

Priory of Sion

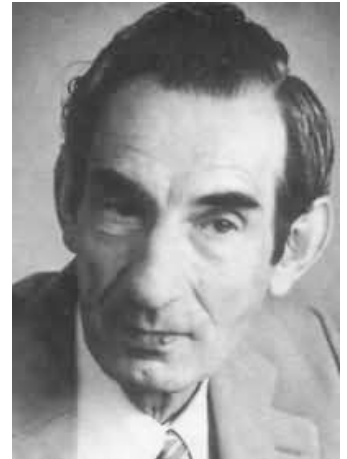
"The Priory of Sion has a momentous duty. Theirs is a threefold charge. The brotherhood must protect the Sangreal documents. They must protect the tomb of Mary Magdalene. And, of course, they must nurture and protect the bloodline of Christ" - Teabing p 345

What does the Da Vinci Code say?

The Priory of Sion is a secret organisation formed to protect the true secret of the Holy Grail. Grand Masters include Isaac Newton and Leonardo da Vinci. This was confirmed by the discovery of documents in the National Library of Paris (p 280). These details are also mentioned on Dan Brown's "Facts" page.

What are the facts?

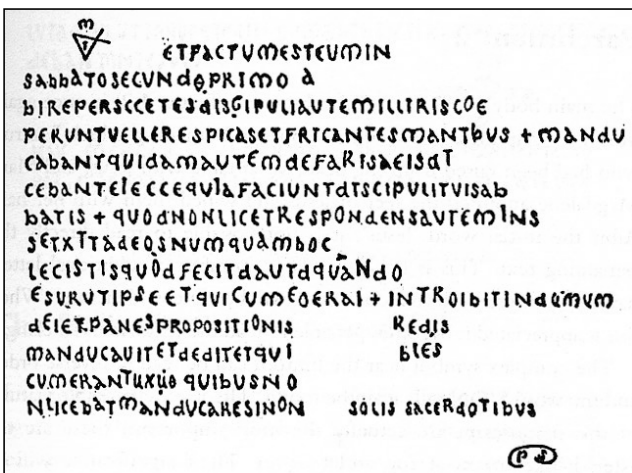
In the 1890 a priest named Francois Berenger Saunier became very wealthy, so much so that he was able to restore his decaying church, Rennes-le-Chateau. Some claimed he had unearthed a powerful secret while renovating his church, which he used to black mail the Catholic Church. Much later, in the 1960's, documents supposedly from Saunier's church were found. Two reporters studied and decoded them but they had trouble understanding them. Then they were tipped off about extra documents in Paris' Bibliotheque Nationale. These documents, *Les Dossiers Secrets d'Henri Lobineau* (Henri Lobineau's secret records), appeared to be records of the Priory of Sion, containing a list of Grand Masters and a family tree of the French Royal family. The two reporters teamed up with another man and together they studied the documents, finally revealing the secret to the world in the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. Their central claim was that the Priory of Sion was a secret organisation established to protect the descendants of Jesus who had married into the Royal French line.



Pierre Plantard
Reportedly served time in prison in the 1950's for fraud.
(Picture from wikipedia.org)

It's a fascinating story, but that's all it is. The hoax began with a man named Pierre Plantard. He was a french royalist who longed to restore chivalry and monarchy to France. He established the Priory of Sion in 1956 by registering it with the government. His group attracted a few members but seemed to die off. He was the one who lead the reporters to the secret documents and asserted that he was a member (perhaps even the leader) of an ancient group called the Priory of Sion. It has become apparent that he actually forged the documents with the help of friends, which is supported by the fact that he is included in the Royal family tree, boosting his claim to be heir to the French throne!

It seemed like everything was working out fine for Pierre Plantard until the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* linked the French royalty and the Priory of Sion to the descendants of Jesus. Plantard panicked and in a 1982 interview on French radio he said:



One of the so-called Rennes-le-Chateau documents. It is written in code and note the P S signature.

(Picture from www.ordotempli.org)

"There is part of the book 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."

Since then Plantard and at least one of his colleagues have admitted they pulled off a hoax. The Priory of Sion did exist but it was nothing like the organisation described in the Da Vinci Code. As an extra note, the priest Saunier got rich by tricking people into thinking they could pay him for a place in Heaven. His church has detailed records of this.

Conclusion:

There is no evidence for a secret society called the Priory of Sion, especially not one since 1099 as Dan Brown claims. While conspiracy theorists may maintain that the Priory has simply covered its tracks well, we have no good reason for believing it exists.

Further Reading:

Simply do a search on the Internet to find hundreds of resources!

All page references to "The Da Vinci Code" are from the Corgi Books paperback.