterized the novel as "based on a notorious hoax", "rank nonsense", and "bogus", saying the book is heavily based on the fabrications of Pierre Plantard, who is asserted to have created the Priory of Sion in 1956.

Critics accuse Brown of distorting and fabricating history. For example, Marcia Ford wrote:

"Regardless of whether you agree with Brown's conclusions, it's clear that his history is largely fanciful, which means he and his publisher have violated a long-held if unspoken agreement with the reader: Fiction that purports to present historical facts should be researched as carefully as a nonfiction book would be."

Richard Abanes wrote:

"The most flagrant aspect... is not that Dan Brown disagrees with Christianity but that he utterly warps it in order to disagree with it... to the point of completely rewriting a vast number of historical events. And making the matter worse has been Brown's willingness to pass off his distortions as 'facts' with which innumerable scholars and historians agree."

The book opens with the claim by Dan Brown that "The Priory of Sion—a French secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization". The author also claims that "all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents... and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." All this is disputed by numerous academic scholars expert in numerous areas.

Dan Brown himself addresses the idea of some of the more controversial aspects being fact on his web site, stating that the "FACT" page at the beginning of the novel mentions only "documents, rituals, organization, artwork and architecture", but not any of the ancient theories discussed by fictional characters, stating that "Interpreting those ideas is left to the reader". Brown also says, "It is my belief that some of the theories discussed by these characters may have merit" and "the secret behind The Da Vinci Code was too well documented and significant for me to dismiss."

In 2003, while promoting the novel, Brown was asked in interviews what parts of the history in his novel actually happened. He replied "Absolutely all of it." In a 2003 interview with CNN's Martin Savidge he was again asked how much of the historical background was true. He replied, "99% is true... the background is all true". Asked

by Elizabeth Vargas in an ABC News special if the book would have been different if he had written it as non-fiction he replied, "I don't think it would have."

So, the book was generally derided by critics and the literate, but this didn't prevent it from becoming the second-best selling book of 2004. Conspiracy theories sell — as do books with lots of implausible plot twists, plenty of action and exotic locations all wrapped up in short and easy sentences.

The Da Vinci Code became the book that simply could not be avoided, and in the same way that born again Christians feel the need to share their profound discovery with everyone, innocent dinner party participants could scarcely escape having Brown's "revelations" shared with them.

The movie adaptation became the fifth highest grossing film of 2006, behind equally realistic *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, *Night at the Museum*, *Cars*, and *X-Men: The Last Stand*. If you want more crazy pseudohistory then watch *National Treasure*. At least in that case the author hasn't tried to sell it as being in any way factual.

The Catholic Church and Opus Dei were of course not overly impressed by Brown's book or the movie. The church urged a boycott, while Opus Dei asked that a disclaimer be added to the movie. As is often the case with religiously-motivated outrage, this probably just encouraged people to see what all the fuss was about. And since the Matrix Conspiracy has succeeded in brainwashing most people on Earth to think that the Catholic Church is utterly corrupted, and lead by pedophiles, the protests just created a backfire effect.

This kind of Anti-Catholicism refers to staunch opposition to the Roman Catholic Church and its members, usually grounded in conspiracy theory, nativism, and misrepresentation of Catholic theology (and, often, copious amounts of tangentially related [wingnuttery](#)). Some brands of the anti-Catholic conspiracy theory paint the Catholic Church as a lone conspirator seeking world domination, though many depict the Church as being in bed with the Illuminati or Freemasons. (Ironically, the former were suppressed by the Church, and they have been staunchly opposed to the latter since the beginning). While anti-Catholic bigotry was once rampant among Protestants, recent political re-alignments have strengthened ties between conservative Protestants and the Catholic hierarchy. Increasingly, so-called "anti-Catholicism" is merely whining about criticism of the Church, coverage being insufficiently pro-Catholic, or disagreement with Catholic positions on issues such as birth control, divorce, abortion, and gay rights.

Returning to the Priory of Sion Hoax: In reality, the Merovingians were some of the most ineffectual royalty in European history. The French know the end of the dynasty as *rois fainéants* ("do-nothing kings"). The blood of Jesus Christ supposedly in their bloodstream did not prevent the kings from losing most of their power to their majordomos, until Charles Martel claimed the throne himself and ousted the last Merovingian king of France, with claims of divine sanction, in fact.

So, The Priory of Sion Hoax has been exhaustively debunked by journalists and scholars as one of the great hoaxes of the 20th century. I find it extremely exciting to read about, but I'm also expressing my concern that the proliferation and popularity of books, websites and films inspired by this hoax have contributed to the subject of conspiracy theories, pseudohistory and other confusions becoming more mainstream. I'm troubled by the romantic reactionary ideology unwittingly promoted in these works, especially since this has become an integrated part of popular culture.

Others are also troubled by this. Historian Ken Mondschein ridiculed the idea of a Jesus bloodline, writing:

“The idea of keeping the family tree pruned to bonsai-like proportions is also completely fallacious. Infant mortality in pre-modern times was ridiculously high, and you'd only need one childhood accident or disease in 2000 years to wipe out the bloodline; if, however, even one extra sibling per generation survived to reproduce, the numbers of descendants would increase at an exponential rate; keep the children of Christ marrying each other, on the other hand, and eventually they'd be so inbred that the sons of God would have flippers for feet.”

Quoting Robert McCrum, literary editor of *The Observer* newspaper, about *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*:

“There is something called historical evidence – there is something called the historical method – and if you look around the shelves of bookshops there is a lot of history being published, and people mistake this type of history for the real thing. These kinds of books do appeal to an enormous audience who believe them to be 'history', but actually they aren't history, they are a kind of parody of history. Alas, though, I think that one has to say that this is the direction that history is going today...”

This latter is my view too. Let me explain:

The Priory of Sion Hoax is claiming that there exists some kind of shadow government: the Catholic Church. The shadow government (cryptocracy, secret government, or invisible government) is a family of conspiracy theories based on the notion that real and actual political power resides not with publicly elected representatives but with private individuals who are exercising power behind the scenes, beyond the scrutiny of democratic institutions. According to this belief, the official elected government is in reality subservient to the shadow government who are the true executive power.

Shadow government theories often propose that the government is secretly controlled by foreign elements (such as aliens or the Vatican and Jesuits), internal minorities (such as the Jews, moneyed interests and central banks, or Freemasons), or globalist elites and supranational organizations, who seek to manipulate policy or conquer the world.

My whole concept of *The Matrix Conspiracy* builds on a paradoxical play with all this. Contrary to the above-mentioned point of views, it says that it is the promoters of these ideas themselves that form a shadow government situated in popular culture. The promoters of all of these paranoid ideas are the leaders and its agents are the Men in Black (MIB). In popular culture and UFO conspiracy theories, men in black are supposed men dressed in black suits who claim to be government agents who harass or threaten UFO witnesses to keep them quiet about what they have seen. It is sometimes implied that they may be aliens themselves. The term is also frequently used to describe mysterious men working for unknown organizations, as well as various branches of government allegedly designed to protect secrets or perform other strange activities.

These ministers and agents (the Matrix Sophists and agents) are the individuals who promote theories like The Priory of Sion Hoax. They do this by preaching anti-intellectualism and anti-science (see the Matrix Dictionary entry on [Anti-intellectualism and Anti-science](#)).

In my view the most clear example of *The Matrix Conspiracy Propaganda* is the website [Gaia.com](#). The gaslighting technique used is that it claims to seek the truth which everyone else are trying to hide, while that fact is that it blurs the distinction between fiction and fact, dream and reality. This is done by making people doubt their critical faculties, and attacking the best tools we have in order to discover truth, such as science and philosophy. It does this even to the point of making people doubt that reality at all exists (and therefore truth – example: [click here](#)). Hereby Gaia.com is standing as the one and only truth.

Gaia.com is for example, with clear inspiration from Dan Brown, treating movies like [The Matrix](#), [The X-Files](#), [Close Encounters of the Third Kind](#), and [films by Stanley Kubrick](#) etc., as sources of facts, and films like the moon landing, as fiction. This is pure gaslighting, and example of the use of active brainwashing techniques (about brainwashing techniques used in another pseudohistorical work - see my Matrix Dictionary entry on [A Course in Miracles](#)).

So, Gaia.com is prophesying a New World Order (New Age) to emerge: the world of Alternative History, Alternative Physics, Alternative Medicine and, ultimately, Alternative Reality.

How, given the recent and sorry story of ideologically motivated conceptions of knowledge – Lysenkoism in Stalin’s Soviet Union, for example, or Nazi critiques of “Jewish science” – could it again have become acceptable to behave in this way? In my article [The Sokal Hoax](#) you can read more about this development.

Related in The Matrix Dictionary:

[Simulation theory](#)

[Doublethink](#)

[The Matrix Conspiracy Updates](#)

[The Matrix Conspiracy Fascism](#)

[Stephen Hawking](#)

[Bruce Lipton](#)

[Rupert Sheldrake](#)

[Robert Lanza](#)

[Doublethink](#)

[Anti-intellectualism and Anti-science](#)

[Bridge between Science and Spirituality](#)

Related articles:

[The New Thought Movement and the Law of Attraction](#)

[The Matrix Conspiracy](#)

[The Fascism of Theosophy](#)

Also Related:

[The Matrix Dictionary](#)

*All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: [**www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com**](http://www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com)*

Copyright © 2017 by Morten Tolboll.

Terms of use:

http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/deed.en_US