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The Family Guy

The bloodline remains only an idea while a three-century gap remains unplugged

The Jesus Papers
Explaining the Greatest Cover-Up in History

Michael Baigent
Harper San Francisco
Hb; 321pp, illus, bib, notes, ind, \$27.95 ISBN 0060827130

Michael Baigent, co-author of “Holy Blood, Holy Grail”, we are told, is “a religious historian and a leading expert in the field of arcane knowledge [with] unequalled access to hidden archives, secret societies, Masonic Records, and the private collections of antiquities traders and their moneyed clients”.

There is nothing here to suggest that any of that is true. It is 22 years since HBHG was published, founded on the claim of a Jesus bloodline, which was also in some way the Grail. As Mr Justice Peter Smith put it in his remarkably clear and informative judgment (see page 5): “What was original was the merging of the Jesus bloodline with the Merovingian bloodline as an idea...” After 22 years, we expect more detail. If Jesus and Mary Magdalene married, who were their children? Who were the 15 or 20 generations between, say, AD30 and the early Merovingians of AD450? The bloodline is STILL no more than an idea.

Baigent backtracks to a very narrow argument: that Jesus was alive in AD45. This rests on a report of a 1982 interview with an elderly vicar. It wasn't good enough for HBHG, but is supposedly an incomplete recollection from 50 years earlier of another clergyman's account of translating a document, or documents – in Paris, 40 years earlier – that said something about Jesus living on after the Crucifixion. Baigent seems to have done nothing to verify this vague, third-hand account.

Secondly, there are the ‘Jesus Papers’, two glass-covered papyri which Baigent was apparently allowed, briefly, to hold. He believed them to be letters from Jesus to the Sanhedrin, because he was told that they were, but as he couldn't read them, he doesn't know what they said. We can't talk to their owner because he is insufficiently identified to trace.

The same is true of two other documents Baigent apparently tried to buy. When he asked for photos to verify their content before buying them, none were forthcoming. Baigent records no further effort to investigate these supposedly amazing documents, and appears not to have approached any academic body or community for help.

In between these blocks of hearsay is all sorts of silliness about Rennes, Sauniere, the Cathars and Montsegur. There's also speculation about the Crucifixion being rigged, but as there's as much proof for this as there is for his earlier claims of the Templars winning Bannockburn, or the Jew-baiting fake that is the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" validating the reality of the Priory of Sion, we need pay it no mind.

No doubt this book will sell, No doubt Baigent will be happy if it does, given the financial demands of the DVC case court costs. If you want to give money to lawyers, here's your opportunity.

Kevin McClure

FORTEAN TIMES VERDICT
A REAL DISAPPOINTMENT - IS THAT ALL THERE IS?