

The Truth About the Marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene

by

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On November 17, 2003, I laid down on my bed and opened the weekly issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* (October 31, 2003), and found an article titled "Will the Magdalene Go Mainstream?" (pp. 8-9). It was about three books written by Margaret Starbird called *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar, Magdalene's Lost Legacy: Symbolic Numbers and Sacred Union in Christianity*, and *The Goddess in the Gospels*. In which the author supposedly reexamined the Gospels, the apocryphal Gospels, and even Medieval symbols to find what was Mary Magdalene's true role within the Christian movement that Jesus began. Even it contemplates the "real" possibility that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus. This concept of the marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is also elaborated in the work of fiction *The Da Vinci Code*, an all-the-way National Bestseller. This is perhaps one of the most controversial subjects that have ever been discussed in the twentieth century. Where did such an idea come from? It seems like during all these centuries no one seemed to know about this secret, but in the end of the twentieth century, it was a sensational and juicy concept, and many liberals and non-Christian scholars, needless to say rabid anti-Christians, embraced this idea without question. Even Bishop John Shelby Spong endorsed this idea and even published about it, and obviously many of his followers accepted it too. Barbara Thiering also peshered her brains out showing how her technique proves that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.

Being a liberal myself, and also questioning the Church's doctrine as a way of placing my faith to the test, I became familiar with this story, and wanted to explore it deeply. I asked myself "if it is true, why would the Church hide this information?" Apparently to many

people, the idea of Jesus marrying would mean the collapse of one of the most dear views about Jesus, that He never married, He was God. Needless to say, the idea of him having children would create lots of problems, since it would give the impression that the Roman Catholic Church, the supposed representative of Christ on Earth through the Pope, usurped the legitimacy of Jesus' descendants.

Is this true? Is this a conspiracy in the Church? Is this information hidden in the Vatican Archives? Did the Church destroy the documents that prove without a shadow of doubt that Jesus was indeed married to Mary Magdalene? Did the Church transform the image of Mary Magdalene to the prostitute that the Gospels talk about, just because the Church didn't want people to relate her to Jesus in any way?

Such a conspiracy theory seemed intriguing: that there is a conspiracy between those who know this truth and supposedly can prove it, and the conspiracy of the Vatican to hide it. This is fascinating. Recently a book was published in France titled *Il Regno Dei Signori Degli Anelli* by Laurence Gardner in which he carries out a "thorough" investigation to show how much J. R. R. Tolkien knew this secret about Jesus' descendants, and how the ring of power represents the Holy Grail, the symbol of Jesus' lineage. At this rate, I will not be surprised if in the future they involve J. K. Rowling in this conspiracy and someone shows how the Harry Potter series "reveal" this well-known "secret" knowledge.

After careful analysis and much reading, I arrived to some conclusions on this subject. In this article I show the results of my investigations on the subject.

How This Subject Came to Be?

The Renegade Priest¹

Rennes-le-Château. Three scholars were interested in this place: Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. This French town is located in the Pyrenees, in France, and was a place where the Cathars used to flourish during the Middle Ages. They were a branch of Christianity in the Middle Ages that evolved from the Gnostics and were considered as heretics by the Catholic Church. According to Cathars, God revealed them a "*gnosis*" or knowledge about the truth. The God of the Old Testament, according to them, is not the one true God, but of an evil god, who created a world out of corrupting matter and who is the one ruling this world. According to them, Jesus Christ didn't become flesh, because He, being pure spirit, join with corruptible matter. They preached docetism, the doctrine that Jesus Christ was only a man in appearance, denied that He died on the Cross, and they even denied the validity of the Sacraments. They were protected in the castle of Montségur in Languedoc until 1244 when it fell under the Crusaders and the Cathars were practically extinguished. Among other things, it was said that the Cathars hid the Holy Grail in the castles of Montségur, and took it somewhere else when the Crusaders attacked.

But more fascinating were more recent events in the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of a Roman Catholic priest called Berenger Saunière. According to the legend, he found in his Church some very old writings, and some treasures. Whether this is true is unsure, but what we do know is that he spent a great amount of money making changes to the church of Rennes-le-Château, and also making new buildings in the area. The restorations he made indicated a deep mystery and in fact, it is actually a connection of Saunière with some secret societies, and his sympathy for esoteric doctrines. One of the things he did was to create strange new images of the Stations of the Cross. For example, in Station XIV, that supposedly represents Jesus being buried, it presents the background as evening with the full moon, as if he was implying that Jesus body was stolen in the middle of the night. In another Station he presented an image of Jesus carrying the Cross, talking to a woman who was

covering her child with a Scottish mantle. He engraved at the very entrance of the Church these words: "TERRIBILIS EST LOCUS ISTE" (This place is terrible). Within the Church, he placed all kinds of images alluding to the Rose+Cross (referring to the Rosicrucians). For example, in the entrance he placed images of the four zealous brothers for the Rose+Cross on top of the demon Asmodeus. He also built nearby a tower dedicated to Mary Magdalene where he had a library.

Saunière also had problems with the Vatican, because the Bishop didn't know where the money he was investing came from, and why did he build the Church the way he did. Saunière refused to tell the Bishop this information, and as a response, the Bishop removed him from his post. Ironically, when Saunière appealed to the Vatican, it exonerated him. The reasons for this are not clear. However, he died on January 22, 1917, some inhabitants reported that unknown people went to Rennes-le-Château to perform a strange ceremony after his death.

Finally, Rennes-le-Château seemed to be linked to the works of Nicolas Poussin, the famous painter who lived in the seventeenth century. Poussin wrote many letters talking about a secret information that was so very hidden that nobody else would find, and one of his most intriguing paintings apparently seems to refer to some secret linked to Rennes-le-Château. He painted "Les bergers d'Arcadie", a portrayal of shepherds gathered around an ancient tomb, and engraved in it there are the words: "ET IN ARCADIA EGO", which literally means "And in Arcadia I . . ." and in the background there is a hill that is precisely Rennes-le-Château. This tomb, however, was not fictional, it actually existed until a decade ago.

A Discovery in the National Library of Paris

Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, searching for the mystery behind Rennes-le-Château, went to the National Library of Paris and found several documents, which they describe as being too dense, too confusing, and too incoherent (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 96). One of these called *Dossiers secrets* documents was attributed to Henri Lobineau, and the other one was also attributed to Henri Lobineau called *Généalogie des rois mérovingiens*. Henri Lobineau is a pseudonym since it reminds of Alexis Loubineau, the author of *History of Britain* and *History of Paris*. Also within the *Dossiers*

1 Most of this information has been provided by Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 28-34.

secrets it states that Henri Loubinau's real name is Leo Shidlof who died in Vienna (Austria) at an old age, information which is proven to be false, because, contrary to what the documents claim, he never published anything in an inexistent journal, and secondly he was never interested in the genealogy of the Merovingian kings (de Sède 76-77).

These interesting documents tell the existence of a secret society called the *Priuré de Sion*, and they allege that they were preserving the Merovingian dynasty of France ever since the Church betrayed the dynasty in favor of the Carolingians. After this "betrayal", the Church proceeded to try to eliminate any reference to king Dagobert II, a king of the Merovingian dynasty who was murdered during that time (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 232-237). But according to the documents, Dagobert II had descendants, and one of them was Gottfried of Bouillon, who was the king of Jerusalem by the end of the eleventh century. The documents say that he founded an order called "Ordre de Sion", although it is not clear if it was in 1090 or in 1099. According to the documents, the see of this new order was the abbey of Notre Dame du Mont de Sion in Jerusalem.

What is interesting about this is that the youngest brother of Gottfried of Bouillon, Balduin the First, was king of Jerusalem when the Order of the Knights of the Temple (the Templars) was created. Who are the Templars? According to the legend, the Order of the Knights of the Temple, also known as the Knights of Christ, was founded in 1118 by Hugues of Payen and some poor men who visited Baduin I and wanted to be warriors for Christ in Jerusalem. This order of Christian warriors would make an oath to live in poverty, and loyalty to the king and the Roman Catholic Church. Their initial work was to protect pilgrims from any kind of attacks on the streets of Jerusalem. The fame of their loyalty to the Church and their life of poverty, obedience and chastity was spread quickly and many people decided to join the order. By 1139 Pope Innocent II wrote a bull asking the Templars to be loyal to no one except the Papacy, and much later St. Bernard of Clairvaux would support them during the Council of Troyes (1128) where the Templars were officially recognized as a religious-military order, and he also wrote their rules of conduct. However, despite their oath of poverty, during the centuries the Templars began accumulating wealth, even to the point of becoming the most powerful economic force in all of Europe. As early as about ten years later, after the Council of Troyes, the Templars

already owned lands in Portugal, Spain, Scotland, France, England, Germany, Italy, Austria, Palestine and many other places. They were a powerful influence in the establishment of a banking system throughout Europe. In fact, at one point they became a very opulent order, and the people began associating them with corruption. Eventually they would end up being persecuted by the Inquisition, tortured and killed.

During their tortures, the Inquisitors wrote down many of their confessions. Apparently they were associated with heretical views, they denied completely the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Some of them, when presented with a crucifix would literally throw it to the floor, step on it and state that Christianity was all a lie. Others confessed that they worshiped a head of a demon called Baphomet. Others uncovered the fact that they were associating with and protecting heretics, such as the Cathars.

The Priuré de Sion and the Holy Grail

While the Templars existed, they were associated with the guardians of very important relics such as the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, the treasures of Salomon's Temple, among many others. According to the documents of the Priuré de Sion, not only the Order of Sion was the one supported by the Merovingian Dynasty, but also it alleges that it was behind the foundation and prosperity of the Templars. This very fact, appears to link the Priuré de Sion to the Holy Grail.

But what is the Holy Grail? The first thing that comes to mind is: "It is the cup with which Jesus Christ celebrated the Last Supper". However, this can be misleading. If one studies thoroughly the history of the Holy Grail, really nobody knows what it is. The first official work about the Grail was written by Chrétien de Troyes and it is titled *Le roman de Perceval* or *Le conte del Graal*, but in this epic novel there is no link between the Holy Grail and Jesus. Later works would link the Holy Grail to Jesus, but not necessarily to a cup. Robert Boron (1190?) said that Joseph of Arimathea took care of the Holy Grail after Jesus died, and later was carried to England. Another anonymous work at that time seems to relate the Holy Grail with the Templar Knights, because it says that the knights guarding it were dressed in white and had a red cross on their chest. One thing is clear, out of all of these romantic works about the Grail, and it is that they all focus on the lineage of Perceval, the protagonist. Many of the romantic novels written afterward included these

knights, which seem to be alluding to the Knights Templars. Even in one of them some men step and hit the cross after Perceval kisses it, which is a very strong reminder of what some Templars did when they were questioned by the Inquisition. The Grail also appears to another character first as a child, then as flesh, and then a crowned king nailed to a cross. In one of the apparitions during a mass, it appeared in five different manners until it appeared before King Arthur as a chalice.

Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln take account of these beginnings of the stories on the Grail (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 257-266), but they fix their attention on the *Parzival* written by Wolfram von Eschenbach. The Holy Grail also is not exactly a chalice, it can be even a stone which kind of reminds the "sorcerer stone", and it is linked to the Phoenix, the symbol of resurrection and rebirth. It also reveals the Knights Templars as the guardians of the Holy Grail and talks also about guarding a family of the Grail that live in the castle of the Grail in Munsalvache (the Cathar castle of Montsalvat), which has been linked to Montségur's castle by few authors. Also the Holy Grail has the power to appoint kings.

The authors of *The Holy Blood, The Holy Grail*, make also an analysis on the phrase "Holy Grail" in the French language: from "Saint Graal" to "Sang Réal" which would lead philologically to a royal blood, blood of kings, a royal lineage.

Could it be, then, that the Holy Grail may be the Merovingian dynasty, and that this dynasty was somehow linked to Jesus? Was the Priuré de Sion guarding this dynasty: the Holy Grail?

The Supposed History of the Priuré de Sion

These documents found by the three scholars also listed a series of stories about how the Order of Sion evolved. It adopted the name Ormus at one time, which provided the foundations of an organization called "the Order of Rose-Croix Veritas". It pretends to be the foundation of the Rosicrucians. Rosicrucians on the other hand state clearly that their origins are based on a series of works written by Christian Resenkreuz and a secret organization he directed. There is doubt that this person or this organization actually existed. Resenkreuz's organization evolved into a series of small organizations. However, the three authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* believed that the

Priory of Sion was precisely the organization who has been behind the creation of the Templar Knights (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 117).

The Priuré documents also offers a list of the Grand Masters:

- Jean de Gisors (1188-1220)
- Marie de Saint-Clair (1220-1266)
- Guillaume de Gisors (1266-1307)
- Eduard de Bar (1307-1336)
- Jeanne de Bar (1336-1351)
- Jean de Saint-Clair (1351-1366)
- Blanche d'Evreux (1366-1398)
- Nicolas Flamel (1398-1418)
- René de Anjou (1418-1480)
- Iolande de Bar (1480-1483)
- Sandro Filipepi (1483-1510)
- Leonardo da Vinci (1510-1519)
- Connétable de Bourbon (1519-1527)
- Ferdinand de Gonzague (1527-1575)
- Louis de Nevers (1575-1595)
- Robert Fludd (1595-1637)
- J. Valentin Andrea (1637-1654)
- Robert Boyle (1654-1691)
- Isaac Newton (1691-1727)
- Charles Radclyffe (1727-1746)
- Charles de Lorena (1780-1801)
- Maximilien de Lorena (1780-1780)
- Charles Nodier (1801-1844)
- Victor Hugo (1844-1885)
- Claude Debussy (1885-1918)
- Jean Cocteau (1918-)

At first sight we notice renowned names such as Nicolas Flamel, the famous alchemist, Leonardo da Vinci, Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, great scientists. Victor Hugo, the great writer and Jean Cocteau the painter are there. So, this is a very unusual set of Great Masters. Apparently even the greatest minds of humanity formed part of it, guarding the secret lineage of the Holy Grail, wanting the Merovingian Dynasty to assume power once again. It is also very interesting that René d'Anjou appears on the list, because he was always related during the Renaissance to the theme of Arcadia, and it has been rumored that he and St. Joan d'Arc were lovers. According some, he was always fascinated by the stories of King Arthur and the Holy Grail, and that he was proud owner of a cup which was used in the feast at Cana, and which was brought to Marseilles by Mary Magdalene (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 125-129).

According to the same documents, the

Priuré and the Sinclair were closely related to the Scottish francmasonry, and also the name Plantard was related the Merovingian lineage. When finally the authors got in contact with the Great Master of the Priuré, they discovered that he was Pierre Plantard de Saint-Claire.

Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail

Yes, there were some traditions that the Holy Grail was brought there to France by Mary Magdalene. And if the Holy Grail is nothing more than the lineage of the Merovingian dynasty, would it be possible that they are descendants from Jesus Christ? If so, why Mary Magdalene? It seems that the only explanation possible is that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife, and the Holy Grail is nothing more than the descendants of both Jesus and Mary Magdalene. According to Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln this is perfectly possible. There are indications of this in the Gospels. Maybe the celebration of the wedding at Cana was in reality Jesus' wedding. And maybe, the reason why some apocryphal Gospels were forbidden by the Church, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, and the *Gospel of Phillip*, was because they established beyond shadow of a doubt that Jesus had Mary Magdalene for a wife and that he didn't die on the Cross. (Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln 348-350).

The Inevitable Conclusions of The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail

The circle is complete! Apparently one of the things that happened with our dear renegade Priest Saunière, was that he was involved in a secret organization that knew the truth about Jesus and Mary Magdalene. That's why he built the Magdalene Tower, that's why he could get favors from the Vatican, that's why he has a station of the Cross with a child covered with a Scottish mantle as a sign of association with the Scottish francmasonry, that's why there were Rosicrucian signs all over the place. It might even explain why in a place in the cementary he engraved the words CHRISTUS A.O.M.P.S. DEFENDIT, the initials probably meaning: *Antiquus Ordo Mysticusque Priuratus Sionis*.

Jesus did not die on the Cross, he married Mary Magdalene, and at a certain point she went to France. Their descendants (the Holy Grail) became the Merovingian dynasty, which later was betrayed

by the Catholic Church. This later led to the founding the *Priuré de Sion* which was the organization behind the founding of the Knights Templars. These Knights were the guardians of the Grail and were related to the Castle Montségur, of the Cathars. Later the region where the Cathars lived, like Rennes-le-Bains and Rennes-le-Château, this secret society would hide this secret and Berenger Saunière got to know it, leading him to join different secret organizations. He took advantage of this knowledge, and reflected all his esoteric thinking in the Church of Rennes-le-Château.

All of this sounds as a very interesting thorough research . . . right? Well, I'm sorry to say this, but all those people who believed in this research will be disappointed when I say that all of it is based on a fraud. Yep, you've been had!

Why is All of This a Fraud?

One of the experts on the subject of Rennes-le-Château, Gérard de Sède shows the evidence of why most of what is being said in *The Holy Blood and Holy Grail* is not true. When I was telling the story of how the documents were discovered, I mentioned the fact that most of the names, like the name of the author, etc., were all fake. All the sources of the documents are fake also because none of them historically check out. Any wise scholar would keep this in mind instead of giving the documents credit in any way (de Sède 75-78).

Gerard de Sède tells us the following: The only thing that the documents say is that there were descendants from the tribe of Benjamin (a lost tribe of Israel) in France, who migrated to Arcadia, Sicilia, the Alps and nearby the Rinne River. From Meroveum to Clodoveum, that lineage was offered to the cult to the goddess Diana. According to the documents, the Carolingians were illegitimate, because they came to power due to the death of king St. Dagobert II. This led to his alleged descendant, Gottfried of Bouillon to found the Priuré de Sion in 1099, and the purpose of this order was to extend the esoteric doctrines of St. John and defend the Merovingian Dynasty. All the writings place the Plantard family as the legitimate dynasty to inherit power. But what the documents of the Priuré really do is to mix legitimate family genealogies with made up genealogies, and make a mix up all kinds people, places and events which contradict history (de Sède 79-84).

The first documents we have at hand on the Prieuré de Sion are from the *twentieth century*. These are the papers and bulletins called *Vaincre pour une Jeune Chevalerie* and also another bulletin called *Circuit*, which were published no earlier than the 1950's apparently by Pierre Plantard de Saint Claire. Interestingly none of these early writings tell us anything on Rennes-le-Château. Most of the other documents made by the Priuré allege that they were written by Henri Loubineau in 1956, but as we said, Henri Loubineau didn't exist, and these documents didn't appear on the French National Library until 1964. Afterward, a good amount of apocryphal texts added to the myth of the relation between Rennes-le-Château and the Prieuré de Sion, these texts were associated falsely to other people. For example, one of them has an address which stated that a "Philippe Toscan" lived in Paris, but Philippe Toscan really lived in Turkey. Another work, apparently written in 1978, called *Abrégé de l'histoire de Francs: les gouvernements et les rois de France*, had the subtitle: "According to the archives of Saint-Hillier's library (Lys Castle)" and said "To the memory to the count Henri de Lénoncourt, known as Henri Lobineau, who died in May 29, 1978 when he was eighty-five years old, who was my guide, and without which the present writings would not exist." One of the things that indicates us the fraudulent nature of this writing, is not only the fact that it is dedicated to Henri Lobineau, but also because in the town of Saint-Hillier there was is no library, and much less a castle. Also Henri de Lénoncourt couldn't have died in May 29, 1978 when he was eighty five years old, for the simple reason that he was born in January 5, 1872, so if he died in 1978 he would have had 106 years. And, he never had Henri Lobineau as a nickname.

Part of this writing plagiarizes other works, and adds other imaginary information. De Sède gives the example of a passage that says that after Charles Martel killed St. Dagobert II, his son, Sigisbert IV, escaped from Martel's persecution and hid in Rennes-les-Bains and Rennes-le Château. He was then healed miraculously close to a fountain at Blesia, and later he was saved by a bishop. That's where the name "Plant Ard" came from. He became count of Rhedae and died in 758. He was buried on the Church of St. Mary Magdalene which he built in Rennes-le-Château. In reality, *it is impossible* that Sigisbert IV would have escaped from a persecution by Charles Martel when he killed Dagobert II, because when Dagobert II died Charles Martel was not born yet. There has never been a fountain at Blesia. Sigisbert IV couldn't have been a count of

Rhedae because at the time it was Alfred I, and because he was killed at the same time as his father, Dagobert II (De Sède 93-94).

This is just a very small sample of all the apocryphal writings placed in the Paris library. Other writings suggest that John XXIII, the Pope, could have been a Great Master of the Priuré de Sion, because each Great Master is nicknamed "John", and the "John XXIII" of the Priuré de Sion coincides apparently with the papacy of Pope John XXIII. Many of the writings even contradict among themselves too. People might say that they originated from different authors, which could explain why the discrepancy of historical facts. However, studies have shown conclusively that ***these works were all typed with the same typewriter.***

Other writings suggest that the family of the "Plantard de Saint-Clair" has a Coat of Arms similar to that of Rennes-le-Château, but in reality they are different, and the attribution of the writings concerning the Coat of Arms of the Plantard de Saint-Clair are nothing more than pure fantasy. People notice the use the phrase "*Et in Arcadia Ego . . .*" in Plantard's Coat of Arms as evidence that there is a link with Poussin's paintings, and hence the link with Rennes-le-Château can be done. But in reality the different pictures called "*Et in Arcadia Ego*" make reference to Snazaro's poem (1502) called "The Arcadia". These paintings include those of Buerchin and Poussin, which deal about the brevity of happiness and the fatality of death. This is the reason why in Poussin's famous painting, the shepherds are looking at a *tomb* trying to understand the phrase "*Et in Arcadia ego*". The selection of Rennes-le-Bains and Rennes-le-Château as the site for the painting is just a mere coincidence, specially when no other painting with the subject of Arcadia refer to this specific place at all (de Sède 97).

But what about the "clear" reference to the Priory of Sion at a tomb in Rennes-le-Château made by Saunière in the inscription: CHRISTUS A.O.M.P.S DEFENDIT? Well, it is very surprising and silly that such renowned scholars like Lincoln, Baigent, and Leigh didn't know that this inscription was used in the Church. For instance, this same inscription can be found on the obelisk of Pope Sixtus V in Rome, and it means: *Christus Ab Omni Malo Plebem Suam Defendit* (May Christ protect His people from all evil) (de Sède 99).

As far as we have seen, these documents, though they are forgeries, do not talk at all about

Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail, and makes just a very incidental reference to the Knights Templars (that the Order of Sion was the one that founded the Templars). Of course, it is not true that such an organization founded the Templars, it doesn't matter what the mysterious origins of the Templars might be. In fact, the whole thing about Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail etc. came as a result of a reflection of our famous scholars Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln. They said: "Oh wow! . . . The Priory of Sion founded the Templars! So, according to the novels about the Grail, the Templars guarded it. Holy Grail means "Royal Blood", hence they were guarding a dynasty, and since the Holy Grail is related to Jesus, then it is Jesus' dynasty. So if the Priory of Sion deals with the Merovingian dynasty, then they are Jesus' dynasty. Then Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife, because legends say that she went to France with the 'Holy Grail'." Presto chango! There is the amazing theory of our dear scholars! Perhaps that's just an example of how historical facts can let imagination run wild. Gerard de Sède, who met them personally, and who initially helped them in their research of Rennes-le-Château, never ceases to denounce their scholarly work as being no more than fraudulent way of thinking, specially when they didn't analyze very well all the surroundings and facts about Berenger Saunière, which he studied extensively in his book about this subject. And yes, Saunière was involved with secret societies, but it was not the Priory of Sion. He was involved clearly with the Rosicrucians and also the Scottish Masonry, which can explain all of the changes he made to the Church of Rennes-le-Château. However, the mystery of how he could finance the constructions of his church still continues.

Where Does the Priory of Sion Come From?

So if this is all false, then where does the Priory of Sion come from? Its origins go as far back as the 1950's according to the *Journal Officiel*. It was specifically founded on June 25, 1956 as a breakup with the Saint-Julien-en-Genevois (Haute-Savoie), with the modest objective of "Studying and Mutual Help Among its Members". Apparently the heads of these organizations were: Pierre Bonhomme, alias Stanis Bellas (Accountant Secretary), Jean Delaval (Vice-President), Pierre Plantard, alias Chyren (Secretary General), and Pierre Desfargots (Treasurer). The only activity of this organization was apparently to publish their ideas through a bulletin called *Circuit*, which presented itself as a "Bulletin of information and

defense of the rights and liberties of the HLM houses" (cheap houses). And as de Sède points out correctly, this group was not at all different in structure and rules to other pseudo-chivalry organizations that were fashionable, and are still fashionable, in Europe (de Sède 86-88).

When Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln wrote their book *The Holy Blood and Holy Grail*, Pierre Plantard was the Great Master of the Priory. Let's examine who is this person. Plantard became part of pseudo-Chivalry organizations as early as 1920, and later in 1942, he began publishing in Paris *Vaincre por une Jeune Chevalerie*, in which the names, the address and director were all one and the same person, Pierre Plantard. Of course, in some editions he was called Pierre de France, in others Pierre de France-Plantard, and in others Pierre Plantard. In all of them, strangely, he never talks about the ideals of Chivalry, but about political and economic issues. It had nothing to do with a so-called Priory of Sion, nor with Rennes-le-Château, nor the Templars, nor any other exotic subject. The monthly issues had more in common with today's personal sites on the Internet than the expression of an actual organization.

After founding the Priory of Sion, evidently what they did, as many pseudo-chivalry organizations try to do, is to give some "historical" and secret background. For instance, in Spain, today's different orders of the Knights Templars try their best to "prove" that they are the real McCoy by saying that they come from the original Templar Order founded in the XII century. Of course, the Priory tried to go a bit further than just claim it. What they did was to forge supposed old documents that "prove" their existence since the end of the XI century, their relation with the Merovingian dynasty and the Templars; wanted to give themselves credit for the strange affairs of Rennes-le-Château, and also, it seems that Plantard, thinking he was a big deal, created an entire mythical view of how he descended from the Merovingian dynasty, and created for himself a Coat of Arms that supposedly belonged to his family. Apparently the members, or Pierre Plantard, said: "Let us create these documents, and submit it to the National Library of Paris to see who is the first idiot to find them and believe the whole story." And alas! That's what happened. And better! Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln not only believed the story, but also added to the legend! And from then on, the Priory of Sion made itself one of the most popular well known "secret" organizations in the world, specially because there were many people, and because there were three

scholars who fell for it, that believed that they guard Jesus's dynasty.

Now . . . About Mary Magdalene Herself

Ever since the publication of *The Holy Blood, and the Holy Grail* there has been nothing short of what I call a "Magdalenomania" concerning Mary Magdalene and her relation to Jesus. Some scholars have made a very thorough, deep and serious study of these subjects, other "scholars" have done nothing short of sensationalism about Mary Magdalene. The thing we must ask first of all is: "Who is Mary Magdalene?"

Mary Magdalene in the Gospels

About Mary Magdalene during Jesus' ministry, these are the things we know for sure. First, according to the Gospels, she was exorcised by Jesus:

[. . .] Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils (Mark 16, 9)

[. . .] Mary surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out (Luke 8, 24).

And that she, along with other women, was a fervent follower of Jesus:

With him went the Twelve, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out. Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their own resources (Luke 8, 1b-3).

And apparently she was well known due to her presence in the tomb at the moment of the resurrection (Matthew 28, 1-8; Mark 16-20; Luke 24,1-11; John 20, 1-18). After this, we practically know nothing else of Mary Magdalene.

Despite this, there has been a long held tradition in the Church that Mary Magdalene was the

prostitute who was forgiven by Jesus (John 8, 1-11; Luke 7, 36-50). However, no one knows 100% if the prostitute in John 8 is Mary Magdalene. We only know that the one in Luke 7 apparently is the Mary sister of Lazarus, according to John 11, 2. St. Bernard de Clairvaux believed that this was Mary Magdalene, but scholars are not so sure of this fact. According to John, this Mary was the "woman with the Alabaster Jar". We must point out that some scholars doubt that in the original stages of this Gospel the character of Mary was mentioned. For example, earlier Gospels, like the Synoptics, fail to mention Mary the sister of Lazarus as the woman with the Alabaster Jar, even in Luke, where Mary of Bethany plays a significant role of follower in that Gospel (Vidal 227-229, 234-235). So we really cannot be sure that Mary of Bethany is the woman with the alabaster Jar. And if we cannot know if Mary of Bethany was Mary Magdalene, the link between Mary Magdalene and the woman with the alabaster jar becomes less likely.

So we really don't have a great deal of information about Mary Magdalene in the canonical Gospels, out of the fact that she was exorcised by Jesus, she was his follower, and that was present at the moment of resurrection.

The Apocryphal Gospels: The Love Between Jesus and Mary

Apparently, since the Gospels don't provide much light concerning the supposed marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, many researchers turn to the apocryphal gospels and writings attributed to the early Apostles. From these apocryphal texts, apparently the Gnostic Gospels seem to be the ones most favored by this group. Among the relevant texts they can allude to for this subject we find: *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *Questions of Mary*, *The Birth of Mary*, and *The Gospel of Mary* (some of these writings have been lost). In the Gospel of Thomas, we can only find is this text about Mary Magdalene:

Simon Peter told him [Jesus]: Mary should leave from among us, because women are not worthy of life. Jesus said: Look, I will make her be a male, so that she achieves also a living spirit similar to yours the male ones; because any woman that makes herself a male, will enter the Kingdom of heaven" (*Gospel of Thomas* 114).

This admittedly strange passage apparently has as explanation the fact that Jesus endows women with the same living spirit (the spirit from the heavens) that men have, so that they can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We can see here the confrontation of Simon Peter with Mary Magdalene, apparently the reason is that she is a woman and hence she should not be with them.

The next gospel that may shed light of why the confrontation of Peter with Mary Magdalene can be found in the *Gospel of Philip*:

And the companion of [the Savior is] Mary Magdalene. The [Savior] loved her more than all his disciples, and frequently kissed her on the mouth. The rest of [the disciples] [got close to her to ask]. They told him: "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Savior responded and said: "Why do I not love you as I love her?" (*Gospel of Philip* 63-64).

That's a very interesting passage, and perhaps one of the most used by those who support the theory that definitely Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife. Some scholars argue that the fact that she is called Jesus' "companion" is enough evidence to prove that she was his wife, because "companion" in Aramaic *only* means wife. There is a small problem with this argument, though: the *Gospel of Philip* was written in Greek (although the original we have is Coptic), not Aramaic, and throughout the entire Gospel we can see reflected a very strong Hellenistic Gnostic way of thinking, and it is very distant from Hebrew thinking.

But no other Gospel is more controversial concerning this subject than the famous *Gospel of Mary*, in which we see again a confrontation between Simon Peter and Mary Magdalene. In this Gospel, apparently, Mary Magdalene has a special revelation, and Jesus blesses her for that (*Gospel of Mary* 10). Mary seems to impart teachings about Jesus to the Apostles themselves, telling them about the things that Jesus has revealed to her, and Simon Peter confronts her saying:

Has he [Jesus] spoken to a woman without us knowing it, so now we have now to go back and listen to her again? He has preferred her to us. (*Gospel of Mary* 17).

This passage reminds us of what we have seen already in the *Gospel of Thomas*. One of the Apostles, Matthew, tried defending Mary from Peter's accusation, and told him that the Savior made her worthy to receive this teaching. It was after listening to her and Matthew that the Apostles went out to preach the Gospel.

But all of these fascinating passages have an explanation far less sensational than the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, but just as interesting. When looked within their historical and textual contexts we can understand them better. The act of kissing of the mouth found in the *Gospel of Philip* has a reason for being, for Gnostics a kiss on the mouth was a symbol for passing "knowledge" (*gnosis*), so the jealousy of the Apostles had to do, not with the fact that Jesus was in love with Mary Magdalene, but the fact that **he is giving her far more knowledge than them**. That's what the Gnostics understood. Of course, not to mention this makes modern day average people think that eventually there was a love affair between Jesus and Mary. In the *Gospel of Mary* we see this more clearly, since we see Mary Magdalene as the perfect Gnostic preacher, that at a certain moment talks about the way the soul ascends to divinity and the way Jesus revealed this to her. That's where the jealousy of Peter comes from. It would make no sense for Peter to be jealous if Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife, because Jesus in any case would have responded that she is his wife, and that it is perfectly reasonable to kiss her more. But he never responds in such a way in the Gnostic Gospels.

The confrontation between Peter and Mary Magdalene is also significant in another aspect. It seems that Peter and Mary are fighting because of leadership and their closeness to Jesus. This selection of Mary Magdalene as Peter's rival was quite common in Valentinian writings and Gospels. Mary Magdalene and James the Less played in those Gospels the roles of rivals of Peter, and Peter becomes the symbol of the authority of the Apostles. In fact, it is known that Valentinians made in some instance Mary the representative of James. These stories represented symbolically the confrontation between the traditional Apostolic-Pauline branch of Christianity and the Gnostics. The Gnostics wanted to show themselves superior to the Apostles, so they make Mary Magdalene (which represents the Gnostics) as having being kissed or as the receptors of the secret teachings that Jesus did not reveal to the Apostles. Mary Magdalene is in many ways ideal to this, because she was a follower of Christ, and she was the first to see Jesus after the

Resurrection. Also, she is a female, a principle that was constantly supported by Valentinian Gnostics, as the soul is presented sometimes as female and superior to the "male" matter (see comments of José Montserrat Torrens in Piñero, Montserrat and García 127-137).

Once all of this is seen these texts in light of what they *truly* mean, I can ask, why Mary Magdalene should be the wife of Jesus. Apocryphal texts also display another possible candidate: Salome, one of Jesus' followers. The *Gospel of Thomas* says that she shared her bed with Jesus (*Gospel of Thomas* 61), but this passage is deliberately omitted by those who say that Jesus married Mary Magdalene. Why? The *Gospel of Thomas* dates from the second century, far closer to Jesus than any of the other apocryphal texts we have mentioned. But incredibly, they can't answer the question. In fact, they completely avoid this problematic issue, only fixing their eyes on few texts in which Mary and Jesus are very close to each other.

Conclusion

Of course, the conclusion in light of all of this seems to be that there is absolutely no basis at all to believe that Jesus did marry Mary Magdalene. Again, I'm not closing the possibility that this might have actually happened. But if this is what really happened, the silence of the Gospels and other writings, even apocryphal writings, is very strange. Yes, as we have seen, in the Gnostic Gospels she is close to Jesus, but not because they were married, and certainly they don't talk at all about any offspring coming from that marriage. All this closeness tells us is that Gnostics believed they had "knowledge" (*gnosis*) that the Apostles did not have.

The rest of the "evidence" of this claim is the product of wild imagination of three scholars (Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln), basing themselves on forged documents. Unfortunately this has led other people's imagination run even wilder.

Quite often I find also some Christians and liberal Catholics who subscribe to this theory. Margaret Starbird is an example of this. I am saddened that she believes this. She wanted genuinely to research this whole issue and find the truth. She made a scholarly study that seemed to

confirm what Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln stated in their book. However, this research is more an interpretation of symbols in the Middle Ages that "suggest" that Mary Magdalene indeed went to France. A sadder part of this is that in her first work about this, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar*, she relies heavily on *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. She quotes it about 12 times in her book, specially in key places when she needs the link between Mary Magdalene and the Merovingian Dynasty. Furthermore, she quotes Henry Lincoln and his book *The Holy Place* where he further uses his wild imagination to elaborate more on Rennes-le-Château alleging that key sites form a star, having a mountain as its center (giving all of this a symbolic meaning related to Mary Magdalene). She quotes too the book *The Temple and the Lodge*, by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh which studies the presence of the Templars in Scotland. Unfortunately she wanted to go as far as even link the whole thing with Tarot cards. What surprises me about this entire research is that **not once** did she question the authenticity of the documents of the Priory of Sion in the way we have done.

But the saddest part of this story is that she left the Catholic Church as the result of her research. It is sad because I feel that her heart is in the right place, but the means to accomplish what she wanted was not the best. I think that women should be ordained, they should have more voice within the Church, and they must be given more power. And I don't mind them choosing the figure of Mary Magdalene as a symbol of Apostleship and the place women should have in the Church. Nor do I mind the thorough study of the symbolic dimension of Mary Magdalene, and the association of her with other Christian and Pagan symbols. What I *do* mind is that as product of this overwhelming hoax, and products of rampant imagination of scholars and "scholars", people as good hearted and intelligent as Starbird leave the Church.

I hope that this work is made known by many to diffuse some sensationalist views that become fashionable, but which in the long run are not true. Unfortunately, and it hurts me to say so, lies and misleading information are often more popular than truth itself. If someone finds some thing as sensational, regardless of whether it is true or not, he or she makes it sell, because people like that which is "forbidden", or "heterodox", or that "challenges the establishment". The Church has been wrong in many issues and is hiding many things to the public. But believe me, most probably the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, as well

as their supposed "descendants" of the Merovingian Dynasty, is an information that the Church is *not* hiding. It is possible that it never existed in the first place.

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