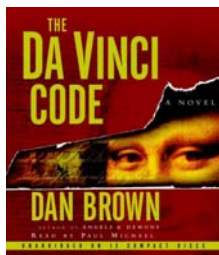


The Da Vinci Code and Biblical Christianity

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All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate. Dan Brown, introductory fact page

"What I mean," Teabing continued, "is that almost everything our fathers have taught us about Christ is false." TDC (234)

What's the Big Deal?

The Da Vinci Code has had phenomenal success. Millions have read the book in hardcover and millions more eagerly await the paperback release. More have watched Dan Brown interviews and the other spin offs that have resulted from the book. The issues of historic Christianity, the formation of the canon of Scripture, and the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth are viable topics of discussion. However, what answers will be found and who will be our sources for information?

"What's at stake in *The Da Vinci Code* is nothing less than traditional Christianity itself... The founder of Christianity had a daughter, Sarah, by Mary Magdalene. If true, this theory would overturn some of the central beliefs of Christians." - David Klinghoffer, *National Review*, Dec. 8, 2003.

Matt Lauer: How much of this is based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred?

Dan Brown: Absolutely all of it. Obviously, Robert Langdom is fictional, but all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies – all of that is historical fact. - Today Show interview, June 9, 2003

"It's interesting to note," says Brown, "that since the beginning of recorded time, history has been written by the 'winners' (those societies and belief systems that conquered and survived).

"Many historians now believe (as do I) that in gauging the historical accuracy of a given concept, we should first ask ourselves a far deeper question: How historically accurate is history itself?" - Juli Cragg Hilliard, ABC Special Examines Da Vinci Code Ideas, *Publishers Weekly*, Religion Bookline.

Questions:

What if everything we have learned about Jesus is false? What if he were proven to be just a man?

What are the implications of this new view of history? Brown wants his readers to discount history as we know it, and yet believe what he is telling is accurate and to be trusted – are there any problems with this logic?

We might call Brown's method "faction" – fiction blended with fact. What are the problems with such writing?

Do you think Brown has any motives behind his book?

The Canon of Scripture (in particular, the New Testament)

TDC goes to great lengths to undermine the Christian scriptures. It insists that there has been a conspiracy to cover up ancient texts that reveal the true nature of religion and Jesus' identity. Is this true?

Teabing paused to sip his tea then placed the cup back on the mantel. "More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.

"Who chose which gospels to include?" Sophie asked.

“Aha!” Teabing burst in with enthusiasm. “The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.” (231)

- **Luke 1:1-4** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

But do we believe [in the present New Testament canon] because a particular Church tells us so? No, we believe this because of the witness of the Holy Spirit, which was given corporately to all of God’s people and has been made manifest by a virtually unanimous receiving of the same New Testament canon in all of the Christian Churches. This is not an appeal to subjectivism because it is an appeal to the corporate witness of the Spirit to the whole communion of saints. The Holy Spirit is the final authority, not the Church through which He bears witness and to which He bears witness. (Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*)

What... should be said about the possibility of adding an ancient document to the canon? The discovery some years ago at Nag Hammadi of several dozen texts from the early Church, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Epistle of Peter to Philip*, and the *Apocryphon of John*, has greatly increased the number of candidates for possible inclusion in a revised form of the canon. Each deserves to be assessed as to its external and internal credentials. How far, for example, does the *Gospel of Thomas* (which, of all the tractates in the Nag Hammadi library, seems to be closest to the New Testament) meet the criteria of apostolicity and orthodoxy, however narrowly or broadly one defines these elusive standards? ... In this case the evaluation of modern readers will no doubt corroborate that of the early Church, namely, that in the *Gospel of Thomas* the voice of the Good Shepherd is heard in only a muffled way, and that it is, in fact, often distorted beyond recognition by the presence of supplementary and even antagonistic voices. (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*)

Church History Part One

In 318 A.D., Arius was spreading the teaching that Jesus was a created being, just like other humans, and not the “begotten Son of God.” Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria opposed him, and Arius was declared a heretic in A.D. 321. But he refused to keep quiet and continued spreading his teaching by sending out letters promoting his ideas. Constantine didn’t like this, because he wanted a stable empire, so he called a meeting to restore peace. He called together more than 300 bishops from around the empire, primarily from the east (which would have favored Arius’ cause, as that was where his influence was the greatest).

The Arians submitted their statement of doctrine which flatly denied the divinity of Christ. It was voted down 316 to 2 (close vote?), because of the commitment the bishops had to the New Testament’s witness. The bishops wrote up the blueprint for the Nicene Creed to demonstrate in a concise way what they church had taught to be the historic position for the previous three hundred years.

Though Constantine’s motives may have been suspect, the work of the council assuredly was not the mechanisms of political propaganda. These people had only recently come out of intense and serious persecution of the church, in which thousands had paid for their faith with their blood.

Church History Part Two

Marcion (90-160 A.D.) created his own Bible – the Gospel of Luke and 10 of Paul’s letters, all “cleansed” of Old Testament influences. No Old Testament at all. Marcion forced the issue of the canon, but it was something already functioning in the church.

The church wanted to make sure that everyone knew what was in the Bible and what wasn’t. They didn’t vote in books and vote out books. They essentially solidified what the church had already believed to be true for decades and centuries. By 200 A.D. four-fifths of the books we find in the New Testament were received without question by the whole church. 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude, Revelation, James and Hebrews were respected and revered, but in the second century were not universally accepted. You have to remember that the church was regionalized and that communication was extremely difficult. As these books became known, they too were accepted into the canon. All but Revelation by 350 A.D. and all by 417 A.D.

There were three other kinds of writings the church had to consider.

1. The writings of apostolic and post-apostolic fathers (late first and second centuries) – these were valued but never considered canonical because they weren’t written by eyewitnesses to Jesus.
2. Popular third-class literary entertainment (second and third centuries) – these were never considered because of their fantastical nature.
3. Heretical books, especially of the Gnostic nature (second to fourth centuries) – TDC calls these the “secret” gospels, but they were never considered because the church recognized how far they were from the message of the canonical books. TDC suggests that the church was dishonest in its method of discernment.

“[The canon] was not imposed from the top, be it by bishops or synods, and then accepted by the communities.... The organized church did not create the canon; it recognized the canon that had been created.” Kurt Aland, *The Problem with the New Testament Canon* (London: Mowbray, 1962), 18

We can confidently date all the books in the New Testament to having been written before 70 A.D. The “secret” gospels can and should be dated to circa 175-250 A.D., during the height of what we now call Gnosticism. TDC wants to assert that the secret gospels are actually precursors to the canonical gospels and thus were written before, and also that Gnosticism was another form of Christianity, equally valid but eventually squashed in a power move.

What is the nature of these Gnostic, so called “secret” gospels? “The most striking theme common to all fifty-two texts dug up at Nag Hammadi is the rejection of the Genesis creation account. The Gnostic texts constantly mock the Creator God as a blind fool. Jahweh is the first and mightiest of all oppressive patriarchs. He is the “heavenly” counterpart of all blustering macho brutes who think they know everything because they are male. These texts despise all created things, especially sexual distinctions, marriage, and motherhood. The true believer must be liberated from such earthly constraints. The Gnostic is also free from any law because the foolish Jahweh made up the law. In this way of thinking, there is no sin, the fall of Genesis 3 is *liberation*, and the serpent of the garden speaks wisdom. The Gnostic Jesus comes with the same message – not to free us from our sin, but to free us from our ignorance. We do not know who we really are. He brings us *gnosis*: knowledge. The knowledge is this – we are divine.” *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, p. 166

Questions:

Why is this Gnosticism so attractive?

What would happen if we undid the canon and inserted some new books?

What is Brown’s agenda with these “secret” gospels?

How would you answer someone asking you about the canon and why you do or don’t trust in the Bible? When was the canon formed? How was it formed?

What is the difference between revelation from God and the myths of mankind?

Can a follower of Jesus dismiss the Old Testament as outdated and observe the New Testament only? Can a follower of Jesus take only the parts of the New Testament that portray Jesus’ words? Why is this possibly problematic?

Early Christian Worship

TDC explains that Christianity is heavily influenced by pagan worship, and has been from the beginning. Is this true?

[Teabing] “Even Christianity’s weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans.”

“What do you mean?”

“Originally,” Langdon said, “Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan’s veneration day of the sun.” He paused, grinning. “To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god’s weekly tribute – *Sunday*.” (232-3)

- **Acts 20:7** On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.
- **1 Cor. 16:1-2** Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration. (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, sect.67; written around 150 AD)

Questions:

What is Brown's argument here?

What is the Biblical response?

Early Christians' Perception of Jesus

TDC claims that Jesus wasn't considered divine until Constantine's time. Is this true?

"At this gathering [of the Council of Nicaea in 325]," Teabing said, "many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the *divinity* of Jesus."

"I don't follow. His divinity?"

"My dear," Teabing declared, "until *that* moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal." (233)

Teabing paused, eyeing Sophie. "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned." (234)

"Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea."

"Hold on. You're saying Jesus' divinity was the result of a *vote*?"

"A relatively close vote at that," Teabing added. (233)

- **Jesus' Deity:** *TOO MANY texts to list*; some key ones outside the four gospels would be Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20.
Jesus allowed others to call him the Christ (Matt. 16:15-20, 26:63-64)
Jesus said He could forgive sins (Matt. 9:2-6, Luke 7:47-48)
Jesus did not stop others from calling him the Son of God (Matt 14:33)
Jesus promised to rise from the dead (Matt 20:18-19, 27:62-63)
Jesus said he would be the ultimate judge at the end of time (Matt 25:31-46)
- **Jesus' Humanity:** Luke alone records that Jesus needed warmth as a baby (2:7,12); went through the normal growing process (2:40,52); got hungry (4:2); slept (8:23); even asked for fish and ate some *after* the resurrection (24:41-42)!

For they who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, sect.63; written around 150 AD)

For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.19.2; written around 180 AD)

Thus the nature of the two substances displayed Him as man and God; in one respect born, in the other unborn; in one respect fleshly in the other spiritual; in one sense weak in the other exceeding strong; in one sense dying, in the other living. This property of the two states – the divine and the human – is distinctly asserted with equal truth of both natures alike, with the same belief both in respect of the Spirit and of the flesh. The powers of the Spirit proved Him to be God, His sufferings attested the flesh of man. (Tertullian, *The Flesh of Christ*, 5.6; written around 215 AD)

"There is no evidence that the text of the original Gospels was "embellished" in the fourth century. Scores and scores of copies of those Gospels already existed in the second century, establishing the text that was received in the fourth. There was no way the texts could have been altered. No one had the authority to call in from the very limits of the Empire every last copy (which by the fourth century were numbering in the hundreds, perhaps thousands) to make the necessary alterations. This really *is* fiction. More than that, it is a cheap shot at the essence of the Christian message." *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, p. 147

Questions:

Is it important to ask whether or not Jesus was divine?

What are the implications if he wasn't divine and Brown is correct?

What are the implications if he was divine and Brown is incorrect?

Brown makes an assumption that Jesus wasn't divine. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Do Jesus' human traits prove he wasn't divine?

Early Christian View of Womanhood / "The Feminine"

TDC paints the picture of the church as the oppressor of women, and as a promoter of a masculine agenda. Is this true?

[Teabing] "The Grail is literally the ancient symbol for womanhood, and the *Holy Grail* represents the sacred feminine and the goddess, which of course has now been lost, virtually eliminated by the Church. The power of the female and her ability to produce life was once very sacred, but it posed a threat to the rise of the predominantly male Church, and so the sacred feminine was demonized and called unclean." (238)

"...Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever." (124)

"The point is that authority and leadership are, and always have been, associated with the male in every society, and I refer to this when I say that patriarchy is universal and that there has never been a matriarchy... Theories that hypothesized a matriarchal form of society 'at an earlier state of history' made a certain, if tortuous sense, until the findings of the past fifty years failed to include a single shred of evidence that such matriarchs had ever existed and demonstrated the inability of all such theories to deal with reality. [Of the h]undreds of the societies we have studied in this century... Without exception [they] have been patriarchal... [Margaret] Mead acknowledged that 'It is true... that all the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense. We have no reason to believe that they ever existed.'" – Stephen Goldberg, chairman of the Department of Sociology at City College, City University of New York, *Why Men Rule: a Theory of Male Dominance* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993, 14, 18, 35)

Pagan cultures before Christianity and their views of women:
Greece, India and China – no rights and were property of their husbands
Aristotle – a woman ranks between a man and a slave
Plato – if a man lived a cowardly life, he would be reincarnated as a woman
Greece – woman could not leave the house unescorted, not allowed to interact with guests
Athens – social status of a slave, not educated
The turning point for women in these cultures was the advent of Christianity.
China – sex-selection infanticide common until Christian missionaries
India – suttee was ended by the influence of Christianity

Brown writes that five million women were burned in the years of the witch hunts (125).

"Today we know that there is absolutely no evidence to support this theory. When the church was at the height of its power (11th to 14th centuries), very few witches died. Persecutions did not reach epidemic levels until after the Reformation, when the Catholic church had lost its position as Europe's indisputable moral authority." Jenny Gibbons, www.cog.org/witch_hunt.html, a self-confessing, Neopagan

"Most reasonable modern estimates suggest perhaps 100,000 trials between 1450 and 1750, with something between 40,000 and 50,000 executions, of which 20 to 25 percent were men." Gibbons

While that is 40,000 to 50,000 too many, it is a far cry from the systematic killing of five million.

The first women's rights conference in America was held in a Wesleyan church in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. On the 150th anniversary of this event in 1998, there was a celebration of this conference. Yet in the national media coverage of that event there was no mention of the church's role in the first conference. Perhaps that

was because early feminism was *biblical* feminism based on the scriptural understanding of women: It is unrelated to today's radical pagan feminism. – *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*, p. 76

The apostle Paul usually "takes the hit" for Christianity being anti-woman. What did he have to say?

- **1 Cor. 11:11-12** Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.
- **Gal. 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- **Rom. 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.
- **1 Cor. 7:3-4** The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Now compare those to...

- **The Gospel of Thomas (one of the primary "excluded" gospels), 114** – *These are the final words of the entire book!* Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary go away from us, because women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "Lo, I shall lead her in order to make her a male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Sounder voices from the early church...

The virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, the Master of both is also one. There is one church, one temperance, and one modesty. Their food is common; marriage is an equal yoke.... All those whose life is common, have common graces and a common salvation. Common to them are love and training. "For in this world," He says, "they marry, and are given in marriage," in which alone the female is distinguished from the male. "But in that world, it is so no more." There the rewards of this social and holy life, which is based on conjugal union, are laid up.... Common therefore, too, to men and women is the name of human. (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, 1.4; around 195 AD)

It appeared that the mercy of Christ, and the heavenly grace that would subsequently follow, was equally divided among everyone – without difference of sex, without distinction of years, and without distinction of persons, upon all the people of God the gift of spiritual grace was shed. (Cyprian, *Epistle 75.14*; around 250)

Hieros Gamos – Sacred Marriage

TDC promotes sex as a way to connect with the divine, a practice called Hieros Gamos, Sacred Marriage. Brown says that this is the true early form of Christianity and the church has stamped it out as evil – wrongly so. Is this true?

In the book, there is one religious ceremony described – that of *Hieros Gamos*. Langdon explains to Sophie that when she saw masked worshipers, men in black and women in white standing around a couple having sex, that this *Hieros Gamos* is "not about sex, it was about spirituality... not a perversion... [but] a deeply sacrosanct ceremony." (308-309)

Brown explains why the right of holy marriage, *Hieros Gamos*, fell on hard times: "Holy men who had once required sexual union with their female counterparts to commune with God now feared their natural sexual urges as the work of the devil" (125), and thus the rite was banished by the narrow-minded church.

The goal of the ritual was to gain, at the moment of orgasm in a sexual union with a woman, spiritual completeness and gnosis, or secret knowledge. (308) TDC does not say how a woman gains knowledge, since she is only a "chalice" in this rite (309), but the male, with the help of the chanting crowd, "could achieve a climactic instant when his mind went totally blank and he could see God." (309)

Androgynous minded - Mona Lisa is "smiling" because she is a fusion of male and female (Amon and L'Isa), so that the painting is neither male nor female... [but] carries a subtle message of androgyny,... a fusing of both" (121)

"Blade and chalice fused as one." (446)

The ultimate goal of this mystical experience of oneness with all things is clear - to deny guilt. In this system, there is no place for sin.

"It was man, not God, who created the concept of... sin." (238)

The use of secret rituals and manipulative techniques by committed followers of Christ to produce altered states of consciousness is found nowhere in the Bible. Even the Lord's Supper, a ritual for believers of Christianity, is to be done in the open, and is talked about and explained in the Bible. There is a tone of openness.

"I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret." John 18:20

"the open statement of the truth" 2 Cor. 4:2

"not for the elite" 1 Cor. 1:26-31

events that were "not done in a corner." Acts 26:26

characterized by prayer as Jesus taught it to his disciples - praising and making requests with rational simplicity to the Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9-13)

Is the Bible against sex?

Prov. 5:15 Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.

16 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?

17 Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for strangers with you.

18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,

19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love.

Read Song of Solomon (Song of Songs)

1 Cor. 7: Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6 Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. 7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

Church History Again – the church, in reacting to the culture, over-reacted and missed the boat.

- Historic religious paganism advocated gross unrestrained sexual chaos, with which TDC is enamored.
- Some Christians overreacted and place an undue premium on asceticism, a call for rigorous self-denial. Thus some of the early church fathers defended virginity or celibacy instead of marriage.
- In violation of the biblical mandate, some early church leaders embraced the idea of continence within marriage: the idea that one would be married, yet refrain from sexual expression.
- Some taught that sexual expression between a husband and a wife should be only for purposes of procreation as opposed to the oneness and joy that accompanies biblical marital sexual expression.

Questions:

Does Hieros Gamos clash with the Biblical view of sex, marriage and knowledge? How?

Would you agree that TDC is an appeal to free sex, separate from the parameters established by the Bible?

Is the Bible's view of sex wrong or backwards? Or is it great?

What is wrong with an "altered state of consciousness" approach to spirituality?

Mantra loosely means: "You are at your best when you are not thinking." Is this true?

If sexual orgasm is the royal way to knowledge of God, would it be wrong to gain that knowledge by any means possible? What limit would one want to put on that activity? Any?

Is each person created male and female? What would the implications of that be?

Does the covenant of marriage influence or impact sex and its fulfilling nature?

Rewriting History?

Christian history seems to have many "losers" – those who committed great sins or who were killed for their faith. Yet TDC claims that church leaders – the winners – rewrote history to favor their "side." Is this true?

The Priory of Sion, according to *The Da Vinci Code*, is one of the oldest secret societies still in existence. It is the Priory that has been charged with guarding the secret of the true Holy Grail, starting in 1099 when the Knights Templar discovered long-lost documents beneath the ruins of Solomon's Temple. Leonardo d Vinci was Grand Master of this society, says Robert Langdon, from 1510 to 1519. The only problem is this: It is all a hoax.

Brown relies on a 1982 publication, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, for his information on the Priory of Sion. The authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* relied on documents provided them by Pierre Plantard, an anti-Semitic Frenchman who spent time in jail for fraud in 1953. Plantard and three other men started a small club in 1954 called the Priory of Sion, taking the name from a nearby mountain. Their club's "cause" was the call for more low-cost housing in France. The club dissolved in 1957, but Plantard held on to the name.

Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, Plantard created a series of documents "proving" the existence of a bloodline descending from Mary Magdalene, through the kings of France, down to the present day to include (surprise!) Pierre Plantard. He began using the name Plantard de Saint-Claire, saying that the Saint-Claire's were direct descendants of the line of Jesus and Mary.

In 1993, Plantard's name came up in light of a political scandal involving a close friend of then French president Francois Mitterand. Plantard had, in one of his documents lists of the Priory of Sion, listed Roger-Patrice Pelat as Grand Master. When called before the court to testify, Plantard, under oath, admitted he had made up the whole Priory scheme. The court ordered a search of Plantard's house, which revealed further documents that proclaimed Plantard to be the true king of France. The judge gave Plantard a stern warning and dismissed him as a harmless crank. www.priory-of-sion.com/psp/id22.html (found in *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, pp. 112, 113)

Other Questions the Book Raises

TDC makes symbols very important. Why is this? What about the use of symbols in pagan and Christian worship?

Is there a real Satan? What is the difference between the Biblical Satan and the pagan Baphomet?

Is the question of evil answered in this book? Why or why not? If we are all gods, then why should we be upset when someone hurts us? Does the pagan idea adequately deal with brokenness and evil? Does Christianity?

TDC pushes toward a unified religion, a fusion of all religions. Why is that a popular notion? Should we seek a unified religion?

What do you think of this quote: "Jesus won't become a national figure unless he can move outside Christianity"? (from American Jesus, S. Prothero)

What is the difference between pagan monism and biblical theism?

What is the difference between liberation from the Creator to do one's own thing and reconciliation with the Creator, who comes to His creation as a savior?

Key Resource for Dan Brown

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*

**Note the names! Richard Leigh + Michael Baigent → Sir Leigh Teabing*

For Further Reading

Byron Barlowe, "The Da Vinci Code: Of Magdalene, Gnostics, the Goddess and the Grail," *Leadership U*, February 2, 2004.

Darrell Bock, "The Good News of Da Vinci," *Christianity Today*, February 2004.

James Garlow, Peter Jones, *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, Victor Books: Colorado Springs, 2004.

Collin Hansen, "Breaking *The Da Vinci Code*," *Christian History*, 7 November 2003 .

Sandra Miesel, "Dismantling the Da Vinci Code," *Crisis*, 1 September 2003 .

DaVinci Code Thoughts by Dr. John Hannah

Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

The book is fiction; a disclaimer appears in the preface (ii) that characters, events, and coincidences have no factual basis.

The fictional thesis in the book revolves around a conspiracy, a dark secret kept within the Roman Catholic Church of subversive distortion, a dark secret hatched in the fourth century by Constantine and the papacy to twist the teachings of Jesus. It was a masculine power play to redefine the church. Jesus was actually married to Mary Magdalene who was his true successor. Some knew this secret of the church and it was used by the knights of Templar, a group from the Crusader period, who had the documents to prove it. They used this knowledge to blackmail the papacy for favors, but the papacy responded by creating the Work of God (Opus Dei), a society bent on destroying those who knew where the documents were that would destroy the credibility of Christianity. The book is a cat-and-mouse game, the Church employing intrigue and murder to find and destroy evidence and the Opus Dei seeking to recover it from hiding to expose the church.

- 1) The book contains a deeply Liberal bias about the corruption of the documents upon which Christianity is based. The sources of Christian faith outside the Bible in the second and third century are multitudinous and affirm affinity with the apostles, as well as the fourth century and beyond. There is continuity of belief from the second to the fourth century, not corruption.
- 2) It is no proof that Constantine was a life-long pagan because he put off baptism until his death bed; it is proof of how serious he took his faith. If there was no forgiveness for moral sins after baptism, then one should be careful about when they are baptized if they know the corruption of their souls.
- 3) Christianity existed before Constantine and he did not make it the state religion. He tolerated it among others; it was Theodosius I (380) that made Christianity the religion of the empire. Constantine was not a high priest of a Sun Cult.
- 4) Brown plays very loose with the canon giving the impression that the church never could agree on the issue. Our first collection of books was in the late second century which included the Gospels and the writings of the apostles, not Revelation. History has had a definitive list of books (contra p. 231) and we have agreed on the New Testament canon. There is no record of “eighty gospels” floating around in the early centuries. We have more manuscript evidence for the canon of the Bible than for the verification of any historical event otherwise.
- 5) Constantine did not provide us with the canon of Scripture; it was Athanasius (367 AD); Constantine died in 338.
- 6) To say that the Bible has evolved through the centuries is deceiving. We have a massive amount of manuscript evidence, thousands of versions and so forth. There are discrepancies in minor details, but nothing substantive. The various evidence over the centuries reveals no evolution of content it is static.
- 7) The Roman Catholic Church, though a Protestant is susceptible to say so, did not begin in the fourth century (Constantine’s era). It began creedally in the Late Medieval Era.

John D. Hannah
9/30/03