

## **CRACKING THE DA VINCI CODE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The novel *The Da Vinci Code* written by Dan Brown was published in March 2003 by Random House and has been called the all-time best-selling novel. The book asserts that Leonardo Da Vinci painted clues in his art which reveal a different story about Jesus. One of the characters in the story says, "What I mean is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false." (p.235). The book also states that there is "scientific evidence that the New Testament is false testimony." (p.341). Brown passes off his views on Christianity as historical facts. What makes the book deceptive is that the theories about Jesus and the early church seem credible because they are discussed by a Harvard professor and a British royal historian. A blockbuster movie directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks as professor Langdon is scheduled to be released May 19, 2006.

### **THE PLOT OF *THE DA VINCI CODE***

The story begins with the murder of Jacques Sauniere, curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. Dr. Robert Langdon, Professor of Religious Symbolology at Harvard University, tries to solve the case. Sophie Neveu, granddaughter of Jacques Sauniere and a cryptographer, works with Langdon on the case. Together they discover that Sauniere was a member of a secret society, the Priory of Sion, whose members included Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo Da Vinci. Behind the scenes, Opus Dei, a Catholic lay organization, is plotting to prevent the discovery of the Holy Grail, kept hidden by the Priory of Sion for centuries. Bishop Manuel Aringarosa is the head of Opus Dei sends Silas an albino monk of Opus Dei to chase after Langdon and the keystone. Silas, an albino monk of Opus Dei chases Langdon and Neveu to get the keystone. Bezu Fache, captain of the French FBI chases Langdon because he believes Langdon is guilty of the crime. British royal historian Sir Leigh Teabing lives outside of Paris in a chateaus where Langdon and Neveu take refuge after escaping from the Depository Bank of Zurich with the box containing the keystone. Teabing gives his interpretation of the holy Grail along the way. When Fache discovers that Landon is at his home, they escape on his private jet to London, England. Fache chases Langdon and Neveu from the Louve museum in Paris (where they gain a clue by looking at the Mona Lisa) to the Temple Church in London and Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland and back to Westminster Abbey in London. There is a final confrontation between Teabing and Langdon over the keystone at Westminster Abbey and a discovery about Sophie Neveu. The book ends with Langdon back at the Louve in Paris. Langdon believes that the Holy Grail is hidden in the Louve.

### **BROWN'S REVISIONIST HISTORY**

In the Middle Ages there was much talk about the search for the holy grail. The holy grail was believed to be the cup that Christ drank from at the Last Supper. Legend taught that Joseph of Arimathea used the grail cup to catch the blood of Christ when he died on the cross. Brown claims in his book that the holy grail is not a cup, but a person: Mary Magdalene. "The Holy Grail is Mary Magdalene...the mother of the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ" (p. 253). The book that was used by Dan Brown to write *The Da Vinci Code* is called *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. Brown borrowed many of his ideas from this book.

*The Da Vinci Code* claims that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and had a child by her.

"According to the Priory...Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion. For the safety of Christ's unborn child, she had no choice but to flee the Holy Land. With the help of Jesus' trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene secretly traveled to France, then known as Gaul. There she found safe refuge in the Jewish community. It was here in France that she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah." (p.255)

The book claims that the Roman Catholic Church invented the story that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute in order to cover up the relationship that Jesus had with Mary Magdalene. Brown claims that at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary Magdalene was pregnant with their child. After the Crucifixion, she fled to Egypt with Joseph of Arimathea where she gave birth to a daughter named Sarah. Then they traveled to Gaul (southern France) in a boat with no oars in AD 42. Sarah married into the line of the Merovingian kings of France. These kings ruled France for 300 years.

Brown claims that The Priory of Sion was started in 1099 in Jerusalem by a French king named Godefroi de Bouillon after he conquered the city. He possessed a powerful secret that had been in his family since the time of Christ (p.157). Fearing that the secret would be lost he founded a secret brotherhood called the Priory of Sion and told them to protect the secret and pass it down from generation to generation (p.157-158).

Brown believes that the Priory of Sion created a military arm of their organization called the Knights Templar. The Knights Templar were sent to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem to find some secret documents (the secret genealogy of Jesus and Mary Magdalene). The Knights Templar excavated under the Holy of Holies and found the secret documents. They took the documents back to Europe. Nobody was certain if the Knights blackmailed the Vatican with the secret about Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The Knights became powerful.

Brown states that Pope Clement V decided that something had to be done. He gave secret orders for King Philip IV of France to attack the Knights Templar in 1307. Some of the Knights escaped with the secrets. The secrets were passed down by the Priory of Sion.

Brown believes that Da Vinci was a member of the Priory of Sion and knew the secret of the holy grail. In his painting *The Last Supper* there is no actual chalice. Brown believes that the person sitting next to Christ is not a man, but a woman, his wife Mary Magdalene.

Brown believes that the Mona Lisa is actually a self portrait of Leonardo dressed as a woman: the androgyny of the sacred union of male and female which is implied in the holy union of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The name Mona Lisa is actually an anagram for "Amon L'Isa," referring to the father and mother gods of Egypt (Amon and Isis).

According to the *Da Vinci Code*, the worship of Mary Magdalene officially ended in A.D. 325 with the Council at Nicea. Constantine wanted one simple form of Christianity: one church, one empire, one emperor. The Church condemned Gnosticism as heresy. The Gnostic gospels were destroyed as heretical leaving only the 4 traditional gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. History was rewritten by Eusebius (Constantine's spin doctor). As a result of Nicea, Christianity becomes a male oriented religion. The sacred feminine was rejected. Mary Magdalene was later reduced to a prostitute by Pope Gregory.

## **JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE**

### **Was Jesus Christ married to Mary Magdalene?**

*The Da Vinci Code* claims that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. "The marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record." (p.245). "Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor. Why? Because Jesus was a Jew...and the social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried. According to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned, and the obligation for a Jewish father was to find a suitable wife for his son." (p. 245).

*The Da Vinci Code* is based upon the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip*. The *Gospel of Philip* states: "And the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, 'Why do you love her more than all of us?'" (p.246). Teabing in *The Da Vinci Code* says, "As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant spouse" (p.246)

In response it is important to know that the *Gospel of Philip* was written in Greek and not Aramaic. The Greek word for "companion" (*koinonos*) used to describe Mary Magdalene, could be "wife" or "sister" in a spiritual sense, but it is not the typical word for wife in Greek according to Bock. The Greek word *koinonos* is used as partner. Luke uses the word to describe James and John as business partners (Lk.5:10).

What about Jesus and Mary Magdalene kissing on the mouth in the *Gospel of Philip* (63:32-64:10)? This text was composed in the second half of the third century: 200 years after Jesus. A key part of the text is broken at 63:33-36 "And the companion of the...Mary Magdalene...her more than the disciples and (used to) kiss her (often) on her ..." The *Gospel of Philip* does not actually say that Jesus kissed Mary Magdalene on the mouth. It may have been on the cheek as a kiss of fellowship. But either way, there is no proof from the canonical gospels that Jesus kissed Mary Magdalene at all. *The Da Vinci Code* has taken this quote from the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* and concluded that since Jesus kissed Mary Magdalene that they must have been married and had a child.

The gnostic *Gospel of Mary Magdalene* states: "And Peter said, 'Did the Savior really speak with a woman without our knowledge? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?' And Levi answered, 'Peter, you have always been hot tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like an adversary. If the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us.'" (p.247)

### **Here are some facts to consider:**

1. There is no evidence that Jesus was married in the NT and Church Fathers.
2. We have no scripture text that says Jesus was single.
3. The Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene do not claim that Jesus was married.
4. Jesus did not have to marry because he was Jewish. Some first century Jews did choose a life of celibacy (the Essenes at Qumran).
5. Jesus showed no special concern for Mary Magdalene when he died on the cross. He did not commit her care to John. He did commit the care of his mother Mary to John.
6. Paul did not cite Jesus in stating that he had a right to marry. He did cite the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord and Peter (1 Cor.9:4-6).
7. It's important to remember that the Bible nowhere condemns singleness. Indeed, it praises those who choose to remain single to fully devote themselves to the work of the Lord (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:25-38). In Matthew 19:12 Jesus explains that some people "have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven" (NIV). He concludes, "The one who can accept this should accept it." It's virtually certain that Jesus had accepted this. He had renounced marriage to fully devote Himself to the work of His Heavenly Father. What's more, since there was precedent in the first century for Jewish men to remain single for religious reasons, Jesus' singleness would not have been condemned. Contrary to the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*, it would have been completely acceptable for Jesus to be unmarried.

### **Did Da Vinci paint Mary Magdalene in the The Last Supper?**

"Sophie examined the figure to Jesus' immediate right, focusing in. As she studied the person's face and body, a wave of astonishment arose within her. The individual had flowing red hair, delicate folded hands, and the hint of a bosom. It was, without a doubt...female. That's a woman. Sophie exclaimed...That my dear, is Mary Magdalene." (p.243)

"It's a matter of historical record...and Da Vinci was certainly aware of that fact. The Last Supper practically shouts at the viewer that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were a pair." (p.244)

Central to the story of the Da Vinci Code is Da Vinci's painting The Last Supper. The Last Supper is not a painting on a canvas like the Mona Lisa, but a painting on the wall of the Dominican Monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy. It measures 15 by 29 feet. It took Da Vinci 3 years (from 1495 to 1497) to finish it. The picture is when Jesus says "one of you shall betray me" (Mt.26:21). The Bible places John next to Jesus at the Last Supper and leaning on him (Jn.13:23-25). John appears younger in the painting than everyone else with long hair and no beard. When the Bible does not tell us how old John was at the Last Supper, church history suggests that he was the youngest apostle. Da Vinci depicts Peter as beckoning to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer is (Jn.13:34). Judas, is seen holding the bag (Jn.12:6; 13:29). He held the bag since he was the treasurer for the disciples. The surprising fact is that there is no cup at the table. This has led Dan Brown to say that the secret in the Da Vinci painting is the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. According to Brown, the V shape in the relationship of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the painting is supposedly the symbol of the sacred feminine and an evidence of their marriage. Again, this is Brown's interpretation of the painting.

### **Was Mary Magdalene a prostitute?**

"Magdalene was no such thing (a prostitute). That unfortunate misconception is the legacy of smear campaign launched by the early church. The Church needed to defame Mary Magdalene in order to cover up her dangerous secret – her role as the Holy Grail" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.244).

Remember, in the world of this novel the Holy Grail is not the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Instead it's Mary Magdalene, who is alleged to be both Jesus' wife, and the one who carried His royal bloodline in her womb.

What are we to say to these things? Did the early church really seek to slander Mary as a prostitute in order to cover up her intimate relationship with Jesus? The first recorded instance of Mary Magdalene being misidentified as a prostitute occurred in a sermon by Pope Gregory the Great in A.D. 591. Gregory wrote,

"She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark And what did these seven devils signify?, if not all the vices?...It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts."

Most likely, this wasn't a deliberate attempt to slander Mary's character. Rather, Gregory probably misinterpreted some passages in the gospels, resulting in his incorrectly identifying Mary as a prostitute.

For instance, he may have identified the unnamed sinful woman in Luke 7, who anointed Jesus' feet, with Mary of Bethany in John 12, who also anointed Jesus' feet shortly before His death and burial. This would have been easy to do because, although there are important differences, there are also many similarities between the two separate incidents. If Gregory thought the sinful woman of Luke 7 was the Mary of John 12, he may then have mistakenly linked this woman with Mary Magdalene. As it turns out, Luke mentions Mary Magdalene for the first time at the beginning of chapter 8, right after the story of Jesus' anointing in Luke 7.

Since the unnamed woman in Luke 7 was probably guilty of some kind of sexual sin, if Gregory came to believe that this woman was Mary Magdalene, then it wouldn't be too great a leap to infer that she was a prostitute.

Thus, while there's no actual evidence that Mary *was* a prostitute, it's not hard to see how Gregory might have mistakenly identified her as one. It's unfortunate that he did, and it needs to be corrected, but it's hardly necessary to believe it was a deliberate part of a smear campaign by the early church. None of the NT texts indicate that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. In 1969 the Catholic Church repealed Gregory's labeling of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute.

### **What does the New Testament say about Mary Magdalene?**

1. She was called Magdalene possibly because she was from Magdala in Galilee (Lk.8:2)
2. She had seven demons living in her (Lk.8:2)
3. She was delivered from the demons by Jesus who cast them out (Lk.8:2; Mk.16:9)
4. She financially supported Jesus and the disciples out of her own funds (Lk.8:2-3)
5. She was at the crucifixion of Jesus with Mary, the mother of Jesus and Salome (Mt.27:55-56; Mk.15:40-41; Jn.19:25)
6. She saw where Jesus was buried (Mt.27:61)
7. She was one of the first women to come to the empty tomb of Jesus (Mt.28:1; Mk.16:1; Lk.24:10; Jn.20:1)
8. She ran and told Peter and John that the tomb of Jesus was empty (Jn.20:2)
9. She wept at the empty tomb of Jesus (Jn.20:11)
10. She saw two angels at the empty tomb of Jesus (Jn.20:12-13)
11. She thought that the risen Jesus was a gardener (Jn.20:14-15)
12. She recognized that it was Jesus when he said her name (Jn.20:16)
13. She clung to Jesus (Jn.20:17). This was unusual in a Jewish culture and would be frowned upon because public displays of affection between unrelated persons were not culturally acceptable (except the holy kiss? In Rom.16:16). There was nothing sexual which happened between them.
14. She told the disciples that she had seen the risen Lord and that he was going to ascend to the Father (Jn.20:18)

### **What about the connection of the Grail and the Rose and Mary Magdalene?**

"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." (p. 238)

"That is the Priory symbol for the Grail. Mary Magdalene. Because her name was forbidden by the Church, Mary Magdalene became secretly known by many pseudonyms—the Chalice, the Holy Grail and the

Rose...The Rose has ties to the five pointed pentacle of Venus and the guiding Compass Rose...Rose is also an anagram of Eros, the Greek god of sexual love." (p. 254)

"Jesus was a father...And that Mary Magdalene was the womb that carried His royal lineage. The Priory of Sion, to this day, still worships Mary Magdalene as the Goddess, the Holy Grail, the Rose and the Divine Mother." (p.255)

"The quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine." (p. 257).

The Holy Grail is a medieval legend about the cup of the Last Supper. The first appearance of the term "Holy Grail" was in 1170 in *Perceval*, a romantic writing about the legend of King Arthur and his kingdom of Camelot. When Dan Brown suggests that the Holy Grail is not a cup but actually Mary Magdalene who carried on Jesus' bloodline by having his child, he alters an existing legend about the historical "cup of Christ" and uses it to advance fictional claims about Jesus and Mary.

## **CONSTANTINE AND THE COUNCIL OF NICAIA**

### **Who was Constantine and what did he do?**

"The Priory believes that Constantine and his male successors 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." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.124)

According to the *Da Vinci Code*, Constantine was a "lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed, too weak to protest...Rome's official religion was sun worship-the cult of Sol Invictis, or the Invisible Sun-and Constantine was its head priest." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.232).

Once again the historical record is different from what Dan Brown states. Constantine was a fourth century Roman Emperor who confessed a life changing experience that caused him to reverse a longstanding persecution policy against Christians. By his Edict of Milan (A.D.313), he extended Christianity the toleration granted other religions of his day.

Its true that Constantine's alleged conversion to Christ is complicated by the fact that Roman Emperors were regarded as both political and religious heads of the state. In the Roman senate, Constantine was considered head priest of the cult of Sol Invictus and also "pontifex maximus" of the priests of the faith. Despite this mix of political and pagan religious power, history bears record that Constantine's interests were not merely political. Until his Edict of Milan, Christians had been regarded as enemies of the state because of their confession that Christ, rather than Caesar, is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Constantine's baptism just prior to his death may reflect a misguided belief in his day that water baptism washes away sin. There is reason to believe that he delayed his baptism until the last moment to try to assure that all the sins of his life would be cleansed.

### **Did the Council of Nicaea make Jesus a "God"?**

"Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea...At this gathering 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...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" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.233)

"Establishing Christ's divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.233)

Without question, Constantine was a pivotal figure in church history who did more than grant followers of Christ protection under the law. He was also responsible for convening the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) to help church leaders develop consensus about the doctrine of Christ. The council was convened because Arius denied the full deity of Christ by proclaiming, "There was a time when Jesus was not." Arius reasoned that because Jesus came into this world in physical form, He must be changeable-unlike God, His Father. The views of Arius stirred great controversy among other church leaders who were convinced that the writings of both Old and New Testament Scriptures showed that the Messiah who came into the world was fully divine. The idea that Jesus was a God-man did not begin with Constantine.

Jesus claimed to possess the attributes of deity: (1) eternity (Jn.8:58; 17:5), omnipresence: He claimed to be everywhere present (Mt.18:20; 28:20); (3) omniscience: he claimed to know all things (Mt.16:21; Lk.6:8; 11:17; Jn.4:29). (4) omnipotence: He demonstrated that he had all power (Mt. 28:20; Mk.5:11-15; Jn.11:38-44). Jesus did works that only God can do. He forgave sins (Mk.2:1-12). He gives spiritual life to whomever he wishes (Jn.5:21). He will raise the dead (Jn.11:43). He will judge all people (Jn.5:22, 27). Jesus claimed to be equal with God (Jn.10:30). Even the Jews who heard him understood that he claimed to be God because they took up stones to stone him for blasphemy (Jn.10:33).

The apostles confessed that Jesus was God. Peter said that Jesus was the Messiah, the son of the living God (Mt.16:16). The apostle John wrote about Jesus in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." When Thomas saw the risen Christ, he confessed, "My Lord and my God" (Jn.20:28).

This Creed of Nicaea (A.D. 325) made the following claims about Jesus Christ:

"We believe in one God, the Father of all governing, Creator of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence as the Father, through whom all things came into being, both in heaven and in earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, becoming human. He suffered and the third day he rose, and ascended into the heavens. And he will come to judge both the living and the dead....But those who say, once he was not, or he was not before his generation, or he came to be out of nothing, or who assert that he, the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or ousia, or that he is a creature, or changeable, or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them."

### **What is Dan Brown's view of the Bible?**

"The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 231).

"The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.231).

"Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries after Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling his life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine

knew he would need a bold stroke. From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history...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 Gnostic gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.234)

The Bible teaches that it is an inspired book (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-20). Prophets and apostles wrote down through working of the Holy Spirit the words that God wanted us to know in the original manuscripts of the Bible. It is not true that history has never had a definitive version of the book. The science of textual criticism shows us that we possess 100% of original words in the copies made of the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament and Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

Eusebius, the church historian (A.D. 265-339) quotes Origen (A.D. 185-254) as stating, "Among the four gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25).

The gospels do not name their authors. The early church fathers affirmed that Mark wrote the second gospel. Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, wrote about A.D. 140, "And the presbyter (the apostle John) said this: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took special care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements." (*From the Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*, 6)

Evangelical scholars believe that the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all written prior to the end of the first century. There is some debate on the priority of Matthew or Mark. Some scholars have proposed that Matthew was written as early as A.D. 50. Evangelical scholars have suggested dates for Mark from A.D. 50 to A.D. 70. A date before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 is required because of the comment by Jesus in Mark 13:2. The gospel of Luke was written prior to the book of Acts (A.D. 63) probably around A.D.60 during Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. Luke would have been in Israel and would have had two years to research his gospel and interview the eyewitnesses of the Lord (Luke 1:1-4). The gospel of John was probably the last gospel written between A.D. 85- 95. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) wrote that John wrote his gospel being aware of the facts in the other gospels (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7).

**How do we answer the assertion in the Da Vinci Code that the gospels were embellished to make Jesus into a God?** We do possess Greek manuscripts with the gospels prior to the Council of Nicea.

P66 (Bodmer papyrus) dates from about A.D. 200 or earlier contains 104 leaves of John 1:1-6:11; 6:35b-14:26 and fragments of forty other pages including John 14-21. John 1:1-14 is included in this papyrus. This shows that the belief that Jesus was God was found in a gospel account that preceded Nicea.

P75 is a codex of 102 pages measuring 10 and ¼ by 5 and 1/3 inches, containing most of Luke and John in clear and carefully printed uncials, and dated between A.D. 175 and 225. It is the earliest known copy of Luke. Its text is similar to Codex Vaticanus (B).



First, we can compare these pre-Nicene manuscripts with those that followed Nicaea to see if any embellishment occurred. None did. Second, the pre-Nicene versions of John's Gospel include some of the strongest declarations of Jesus' deity on record (e.g. 1:1-3; 8:58; 10:30-33; etc.). That is, the most explicit declarations of Jesus' deity in any of our gospels are already found in manuscripts that pre-date Constantine by more than a hundred years! So much for the theory that they were embellished.

Although the church did not give official recognition to the canon prior to the late fourth century, it is misleading to say that there was no recognition before then. There is evidence to show that the inspired NT books were received as such by the churches, circulated and collected. The NT books had to be written by an apostle or NT prophet (Eph.2:20). New Testament books were being circulated and read among the churches. (Rev.1:11; Col.4:16). Peter recognized Paul's letters as scripture (2 Pet.3:15-16). Paul quoted from Luke's gospel and referred to it as "Scripture" (1 Tim.5:8). The gospel of John was cited by Ignatius (A.D. 110-117). Clement of Rome cited John in his epistle to the Corinthians. Polycarp (A.D. 150) quoted from Matthew and John. Justin Martyr considered the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to be scripture. Irenaeus (A.D. 170) was the church father who quoted almost every book of the NT (23 of 27) and he included all four canonical gospels as Scripture. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200) also recognized the four canonical gospels.

### **Do the winners rewrite history to suit their desires?**

Dan Brown's Langdon tells Sophie, "History is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books—books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe. As Napoleon once said, "What is history, but a fable agreed upon?" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.256).

One problem with the book's observation that the emperor Constantine rewrote history is that Constantine could not have collected and altered the combined evidence of history that preceded him. Ancient documents including but not restricted to the New Testament accounts tell the story of witnesses who saw the Old Testament Scriptures fulfilled in Christ and who were willing to suffer and die for what they saw in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. These witnesses lived and died in spite of the power of Rome, not because of it. For most of the years preceding Constantine they were a hated and persecuted people (1 Cor.1:26-31). Followers of Christ were outcasts of society. They were the poor and powerless witnesses of the history of Christ, not "the winners," as alleged by Brown.

## **THE GNOSTIC GOSPELS OF NAG HAMMADI**

### **What are the Gnostic gospels of Nag Hammadi?**

The Gnostic gospels were discovered in Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. The Nag Hammadi library published in English in 1977 consisted of 45 titles and not all of them were gospels. The five Gnostic Gospels discovered were: the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Egyptians, and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. The early church Fathers were critical of the Gnostics.

"Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. In addition to telling the true Grail story, these documents speak of Christ's ministry in very human terms. Of course, the Vatican, in keeping with their tradition of misinformation, tried very hard to suppress the release of these scrolls. And why wouldn't they? The scrolls highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda—to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 234).

According to Teabing, the fictional historian in *The Da Vinci Code*, the Nag Hammadi texts represent "the earliest Christian records" (245). These "unaltered gospels," he claims, tell the real story about Jesus and early Christianity (248). The New Testament gospels are allegedly a later, corrupted version of these events.

The Nag Hammadi documents are not "the earliest Christian records." Every book in the New Testament is earlier. The New Testament documents, including the four gospels, were all written in the first century A.D. In contrast to these documents, the dates for the Nag Hammadi texts range from the second to the third century

What *do* we know about the contents of these books? It is generally agreed that the Nag Hammadi texts are Gnostic documents. The key tenet of Gnosticism is that salvation comes through secret, esoteric knowledge. As a result, the Gnostic gospels, in striking contrast to their New Testament counterparts, place almost no value on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Gnostic Christology had a tendency to separate the human Jesus from the Divine Christ, seeing them as two distinct beings. It was not the Divine Christ who suffered and died; it was merely the human Jesus. It didn't really matter much to the Gnostics because in their view the death of Jesus was irrelevant for attaining salvation. What was truly important was not the death of the man Jesus, but the secret knowledge brought by the Divine Christ. According to the Gnostics, salvation came through a correct understanding of this secret knowledge

These doctrines contradict the New Testament teaching about Christ and salvation (e.g. Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 15:3-11; Titus 2:11-14). Ironically, they're also incompatible with Teabing's view that the Nag Hammadi texts "speak of Christ's ministry in very human terms" (p.234). The Nag Hammadi texts actually present Christ's person as being divine.

Thus, the Nag Hammadi texts are both later than the New Testament writings and characterized by a worldview that is entirely alien to their theology. The church fathers were wise to reject them from the New Testament Canon. But how did they decide what books *to* include?

## **VIEWS ON SEX AND THE WORSHIP OF GOD**

### **What is Hieros Gamos and how does it relate to the worship of Jehovah in the temple in Jerusalem?**

"The once hallowed act of Hieros Gamos—the natural sexual union between man and woman through which each became spiritually whole—had been recast as a shameful act. 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, collaborating with his favorite accomplice...woman." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 125)

"Hieros Gamos...dates back more than two thousand years. Egyptian priests and priestesses performed it regularly to celebrate the reproductive power of the female...Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and ultimately achieve gnosis-knowledge of the divine." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.308)

Dan Brown attempts to tie his "secret knowledge" to early Judaism with this shocking statement, "Admittedly, the concept of sex as a pathway to God was mind-boggling at first. Langdon's Jewish students always looked flabbergasted when he first told them that the early Jewish tradition involved ritualistic sex. In the Temple, no less. Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah...." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.309)

The sacred marriage was a familiar concept to pagans of Jesus' day. Versions of it were commonly performed by the devotees of various other dying and rising god cults, such as that of Tammuz (to whom there was a temple in Jerusalem at that time), and the Egyptian god Osiris, whose consort Isis breathed life

into his dead body long enough for her to conceive the magical child, the hawk headed god of courage, Horus.

Dan Brown tries to justify this pagan ritual of Hieros Gamos. In reality it is sexual immorality done in the name of God and religion (1 Cor.6:18-20).

### **Did the Church condemn sex as sinful?**

“For the early church,” Landon explained in a soft voice, “mankind’s use of sex to commune directly with God posed a serious threat to the Catholic power base. It left the Church out of the loop, undermining their self proclaimed status as the sole conduit to God. For obvious reasons, they worked hard to demonize sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act. Other major religions did the same” (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.309) Brown believes that the Bible and the church are against sex. The Bible teaches that God created sex as a gift for a husband and his wife. Genesis 2 tells of how God created Eve from Adam and brought her to the man. His plan was that the two should become one flesh (Gen 2:24). Proverbs 5:18-19 encourages a husband and wife to enjoy sex. The Song of Solomon is a love poem which includes allusions to sexual enjoyment. 1 Corinthians 7:1-6 instructs a husband and wife to meet each other’s sexual needs. Hebrews 13:4 teaches that the marriage bed is honored as pure. The Bible condemns sexual immorality of all types: adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, and premarital sex (fornication).

It is true that some Christians overreacted to the sexual immorality in their culture and emphasized asceticism. Some early church fathers emphasized celibacy over marriage. And some embraced the idea of abstinence from sex in marriage. Others taught that sex was only for procreation and never for pleasure.

### **Does the name of Jehovah refer to the union of masculine and feminine?**

"The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH—the sacred name of God—is in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, Havah (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.309).

Such concepts sound scholarly when spoken by a fictional Harvard professor of symbology. They can also be misleading when they come from the pen of someone who is trying to rewrite history to claim that God is pleased by the pagan practices of ancient fertility cults. This is another instance, however, where the facts are different.

Researchers Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel note, "The name Jehovah didn't even exist until the thirteenth century at the earliest and wasn't common until the sixteenth century and is an English word. It was created by artificially combining the consonants of YHWH or (JHVH) and the vowels of Adonai (which means "Lord"), the name substituted for YHWH in the Old Testament by Jews. The Hebrew—not "pre-Hebraic"—word for Eve is hawwa, (pronounced "havah"), which means "mother of all living" ([www.davincihox.com](http://www.davincihox.com))

By contrast Brown uses his own assumptions to make unjustified claims about Hebrew word meanings and origins. The reader is asked to accept the words of Robert Langdon, a fictitious authority in the field, who tries to tie the worship of Israel to the ancient fertility cults characteristic of the Canaanites. Notice the difference of definition given by Hebrew scholars in the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.

"Most likely the name YHWH should be translated something like, "I am He who is," or "I am He who exists."... More than anything perhaps, the "is-ness" of God is expressive both of His presence and His existence." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.214).

The self description of God in the Old Testament is that He is personal and eternally existence. But why is this important? The ancient Hebrews were surrounded by pagan peoples who worshiped many gods and goddesses, offered their children as sacrifices, and engaged in ritual sex and other forms of moral depravity. These forms of worship were condemned by the prophets. In fact, a ruler of Israel or Judah was often approved or condemned on the basis of whether he accepted or rejected such pagan cults (1 Kings 15-16)

Yet *The Da Vinci Code* claims that the original form of Judaism was polytheistic with goddess worship and ritual sex (p.309). To place such pagan practices within the Holy of Holies would have been a blasphemous violation of Mosaic Law.

## **WOMEN AND THE CHURCH**

### **Is the Church responsible for the repression of women?**

“Powerful men in the early Christian church ‘conned’ the world by propagating lies that devalued the female and tipped the scales in favor of the masculine...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” (*The DaVinci Code*, p.124)

In addition, *The DaVinci Code* refers to the Catholic Inquisition and to victims that “included all female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, mystics, nature lovers, herb gatherers, and any women suspiciously attuned to the natural world. Midwives were also killed for their heretical practice of using medical knowledge to ease the pain of childbirth” (*The DaVinci Code*, p.125).

"Women, once celebrated as an essential half of spiritual enlightenment had been banished from the temples of the world. There were no female Orthodox rabbis, Catholic priests, nor Islamic clerics. The once hallowed act of Hieros Gamos-the natural sexual union between man and woman through which each became spiritually whole-had been recast as a shameful act. 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, collaborating with his favorite accomplice...woman." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 125).

Prior to Christianity, women were held down in a sinful patriarchal society. Women had no rights and were considered the property of their husband. Aristotle taught that a woman ranked between a man and a slave. In ancient Greece women were not allowed to leave their homes unescorted. She was not allowed to eat or interact with guests. In contrast a mistress was allowed to accompany a married man in public. Women were not educated and they were not allowed to speak in public. Women were thought to be inferior and the source of temptation. It is public knowledge that followers of Christ have not always treated women with the love and respect that Jesus Himself showed the women who followed Him. Yet the truth is that the persecuted groups listed by Brown were not specifically targeted because of their gender. The Inquisition targeted men and women-priests, nuns, artists, transients, and political enemies among others. To the extent that *The Da Vinci Code* is right about the church’s devaluation of women, it is only because followers of Christ have not followed the example of Jesus and his apostles.

Jesus elevated the status of women through his ministry. Jesus had women disciples who followed him and listened to his teaching. They served Jesus as well (Mt. 25:55; Mk. 15:41; Lk.8:1-3).In contrast to normal custom and rabbinic standards, Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman and revealed to her the nature of true worship (Jn.4:7-26). Jesus cared for the physical infirmities of women (Mk.1:29-31; 5:25-34; Lk.13:10-17). Jesus drew attention to the devotion of an unnamed poor widow to teach a lesson in discipleship (Mk.12:41-44).Jesus permitted Mary, the sister of Lazarus, to sit at his feet and learn (a privilege granted only to men at that time; Lk.10:42)).Women who had been healed by Jesus praised God publicly in the synagogue (Luke

13:13). In a male dominated culture, Jesus spoke about legal situations which were weighted against women (Mt.19:9-10; Mk.10:11-12). Though Jesus had both male and female disciples, Jesus chose twelve men to be the first apostles (Mt.10:1-4; Mk.3:13-19). Jesus permitted women to show their love for him. An unnamed sinful woman washed Jesus' feet with tears, kissed his feet and anointed them with fragrant oil (Lk.7:36-50). Mary of Bethany anointed the head of Jesus with a fragrant oil, let down her hair and wiped his feet with her hair (Mt.26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn.12:1-8).

Though one of Jesus' male disciples betrayed him (Judas; Mt.26:47-49) and another denied him (Peter; Mt.26:69-75), all the rest of them fled from him in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was arrested, some women followed Jesus to the end. Women stood at the foot of the cross (Mt.27:55-56; Mk.15:40; Lk.23:27-29, 49; Jn. 19:25). Women watched the burial of Jesus (Mt.27:61; Mk. 15:47; Lk.23:55). Women came early on resurrection Sunday to anoint the body of Jesus (Mt.27:61; 28:1; Mk.15:47; 16:1-4; Lk.23:55-56; 24:1; Jn.20:1). The risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Jn.20:11-18). The risen Jesus next appeared to women who took the good news to the men in the upper room (Mk.16:6-8; Lk.24:11). This was a remarkable thing in that culture since a woman's testimony was not legally valid in a court of law.

Women prayed with men in the upper room (Acts 1:14; 12:12). The Holy Spirit fell on men and women on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Women believed in Jesus and were baptized (Acts 5:14; 8:12; 9:2). Tabitha is praised as a woman disciple who did good works for others (Acts 9:36). Lydia was the first convert in Greece (Acts 16:13). Priscilla with her husband Aquila explained the way of God more accurately to Apollos (Acts 18:26). Philip had four daughters who are called prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9).

Paul greeted women in Rome including Phoebe who is called a "deacon" (Rom 16). Out of the 29 people that Paul commended in the church at Rome for loyal service 10 were women. Paul encouraged both unmarried men and unmarried women to remain single and devote themselves to the service of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-34). Paul gave instructions about women and head coverings (1 Cor. 11:2-16). Paul commanded the women to remain silent in the churches (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

Paul affirmed the personal equality of man and woman in Christ (Gal 3:28). A woman obtains salvation by grace through faith in Christ just as a man does (Eph. 2:8-9). A woman is a coheir of the grace of life with her husband (1 Pet 3:7). A woman has access to God in prayer just as man does (1 Cor 1:4-5, 13). She is a believer priest (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). A woman is nurtured by the word of God just like a man (1 Pet 2:2). A woman is given spiritual gifts to use in the church (Rom 12:3-8). Paul had women who labored with him in the gospel (Phil 4:2-3). Paul gave qualifications for wives of male pastors and deacons (1 Tim 3:11). Paul gave instructions for caring about widows (1 Tim 5). Paul instructed older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:1-5).

### **Did Jesus want Mary Magdalene to restore to the church the concept of the Sacred Feminine?**

According to *The DaVinci Code*, Jesus wanted Mary Magdalene to restore to the church the concept of the Sacred Feminine. Robert Langdon explains, "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" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.238)

By that rationale, Dan Brown builds his case that Jesus not only took Mary Magdalene as his wife, but planned to make her the founder of His church (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.254). All of this is in sharp contrast to the NT portrait of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

## **THE PRIORY OF SION**

### **What is the Priory of Sion?**

"Fact: The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099---is a real organization. In 1975 Paris' Bibliotheque Nationale discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.1)

"The modern 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—those few members of the royal Merovingian bloodline who have survived into modern times." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.258)

The Priory of Sion has a basis in fact, but not in the sense that Brown portrays it. The title has been used three different times. It was first a monastic order founded in Jerusalem in 1100 that was absorbed into the Jesuits in 1617. The second and third Priory of Sion were each under the leadership of Pierre Plantard (1920-2000), an anti-Semitic Frenchman who went to jail in 1953 for fraud. In 1954, Plantard formed a group called the Priory of Sion to help those in need of low cost housing. The group dissolved in 1957. Then in the 1960's and 1970's he created a series of forged documents to prove the existence of a bloodline descending from Jesus and Mary Magdalene through the kings of France to himself (claiming to be the rightful heir to the throne). He and his associates called themselves the Priory of Sion and deposited these documents in libraries all over France including the National Library. In 1993, however, Plantard admitted under oath to a French judge that he had fabricated all the documents relating to the Priory of Sion. The judge issued him a severe warning and dismissed him as a harmless crank.

### **Were DaVinci and Isaac Newton members of the Priory of Sion?**

The significance of the Priory of Sion is bolstered in the plotline of *The DaVinci Code* by claiming a little known connection with such geniuses as Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaac Newton. Once again, Brown bases these assertions on one of Plantard's forged documents: called *Les Dossiers Secrets d'Henri Lobineau* (The Secret Records of Henri Lobineau). Even though a French judge got Plantard to admit his hoax, Dan Brown uses these "secret records" as if they were legitimate. These facts are important to readers of the *DaVinci Code*. If there is no credible evidence that Leonardo DaVinci and Isaac Newton were secretly involved in the Priory of Sion, and if there is only fraudulent evidence that the Priory of Sion was formed to keep the secret of Mary Magdalene, then the other factual claims of *The DaVinci Code* also need to be carefully looked at.

## **THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR**

The Knights Templar are again based in history, but once again, not as portrayed in the novel. They were founded in 1118 as a military religious order, but they did not become wealthy, as alleged in the novel, by discovering the secret of the Holy Grail. And there is no evidence that they were annihilated for having knowledge of it.

## **OPUS DEI**

Brown begins his book by writing: "Fact: The Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei is a deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion, and a dangerous practice known as 'corporal mortification.' Opus Dei has just completed construction of a \$47 million National Headquarters at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City." (*The Da Vinci Code*, p.1)

Early in *The DaVinci Code* Silas is introduced as the faithful assassin doing the work of the Lord. Silas turns out to be a member of Opus Dei, compete with a spiked belt for self mortification and a willingness to silence (murder) all enemies of the secret society.

Again, *The Da Vinci Code* alleges to have uncovered secrets about the Roman Catholic Church. The truth is that the real Opus Dei is a Roman Catholic lay organization that emphasizes piety and good works. Its founder Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbados, Spain, in 1902 and created Opus Dei (Work of God) to empower lay people, instead of focusing on the spirituality of clergy. The characteristics of Opus Dei are self denial and sacrificial good works within the context of the Roman Catholic Church. But *The Da Vinci Code's* claim that Opus Dei exists to suppress documents of the Priory of Sion is pure fabrication.

### **THE INSPIRATION FOR THE NOVEL**

The novel is part of the late twentieth century revival of interest in Gnosticism. Its emphasis on the role of Mary Magdalene in early Christianity comes straight from the Gnostic gospels as does much of its portrayal of fertility rites and mystery cults in the ancient church. The later ecclesiastical history described in Langdon and Teabing's soliloquies is largely adapted from modern interpretations of the relationship between Gnosticism and Christianity. The most influential book is probably *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. Dan Brown mentions this book on page 253. Lewis Perdue has sued Dan Brown, claiming that the *The DaVinci Code* was largely plagiarized from his earlier book, *The DaVinci Legacy*. Perdue has set up a web site listing some of the alleged similarities between the two works.

### **CONCLUSION**

The first apostles of Christ knew the difference between fact and fiction. The New Testament writer Peter wrote, "*We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty*" (2 Peter 1:16).

Peter affirmed that the historic Christian faith does not rest on cleverly invented stories that have no basis in fact. "Cunningly devised" could be translated "artfully framed by human cleverness." The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament makes the following observation: "Certain unspecified Gnostic teachings are in view in 2 Peter 1:16, but the warning is a general one to shun contact with all false doctrines, which can pass on only myths and not the realities of revelation."

Notice that this biblical dictionary identifies Gnostic teaching and myths that are not consistent with events recorded in Scripture as "cunningly devised fables."

The word fables is literally mythos, from which we get the word myth. This is not to say that all fiction or myth is wrong. Just recently we saw the Chronicles of Narnia come to life on the big screen. It is a fictional story based on the truth of God's word. Some myths or fables contain moral lessons. They are not written to make claims about history but to illustrate principles that relate to life. Well written novels can use imagination combined with a historical backdrop to tell a gripping and insightful story. The Da Vinci Code however, alters the facts of history to promote a Gnostic and fanciful portrait of Jesus. The result is a bestselling "cunningly devised fable."

### **EVANGELICAL CRITIQUES OF *THE DA VINCI CODE***

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