



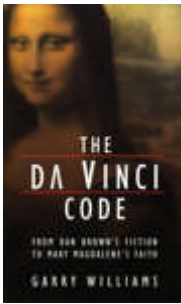
Arts & Entertainment Ministries

A REVOLUTION IN REDEMPTION

May 14, 2006 Sunday Night Bible Study

The DaVinci Code Movie Discussion

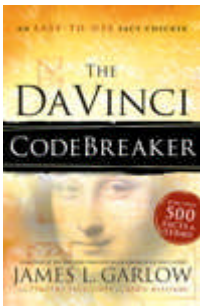
Resources- Books and DVD's:



The Da Vinci Code: From Dan Brown's Fiction to Mary Magdalene's Faith

by Gary Williams
Paperback

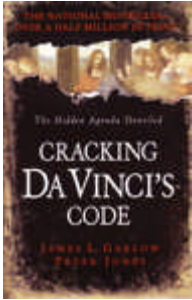
Professor Recommendation: Given all the current hype and hoo-hah about Dan Brown's spectacularly successful novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, it's a pleasure to be able to recommend this little book by Garry Williams, who teaches history of doctrine at Oak Hill Theological College in London, and is an adjunct at Westminster. In just over sixty pages, Garry guides the reader through the major historical and theological implications of Brown's work, and offers a thoughtful response from a historic Christian perspective. Dealing with everything from the Nicene Creed to the conventions of Renaissance art, Dr Williams guides the reader through the many problems in Brown's book; but, more than that, he points the reader to the Gospels and to the real Christ. Concise, well-written and chock full of insight, this is an ideal book for reading and for giving away. - **Carl R. Trueman, professor of historical theology and church history, Westminster Theological Seminary, November 2005.**



The Da Vinci Codebreaker: An Easy-To-Use Fact Checker

by James L. Garlow
Paperback

Endorsement (from publisher website): "As a religiously committed Jew, I've been appalled at the number of gullible readers who accept *The Da Vinci Code* as a piece of serious religious scholarship, rather than recognizing the novel for what it is--a cheap, skillfully constructed entertainment that is simulatenously a bitterly biased, utterly irresponsible slander of Christian tradition. The Da Vinci Codebreaker provides the factual background fairminded people need to correct the lies, myths, and misunderstandings so recklessly promulgated by Dan Brown's novel and, no doubt, by Ron Howard's upcoming film. This book merits broad circulation and serious discussion." --**Michael Medved, nationally syndicated talk show host and bestselling author.**



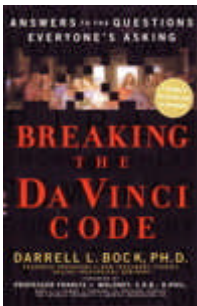
Cracking Da Vinci's Code: Separating Fact from Fiction

by James Garlow and Peter Jones

Paperback

Publisher Review: The controversy grows with every sale of the bestselling novel. Throughout the contemporary fictional storyline of *The Da Vinci Code*, author Dan Brown skillfully weaves "historical" assertions intended to shake the very foundations of Christianity:

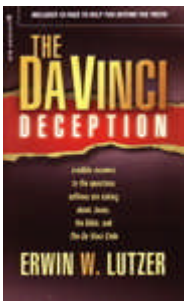
- Was Jesus merely human and not divine?
 - Did Jesus and Mary Magdalene marry and have children?
 - Is there a Holy Grail? If so, what is it and where can it be found? *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* is the long-awaited answer to these and other questions that may have troubled you-or readers you know. Authors James L. Garlow and Peter Jones present compelling evidence that Brown's assertions are not only historically inaccurate, but may also contain a hidden agenda.
-



Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone's Asking

by Darrell L. Bock, PH.D. - Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

Publisher Description: This text distinguishes fictitious entertainment from historical elements of the Christian faith.

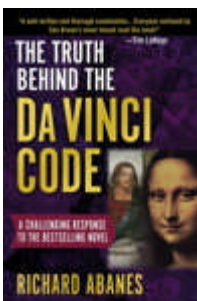


Da Vinci Deception

by Erwin W. Lutzer

Paperback

Publisher Description: Was Jesus really married to Mary Magdalene? Did they actually have children who intermarried with the French royal family? Has the church been hiding the truth for centuries? In his best-selling work of fiction, *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown blurs the lines between history and fiction, giving the impression they are one and the same and that Christianity is based on a lie. In *The Da Vinci Deception*, Erwin Lutzer, renowned theologian and pastor of the world-famous Moody Church in Chicago, examines the "facts" behind the best-selling novel, clarifies the issues involved in the deception, and equips readers with the truth. Mass paper edition includes study guide.



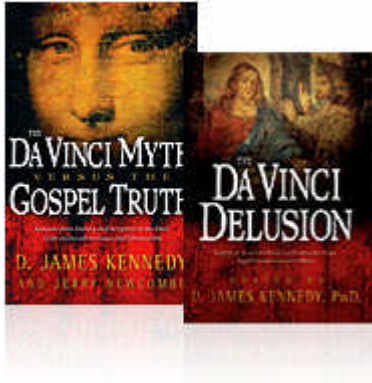
The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code

by Richard Abanes

Paperback

Publisher Description: Join Richard Abanes as he "de-codes" one of the most controversial novels of our time and goes behind the scenes to separate fact from fiction.

From D. James Kennedy and Coral Ridge:



The Da Vinci Delusion DVD and The Da Vinci Myth vs. The Gospel Truth

Produced to coincide with the release of the film, this documentary refutes the fraudulent historical claims made in The Da Vinci Code. With the help of world-renowned scholars, Dr. Kennedy will show definitively that the book and movie's historical claims are blatantly false and that the faith of Christian believers today is truly "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." *The Da Vinci Myth vs. The Gospel Truth* book and *The Da Vinci Delusion* DVD are yours for a gift of \$35 or more.

Donation: \$35.00 <http://www.coralridgehour.org/>

Resources- Websites, Articles, etc.



1) A Website by Westminster Theological Seminary:

<http://www.thetruthaboutdavinci.com/faq.html>

Articles by Tim Keller, George Barna, etc. – great stuff

Here's an article for you to see the kind of info on the site:

Gnostic Gospels

by [Dr. Timothy Keller](#), Adjunct Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA) in New York City

Gnostic gospels - what are these teachings that the Christian church supposedly repressed for nearly 1700 years? In 1945 a red earthenware jar was found buried near Nag Hammadi, a town in upper Egypt. Within thirteen papyrus books dating from A.D.350 were discovered. The writings were those of believers in the philosophy/religion of gnosticism.

Gnostic gospels held some different beliefs

Gnosticism is heavily influenced by the Hellenistic understanding that the material world is evil and the spirit is good. Gnostics believed that the ultimate supreme God did not create the world, but rather a lesser god, a 'demiurge,' created the world poorly and imperfectly. The result was a material world filled with decay, weakness, and death. But gnostics believed that human beings, though locked in this material body, have a spark of the higher spiritual reality within. This spark, if fanned into a flame, can liberate us and help us evolve back into spiritual perfection. This happens through a process of self-discovery, in which you discover your divine identity, you separate from the world by 'stripping off' the consciousness of the physical body, and you finally experience the kingdom of light, peace, and life.

The writings of gnosticism were much wider than the Nag Hammadi texts, but what makes the NH texts different is that, as Craig Blomberg writes, they use the purported conversations of Jesus with his disciples as *"little more than an artificial framework for imparting Gnostic doctrine."* (The Historical Reliability of the Gospels, p.208) The most well known of these Gnostic-Jesus texts include "The Gospel of Thomas," the "Apocryphon of James," "The Gospel of Phillip" and "The Gospel of Truth."

Gnostic gospels give a contradictory view of Jesus

The teachings of the gnostics' Jesus flatly contradicts the Jesus of the Bible. The Gnostic-Jesus says, *"When you come to know yourselves... you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty."* (Thomas-3) This reflects the gnostic concept that self-consciousness of one's own divinity (rather than a new awareness of sinfulness and need) is the first step to salvation. The Gnostic- Jesus also says, *"When you disrobe yourselves and are not ashamed, and take your garments and lay them beneath your feet like little children, and tread upon them, then [shall ye see] the Son of the living One, and ye shall not fear."* (Thomas-37) This and the other 'undressing' saying (Thomas-21) urges us to 'disrobe,' to trample underfoot and despise the physical nature.

The most interesting statement of all is Thomas-71 where the Gnostic-Jesus says: *"I will destroy this house and no one will be able to rebuild it."* This is a clear contradiction of Jesus' saying in John 2 that though others would destroy his body, he would be resurrected. This reflects the gnostic disdain for the very idea of the resurrection. Since, in their view, the material world is an evil thing we must be freed from, the bodily resurrection is completely rejected. According to the Gnostic gospels, Jesus was not raised bodily, and neither will we be.

Excerpted from:

Keller, Timothy *"The Gnostics and Jesus" Redeemer Report*

© 2004 Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY pp.1-3



2) Ligonier Ministries & R.C. Sproul:

<http://www.ligonier.org/>

-Has Audio file with interviews

Ligonier Ministries monthly publication: *TableTalk*, the May issue is devoted entirely to the DaVinci Conspiracy.

The Da Vinci Conspiracy

by R.C. Sproul

An Excerpt from the May 2006 issue of *Tabletalk*

In the realm of ideological discussion, there is always a curious phase called the “journalistic phase.” The journalistic phase is the phase that feeds upon sensationalism. *The Da Vinci Code* sensationalizes historical evaluations of the New Testament documents and their portrait of Jesus of Nazareth.

We are a people absorbed by finding flaws in the famous. We are incurably iconoclastic, relishing the fall of the mighty. Whenever the mighty or the hero of the culture falls into corruption, it provokes juicy discussion with delicious elements for a public hungry for controversy. No one in the historical stage of history is represented with less flaws than Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, even beyond the church and her confession, Jesus is often perceived as being flawless. Yet there is no more delicious target for sensational fiction writing than Jesus. To sully His character by salacious innuendos is the ultimate form of iconoclasm. Add to the mix the appetite for conspiracy and cover-up, and it’s easy to see how *The Da Vinci Code* can be catapulted to the top of the best-selling list.

Why are we so gullible as to take this kind of thing seriously? The author, who is writing a fictional work, nevertheless claims to be basing his story on real historical data. That claim adds to the fictional dimension of the book. We have here fictional fiction with a fictional claim to historical sobriety. The claims of historical knowledge in this book rely on completely non-credible sources. The actual historical source for the salacious speculations of the behavior of Jesus is found in the pseudo-gospels of the second and third centuries. Very early in church history these pseudo documents were exposed as frauds that were advanced by the early Gnostic community.

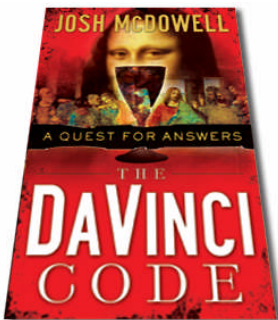
Who were the Gnostics that produced such fraudulent literature? The Gnostics were so named because they claimed to have a special type of knowledge that was unavailable to other people. The Gnostics eschewed normal categories of knowledge, such as found universally in human epistemology, namely that we learn what we learn by a combined use of sense perception (empiricism) and rational deduction from the data (rationalism). The Gnostics rejected both and claimed a superior way of knowing through immediate apprehension of truth by mystical intuition. In a word, the Gnostics were anti-science and anti-sober history.

It's important for us to understand the rudiments of Gnosticism in as much as we live in what has been called a neo-gnostic culture. Our culture has been defined by an intoxication with New Age theories that share many things in common with Gnosticism. The most obvious point of commonality is the substitute of mystical insight for rational and empirical investigation. We also live in an age that is characterized by the embracing of philosophical and moral relativism. Relativism and Gnosticism are not one and the same thing, but they have so many common elements that they are compatible with each other. Once relativism is embraced, there are no brakes on the roller coaster of sensational epistemology. It opens the door for the kind of literature that makes *The Da Vinci Code* well read and its author, Dan Brown, famous. The flaws of this book reveal far more about the flaws in the character of its author than it does about alleged flaws of the most impeccable character in history.

Dr. R.C. Sproul is minister of preaching and teaching at Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Florida, and is author of the book The Consequences of Ideas.

3) Josh McDowell & True Foundations Ministries:

<http://www.beyondbelief.com/home.spl>



On their website they have bible study materials, tracts, etc. I believe his book is only available on his site. They also have a mini magazine that is a companion to the movie.

Get Josh McDowell's personal Da Vinci Code research notes for free, a 164-page document. Download by going to this link: <http://www.sermoncentral.com/articleb.asp?article=p-davincicodehome&--objCONT:RTSI-->

4) Article in Christianity Today:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/newsletter/2003/nov7.html>

5) Website created by Sony & Grace Hill Media to Promote Movie:

<http://www.thedavincialogue.com/>

Includes scholars responses, and critiques.

Five Key Questions From the DaVinci Code

by ATRI Staff

1. Was Jesus' divinity really invented in the 4th century?

"Indeed," Teabing said. "...During this fusion of religions, Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea."...

"At this gathering," 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."

[Sophie] "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."

"Not the Son of God?"

"Right," Teabing said. "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....1

What did Jesus and His disciples believe about His divinity?

Jesus:

I and the Father are One. (John 10:30)

If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. (John 8:19)

He who has seen Me, has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

The Disciples:

John 20:28—Thomas said to him [Jesus] "My Lord and **my God**."

Romans 9:5—"Christ, who is **God** over all, forever praised."

2 Thessalonians 1:12—"Our **God** and Lord Jesus Christ."

1 John 5:20—"Jesus Christ. He is the **true God** and eternal life."

Colossians 2:9—"In Christ all the fullness of **the Deity** lives in bodily form."

Others:

The Jews: "You a mere man claim[ing] to be God" (John 10:33).

The High Priest: "You have heard the blasphemy" (Mark 14:61-64).

Church Fathers PRIOR to the Council of Nicea:

Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote of Jesus, "who,... being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God."² In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he stated that "God was born from a virgin" and that Jesus was "worthy of worship" and of being "called Lord and God."³

Irenaeus (120-202 A.D.), wrote that Jesus was "perfect God and perfect man"; "not a mere man...but was very God"; and that "He is in Himself in His own right...God, and Lord, and King Eternal" and spoke of "Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour and King"⁴

Tertullian (145-220 A.D.), said of Jesus "Christ is also God" because "that which has come forth from God [in the virgin birth] is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one...in His birth, God and man united."⁵

Athanasius (293-373 A.D.), the keen defender of New Testament teaching against the early Arian heresy, which taught that Jesus Christ was not God, declared of Jesus, "He always was and is God and Son" and "He who is eternally God,... also became man for our sake."⁶

2. Was Jesus married?

...Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor... Because Jesus was a Jew... 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. If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible's gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood.⁷ —Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 245.

The greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. My dear, Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage, and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang forth.⁸ —Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 249.

Is it true that it was socially unacceptable for a Jewish man to be single?

It has long been believed that Jesus was single. Every detail of Scripture indicates this. When he was in ministry, there is no mention of a wife. When he was tried and crucified, there is no mention of his having a wife. After his death, there is no mention of a wife. Whenever Jesus' family is referred to, it is his brothers and sisters who are mentioned, but never a wife. Nor is there any indication that he was widowed.⁹

... two factors make this argument [that Jesus was "required" to be married] weak. First, Jesus was not technically a rabbi, nor did he portray himself as one. The apostles addressed him as such to say he was their teacher, not because he held any kind of official Jewish office. The Jews asked Jesus "by what authority" he did certain things because he did not hold any kind of formal office within Judaism. He did not have an official position that would have permitted him to do things like act within the temple (Mark 11:28). As far as the Jewish leaders were concerned, Jesus had no recognized role within Judaism....

Second, the example of the call to be "eunuchs for the kingdom" appears, in part, to be rooted in Jesus' own commitment and example not to be married (Matthew 19:10-12). In fact, the rationale for the Roman church's later view that priests should not be married partially stems from the view that Jesus was not married.¹⁰

The Jewish atmosphere of Jesus' day clearly had a tradition of celibacy for those who devoted their lives to God, as exemplified by the unmarried prophets Jeremiah and Elijah and as expressed by New Testament-era groups such as the Essenes and figures such as John the Baptist and Banus the prophet (Josephus, *Life* 2.11). Celibacy and singleness were indeed exceptional, but contrary to Brown, they were not forbidden by any "social decorum."¹¹

Specifically, there is not a shred of historical evidence that Jesus ever married Mary Magdalene (or anyone else) or ever fathered children. As Darrell Bock points out in his recent *Christianity Today* review (January 2004, 62), such information would certainly have been included in 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul appeals to the fact that Peter and various other apostles had wives when they received material help from the churches. In supporting his right to receive such help, Paul would have wanted to appeal to an even more convincing example—Jesus—if it were available.¹²

To learn more about this topic, see these articles:

3. Is it true that the Bibles we have in our homes do not contain the earliest and most accurate information about Jesus?

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. —Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 231¹³

"Fortunately for historians," Teabing said, "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.... 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." —Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 234¹⁴

What did the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal?

These ancient texts, hidden in pots in cliff-top caves by a monastic religious community, confirm the reliability of the Old Testament text. They provide significant portions of Old Testament books—even entire books—that were copied and studied by the Essenes. These manuscripts date from as early as the third century b.c. and so give the earliest window so far found into the texts of the Old Testament books and their predictive prophecies. The Qumran texts have become an important witness for the divine origin of the Bible.¹⁵

Even the deity of the Messiah is affirmed in the fragment known as "The Son of God" (4Q246), Plate 4, columns one and two: "Oppression will be upon the earth... [until] the King of the people

of God arises,... and he shall become [gre]at upon the earth. [... All w]ill make [peace,] and all will serve [him.] He will be called [son of the Gr]eat [God;] by His name he shall be designated.... He will be called the son of God; they will call him son of the Most High."16

What did the Nag Hammadi documents reveal?

The Nag Hammadi Texts, ... are named after the place they were found on the west bank of the Nile. A library was found containing forty-five texts written in the Coptic language. These were written from the early second century to the fourth century AD. Examples of texts included *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Acts of Peter* and others. These texts were Gnostic in character and found in a library of Gnostic works....17

...Gnosticism may be described generally as the fantastic product of the blending of certain Christian ideas—particularly that of redemption through Christ—with speculation and imaginings derived from a medley of sources (Greek, Jewish, Parsic; philosophies; religions, theosophies, mysteries) in a period when the human mind was in a kind of ferment, and when opinions of every sort were jumbled together in an unimaginable welter. It involves, as the name denotes, a claim to "knowledge," knowledge of a kind of which the ordinary believer was incapable, and in the possession of which "salvation" in the full sense consisted. This knowledge of which the Gnostic boasted, related to the subjects ordinarily treated of in religious philosophy; Gnosticism was a species of religious philosophy (Early Church History to AD 313, II, 71).18

Are the Gnostic Gospels earlier and more accurate? Why were the Gnostic Gospels not included in our New Testament?

The assertion by Brown that these are secret gospels is false. We have known of these for centuries. The early church fathers wrote about the texts and rejected them as uninspired and non-apostolic. Iraneaus (130-200 AD) and Tertullian (160-225 AD) mentioned the texts in their letters and stated their rejection of them. These texts were never considered part of the inspired writing of the Apostles for several reasons.

Many of the texts are dated well after the death of the apostles. The teachings are inconsistent with previous revelation of Jesus and apostolic teaching. The teaching of Gnostic dualism is what the gospels of John and Epistles appear to be reacting against. Additionally, the church fathers knew of these texts and never regarded them as equals to the gospels.19

To learn more about this topic, see these articles:

4. Was Jesus' original message that men should encounter God through sexual rituals?

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.20—Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 125.

Did the church make sex the original sin?

The church has not recast sex as a shameful act. Sex within marriage is good (see Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31). Sex was a part of God's "good" creation. Indeed, God created sex and "everything created by God is good" (1 Timothy 4:4). But it is good only within the confines of the marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 7:2), which He Himself ordained (see Hebrews 13:4). The Song of Solomon indicates that God desires married people to have truly fulfilling sex.

Christians, however, are to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:20). Paul said that the body is not for fornication and that a man should flee it (1 Corinthians 6:13,18). Certainly the sex ritual depicted in THE DA VINCI CODE (a copulating couple surrounded by chanting people) constitutes a form of fornication and is thus condemned by God.

Scripture is quite clear: "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (Eph. 5:5-6).²¹

Do men "encounter God" through sexual rituals?

Sex was never intended as a means of achieving "gnosis." Man is not to seek revelation or knowledge in altered states of consciousness related to the sex act, but rather from God's Word. Scripture alone is the supreme and infallible authority for the church and the individual believer. Jesus always used Scripture as the final court of appeal in every matter under dispute. We must do the same.

Instead of a view that says individuals can receive individual insights from God during sexual ecstasy, Scripture indicates that a definitive body of truth was objectively communicated to man. This is why Jude 3 admonishes us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In the Greek text, the definite article "the" preceding "faith" points to the one and only faith; there is no other. "The faith" refers to the apostolic teaching and preaching which was regulative upon the church (see Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1).

This body of truth is referred to in Jude 3 as that which was "once for all delivered to the saints." The word translated "once for all" (Greek: *apax*) refers to something that has been done for all time, something that never needs repeating. The revelatory process was finished after this "faith" had "once for all" been delivered.

The word "delivered" here is an aorist passive participle, indicating an act that was completed in the past with no continuing element. There would be no new "faith" or body of truth communicated through people in sexual ecstasy.²²

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this manner no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:3-8).

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."...So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep.... Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Gen. 2:18,21-24).

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.... "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking *about Christ and the Church*. (Eph. 5:25-32, emphasis added)

To learn more about this topic, see these articles:

5. Is Christianity nothing more than a copy of older mystery religious beliefs and practices?

The vestiges of pagan religion in Christian symbology are undeniable. Egyptian sun disks became the halos of Catholic saints. Pictograms of Isis nursing her miraculously conceived son Horus became the blueprint for our modern images of the Virgin Mary nursing Baby Jesus. And virtually all the elements of the Catholic ritual—the miter, the altar, the doxology, and communion, the act of "god-eating"—were taken directly from earlier pagan mystery religions.²³

Did Christianity borrow from pagan rituals?

Many alleged similarities between Christianity and the Greek pagan religions are either greatly exaggerated or fabricated. Liberal scholars (such as those in the Jesus Seminar) often describe pagan rituals in language that they borrowed from Christianity, thereby making them appear to be "parallel" doctrines.²⁴

New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger is quoted by Nash: "It must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries [i.e., pagan religions] always influenced Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases, the influence moved in the opposite direction." Nash notes that it should not be surprising that leaders of cults that were being successfully challenged by Christianity should do something to counter the challenge. What better way to do this than by offering a pagan substitute? Pagan attempts to counter the growing influence of Christianity by imitating it are clearly apparent in measures instituted by Julian the Apostate.²⁵

The mysticism of the mystery religions was essentially nonhistorical. The religion of Christianity is grounded in history.²⁶

Notes

1 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (), p. 233.

2 Justin Martyr, "The First Apology," Chapter 63, in Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 184.

- 3 Justin Martyr, "Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew," Chapters 64, 68, in Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 1, 231-233.
- 4 Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" Book III, Chpt. 16, Title; Chpt. 19, Title, para.2; Book I, chapt. 10, para. 1, in Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1*, 440, 448-49.
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- 23 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), p. 232.
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The Da Vinci Code: Separating Truth from Fiction

By Sean McDowell

A few weeks ago I received a frantic call from a mother afraid her daughter would lose her faith after reading *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown. “How do I answer her questions?” she asked. And, “What part of the novel is fiction, and what part is truth?” The novel is appropriately placed in the “fiction” section of bookstores, but because of Brown’s clever blending of fact and fantasy, countless people have been convinced that its outrageous claims are actually rooted in history. And with the movie release on May 19th, questions will likely increase.

One reason some people have been confused is that the opening page of the book says, “FACT...All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” When asked on *The Today Show* how much of the book is based on reality, author Dan Brown replied, “Absolutely all of it...is historical fact” (October 10, 2005).

While *The Da Vinci Code* may be great fiction, it is certainly not historical fact. Consider just a few of the historical blunders:

THE DA VINCI CODE: “During 300 years of witch hunts, the Church burned at the stake an astonishing five million women” (p. 125).

TRUTH: Historians all agree that the actual number of people burned at the stake was 30,000-50,000. If Brown’s math were correct, then a total of 46 women would have been burned at the stake each day for the entire 300 year period. This would be 40% of the female population in Europe during this time! Clearly, his claim is fiction.

THE DA VINCI CODE: “Some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert” (p. 234).

TRUTH: Constantine had nothing to do with the completion of the biblical canon or the destruction of secret gospels. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, not the 1950’s. They included books of the Old Testament and writings of the Essenes, a strict Jewish community. Not a single New Testament book or gospel was found in the entire collection of scrolls.

THE DA VINCI CODE: The Priory of Sion is allegedly the oldest secret society, founded in 1099. This small band of conspirators knew the truth about Jesus’ marriage to Mary

Magdalene, but because of opposition from the church, kept the explosive secret hidden. They waited for the perfect moment to reveal the secret to the world (pp. 157-58).

TRUTH: The real Priory of Sion was founded by Pierre Plantard and registered with the French government in 1956! The documents that supposedly prove the existence of the Priory were fabricated by Pierre Plantard and his associates, who have since admitted to the cover-up.

THE DA VINCI CODE: The figure on the right of Jesus in the “Last Supper” painting by Leonardo Da Vinci is Mary Magdalene (p. 243).

TRUTH: Da Vinci himself labeled the figure on Jesus’ right side as “Johannes,” referring to John, the beloved disciple. If Mary was added to the painting then there should be fourteen figures, whereas there are still only thirteen (Jesus and the twelve disciples).

THE DA VINCI CODE: “The marriage of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record” (p. 245). Two primary arguments are put forth to support this claim: First, it was unlawful for a Jewish man to be unmarried. Second, according to the “gospel” of Philip, Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth, which indicated his special relationship to her.

TRUTH: There were in fact many Jewish rabbis who were not married. We know of two specifically during the time of Jesus—John the Baptist and the apostle Paul. Paul said, “Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord and Peter” (1 Corinthians 9:5). If Jesus had been married, certainly Paul would have cited Him as the ultimate example! The “gospel” of Philip, as we will see below, was written far too late to be considered a reliable historical document.

THE DA VINCI CODE: “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” (p. 231).

TRUTH: There were never eighty gospels being considered for inclusion in the Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all based on eyewitness accounts, are internally coherent, and have been corroborated by archaeology and non-Christians sources. The four biblical gospels were all completed within the first century (by 85 A.D.). In comparison, the so-called “gospels” of Mary, Thomas, and Philip were written by imposters no earlier than A.D. 150.

THE DA VINCI CODE: “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” (p. 233). In other words, Jesus was not considered divine until the 4th century when Constantine turned him into a deity at the council of Nicea.

TRUTH: The question being debated at the council of Nicea was not whether Jesus was divine, but how he could be both God and man. Jesus was considered God since the inception of the church. Paul said Jesus was, “in very nature God” (Phil 2:6), John writes that Jesus made “Himself equal with God” (John 5:18), and the early church father Ignatius refers to, “our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.” All of these quotes are at least 200 years before the council of Nicea.

THE DA VINCI CODE: “Sophie, every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove” (p. 341).

TRUTH: While this may be true for some faiths, it is outrageous to claim this is true for all faiths. Christianity, in particular, is not based on wishful thinking, but rather on historical fact. Christianity is rooted in objective history, including events like the exodus from Egypt, the reign of King David, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, Paul said that if the resurrection of Jesus did not really happen then we are to be pitied and our faith is worthless! (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17).

But if it did happen, then there is forgiveness and hope for those who follow Jesus: “He who sees me sees the one who sent me...Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me (John 12:45; 14:1).

For further research see:

The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers, by Josh McDowell.

The Da Vinci Deception, by Erwin Lutzer