



The Da Vinci Code (I)

by ATHOS

For the common people, the existence of a secret organization always produced distrust and animosity, since, by definition, the public is based on all that is public and everything that is hidden and unknown irritates. The pleasure a tourist experiences when stepping inside the bedroom of a “celebrity” is also due to the opportunity to penetrate a “secret” and “intimate” place. Today, when nothing is considered “intimate” anymore, an organization like Masonry, for example, is difficult to accept. The mass-media’s slogan, “the public has the right to know,” is very well known. It is abused and used to hunt all sorts of gossip and intimacies and so-called “secrets,” when, in fact, the information people need and have a right to know should be of a totally different nature.¹ At the same time, the public is always focused on “uncommon” individuals (called today “celebrities”), exactly because they looked different from the common people (who constitute the “public”). Therefore, a conspiracy theory, which implicates a secret famous organization, will have, obviously, much more success than an unknown one. Free-Masonry, with its links to Rosicrucians and Templars, represented an ideal target for the exponents of the conspiracy theory.

The obliteration of the Order of the Temple is a good example of the profane mentality’s reaction with regard to a secret organization. Generally speaking, in a society that has lost its traditional characteristic the idea of a “state inside the state,” that is, the existence of an autonomous group, having its own rules different from the official ones (yet not against the official laws governing that country), is inconceivable. Like Free-Masonry later, the Order of the Temple became unbearable and was destroyed. If Masonry survived (even if there were epochs when it was totally prohibited), that was due to the passage from “operative” to “speculative” and, especially in modern times, due to its opening to the world, where in its ranks were accepted many individuals who, in normal times, would not have a chance of becoming masons without possessing the necessary qualifications. As speculative Masonry, the organization comprised among its

¹ Of course, the people should be informed with regard to the social, political and economical order; and they should know the “secrets” regarding illegal activities. But there is a tendency to bury the really important issues in a huge amount of gossip and intimacies.

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members preeminent characters belonging to the government, either princes and kings or presidents, which assured its survival.

Yet, it did not mean, as the Templars were accused of all types of absurd crimes, that Masonry did not suffer the same accusations.² The antitraditional forces, perfidiously, took advantage of the fundamental law of traditional symbolism, which stipulates that not only does a symbol, by definition, accept an indefinite number of meanings, but also it always has two faces, one beneficent, and the other maleficent, since our world is based on duality. In different epochs, the beneficent meaning was lost, and only the maleficent one remained; in this mode, Saturn, the king of the “Golden Age,” became an ogre, and was even identified with Satan (his symbolic weapon, the scythe, became the tool of Death); similarly, the wolf lost its luminous and spiritual aspects, remaining in the people’s memory as the “bad wolf”; the same thing happened to the colour black. Correspondingly, the Templars’ rites and emblems were interpreted in a maleficent sense (if not they were invented, purely and simply). And likewise, the Masonic pentagram was confused (malevolent or not) with a satanic insignia; yet the five-point star is a symbol of the Microcosms and only by degeneration did it become to be used in some satanic ceremonies.³

Coming back to the initiatory organizations, it must be stressed that (even secret) societies and associations are the expression of an individual initiative. Their rules and regulations, their organizational style, the oath and meetings, represent a typical individual “bureaucracy,” while an authentic and superior initiatory organization is usually invisible, without any outside traces, and the case of the Rose-Cross is the best known; or, if they manifest their presence, they would need only initiatory rites and traditional symbols. Only in special occasions may the initiatory organizations take an external form similar to that of a society, as occurred with Masonry; yet even then it would be wrong to consider them secret societies, since many of the esoteric organizations possessed an initiatory secret that is incommunicable because of its very nature and not due to some external interdictions. However, profane societies copied, more or less, traditional organizations, aping their content, and therefore we have to be very careful when we want to characterize a visible organization.⁴

² The “Morgan case” is well-known in North America.

³ The pentagram was not only a Masonic emblem, but also a Rosicrucian one, symbolizing the initiate, that is, “the perfect man.” The mockery that presents the satanist with a pentagram on his chest is a part of a larger action, a counter-initiatory one, aiming at the desecration of the traditional symbols. We may note that the “adverse” forces, not at all negligible, know only to imitate, their role being to steal the traditional elements and desecrate them in an infernal mode. For the common people, such an action generates an irremediably confusion, and that is what these forces want. There are other examples we could mention. Guénon stated that the apocalyptic number 666, “the number of the Beast,” is also a solar number; as well the lion is, at the same time, Christ and Antichrist’s emblem. The confusion between the luminous aspect of the symbol and its dark side constitutes “satanism” (Guénon, **Roi**, p. 30).

⁴ As an example, Guénon wrote, we should mention the “Bavarian Illuminati,” which represent an antitraditional society, that is, a profane one, and which was organized as an imitation of Masonry; on the other hand, Carbonarism, even though similar to *Illuminati* (because of its revolutionary activity), was originally an initiatory organization based on craft, which severely degenerated, with its members losing the meaning of their rites and symbols. It is obvious that we have to be cautious when we want to specify

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An initiatory organization does not usually leave written evidence, and that is one of the reasons why the historians will never fulfill their profane curiosity. For this reason, anytime the individual founders (without traditional attachments) of a group are exactly known, we can be sure that it is not an initiatory organization. An initiatory organization, Guénon stressed, is indeed “ineffable”; it is not submitted to contingencies and no worldly power can dismantle it (as in the case of a profane society), since the quality of its members is permanent and cannot be withdrawn, remaining real and operant, as long as one single “member” stays alive (in the case of the Templars, the “initiatory secret” was transferred to Masonry).

Diverting the initiatory organization’s energies toward social, sentimental and moral objectives diminishes its effectiveness; yet, especially when it becomes implicated into the political domain, the decay is irremediable. On the other hand, there were circumstances when an initiatory organization inspired one or more external, but genuine traditional organizations, due to their attachment to the initiatory organization that “generated” them, the latter guiding them in an “invisible” mode, through a subtle activity of presence and “non-action” (the Far-Eastern *wu-wei*).

Speculative Masonry, by its opening to the many, to which we should add the unfavorable moment of the evolving human cycle, weakened and allowed because of this very weakness a lot of so-called Masonic organizations, in fact counterfeit groups based on individual initiatives, to be born.⁵ If true Masonry is based on a regular and uninterrupted transmission, all the pseudo-Masonic societies and associations have a fantasist origin. Therefore, when some amateurish authors write that Masonry was an important factor in starting the French Revolution, for example, and they introduce the conspiracy theory, it is willingly forgotten that, in those times, in Germany, France, Russia, and Scandinavia, kings and princes were members of Free-Masonry, which made Queen Marie Antoinette exclaim: “Everybody is a mason! So, where is the danger?”⁶ Yet the danger was not Masonry itself, but exactly the fact that “everybody is a mason”; since, this “dilution” of Masonry was a true misfortune, which permitted the manifestation of deviated individuals (among whom, of course, were masons belonging to the regular lodges) and of dubious and profane societies dressed in Masonic clothes.⁷

One of the problems related to Free-Masonry that haunted the imagination of the modern world was the secrecy. From a historicist point of view, of course, it is impossible to understand that the “initiatory secret” is a mystery first of all because it is inexpressible, containing super-human truth that cannot be limited by words. Then, the point of view of an initiatory organization is not a worldly one, and as Saint Paul cannot be judged by human standards, so it is absurd to try to explain initiation by profane

the nature of an organization, especially since the name (like “Illuminati”) can easily deceive us (Guénon, **Aperçu sur l’Init.**, p. 83).

⁵ As Guénon said, “Regarding the Masonry, we must say that the infiltration of the modern ideas, to the initiatory mentality’s detriment, made Masonry not one of the agents of the «conspiracy,» but one of its first victims” (Guénon, **Franc-Maçonnerie**, I, p. 110).

⁶ On the other hand, the opinion that the revolutions are spontaneous is as well erroneous.

⁷ The Masonic terms “assembly” and “convention,” gestures and rituals, mode of organizing, were adopted by revolutionaries and are used today by political parties.

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means. What characterizes all this amateurish “literature” that focused upon the Masonic secret is the endeavour to invent something sensational and corporeal, which could represent the “secret.” Yet, unfortunately for historicism, as much as we boast about the human imagination, its possibilities are limited to few scenarios.

Let us try to trace logically these scenarios. An option would be to consider Jesus an alien, and that the Templars and the Masons knew this secret. Yet there is nothing new here, since some decades ago a campaign was launched to convince the public that all the gods are aliens coming from other planets. Another option would be to consider the “secret” a precious document⁸; yet in this case the “secret” is still unveiled. We can imagine that the document hides an even bigger secret: that, for example, the true God is the one worshiped by the Templars and not by the Catholic Church; this idea is a very old one, and it is well-known that the Gnostics used it. We might suppose that the Templars and the Masons were some sort of satanists, but we cannot see how this “secret” is a secret, when such accusations accompanied Christianity all along, and Jeanne d’Arc and the Templars were publicly punished for this very reason. Another option would be to consider that the Templars hid a “secret” used to blackmail the Catholic Church.⁹ Yet what is the reason for the blackmail? For power? For money? Impossible, because then we alter the basic truth about the Templars.¹⁰ And if the Templars had a secret which could be used to blackmail the papacy, this should have been related to a false religion or a false God; but the Templars were strong defenders of the Catholic religion.

As we may note, there are not too many scenarios. Various authors have tried all these options and all their works, at the end, deflated since they could not unveil a secret sufficiently sensational to stand for a real “secret.” All the works had one element in common: they referred to Jesus and, more or less subtly, were against the Catholic Church. In fact, to write a best-seller regarding this subject it is enough to have at hand a list of keywords, such as: Gnosticism, Masonry, Templars, Grail, Knights of the Round Table, Rosicrucianism, Jesus, Jerusalem Church,¹¹ Essenes, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, conspiracy theory, etc., and to connect them as cleverly as possible. Of course, it does not mean that the best-seller has also to tell the truth.¹²

⁸ We could consider the “secret” some kind of treasure, but Dumas already exploited it in his **Count of Monte-Cristo**.

⁹ We must comment that the obsession of some authors for the Templars and Catholicism is at least weird.

¹⁰ However, such a hypothesis is too modern. Only the modern man thinks that everything is money and power.

¹¹ In a recent book it is considered that James and the Jerusalem Church transmitted to the Templars the Masonic “secret”; the absurdity and ignorance that characterize each page of this work are amazing. We note that some Gnostics had a special attraction for James, “the brother of Jesus,” yet, almost certainly, they used him as a pretext to expose their doctrine; in **The First Apocalypse of James**, Christ states: “James, my brother. For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother materially” (Nag Hammadi, p. 262).

¹² One of the sure signs that could point out such a phantasmagoria (which often has a malevolent purpose) is its critical view regarding the medieval Christian traditional society (considering that this represents “the dark age”), and also its favorable views regarding the Renaissance and the “age of enlightenment.”

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We may view modern literature from a quadruple perspective, with respect to the author: there are authors, very few, who possess initiatory data and these are reflected in their works¹³; there are authors who, unconsciously, transmit in their works unaltered traditional vestiges; there are antitraditional authors who willingly abuse the sacred symbols and fabricate others, writing a maleficent literature; eventually, there are authors who, manipulated without knowing by counter-initiatory forces, issue noxious writings.

We witness today an explosion of literature belonging to the last two categories we just mentioned. It is a sign of the times. Two subjects are dealt with obsessively in this kind of literature, whether fiction or not. The first one is Jesus Christ, no more no less; the second is the Holy Grail, which, however, is related to the first. The major problem of our times is that, for the many, the capacity to look upwards, in a *sattwic* mode, is missing. Preoccupied with all sort of daily affairs, modern people do not have time for anything else and, generally, it is much easier to look downwards: it is the effect of the last layer of oxygen. In other words, the solidification of the world is so advanced, that the human being is pulled downwards (where the heaviest element, earth, is), in contrast to the spiritual which rises by itself (symbolized by air and fire). For this reason, any attempt to rise toward Christ is impossible, and for the many it is much more convenient to bring Christ down, among humans, not as an *avatarana*, but purely and simply as a desecration.

A famous author, Nikos Kazantzakis, increased his fame by issuing a book called **The Last Temptation of Christ**. In fact, it is about Kazantzakis' temptation, and the author failed to resist, bringing to our attention old heresies from Saint Paul's days. As we have already said, the great temptation was always to bring the gods to a human level. Therefore Greek mythology is full of gods with very human behaviour. For the same reason the much-admired art of the ancient Greeks became exclusively human; trying to copy the Nature, their art decayed into an antitraditional art. In the case of Christianity, where Christ was accepted with two natures, one divine, the other human, the temptation to make him just a man, nothing more, was even more powerful. Of course, Jesus is presented as a "holy man," yet as the Church insisted on his human nature, so others started to depict him not as a "holy man," but as a simple and common human being; and the easiest way to erase the adjective "holy" was to describe him as an individual implicated in sexual and sentimental activities, since, it is well known that the visceral area, that of the desires, and even more the psychical area, are the Adversary's domain.¹⁴ And that is how Kazantzakis proceeded, focusing the entire book upon the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, and enveloping everything in a rough human cloak.

The idea of describing Jesus and Mary Magdalene as a couple is not new; it was already present at the beginning of Christianity, in the Gnostic doctrines. The fact that the Holy Trinity is purely "masculine," even though in an absolute sense it is neutral, like the three lights of the Hindu tradition, tempted many to suggest the existence of a couple;

¹³ Of course, in the case the authors only think that they are endowed with an initiatory knowledge, fantasizing that they have the key of the secret treasure, without in fact to be attached to an initiatory organization or an authentic tradition, their work does not worth much.

¹⁴ The counter-initiatory and adverse forces do not have access to the super-individual, angelic world; therefore Coomaraswamy could conclude that the devils' home is our ego (our "soul").

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since Mary Magdalene was present at Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, she was chosen for this role. Kazantzakis followed the Gnostic model and presented the famous scene found in **The Gospel of Philip**, when Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth; also he alluded to a son who was born as a result of this union.¹⁵

Leisegang selected, from **Pistis Sophia**, the paragraphs related to Mary Magdalene, where she is the main character, besides Jesus: "Indeed, Mary, you are the blessed one among all the women of the world, since you will be the Pleroma of all pleromas and the Perfection of all perfections. Indeed, Mary, you are blessed, since you will inherit the entire kingdom of light"; and Leisegang noticed the imitation in Simon Magus' Gnostic doctrine, where the prostitute Helen was an *alter ego* of Mary Magdalene (Leisegang 83-84). Gnosticism had a long life and, due to its heretical characteristic, its independence and individualism, and its "eso-exoteric" content, always found imitators; that not to say that some Gnostic sects kept interesting genuine initiatory data.

Luigi Valli, who was accused by Guénon of having a profane mentality, not an "initiatory" one (**Ésot. Chrét.**, p. 56), is a predecessor of the modern authors in this direction. He mixed together Gnosticism, Rosicrucianism, Cathars, Fedeli d'Amore, sometimes without much sense of distinction. An author, quoted by Valli, even wrote a book called "The Gnostic essence of Dante's thinking" (p. 422). Jean Tourniac suggested also that the Gnostic doctrine was transmitted to Masonry and the Templars, but he at least referred to the "Gnosis of the first Christians," admitting that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between genuine and false Gnosis (**Principes**, pp. 139, 151, 155, 170-1). Guénon, in a review, wrote about an author who tried to explain the Templars' symbols "referring to the «Gnostic and Essenic» doctrines, which represent only vague labels, since we do not know much about the Essenes, and a lot of disparate things are called «Gnostic»" (**Comptes rendus**, p. 159).

¹⁵ Nikos Kazantzakis, **The Last Temptation of Christ**, Faber and Faber, 1987, pp. 457-8.