

The Da Vinci Code

By Bob Waldrep

Author: Dan Brown

Publication Date: 2003

Associated Publications: *The Da Vinci Code* has several companion books upon which the author based his beliefs. These include: *The Woman With The Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail* and *The Goddess in the Gospels: Reclaiming the Sacred Feminine* by Margaret Starbird, *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ* by Lynn Picknett & Clive Prince, and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln.¹ An extended list is on the author's website.²

Organization Structure: While there are book and fan clubs devoted to this book, as well as many adherents to the beliefs it presents, there is no organizational structure built around it or the author.

Unique Terms: While *The Da Vinci Code* does not have truly unique terms, it does redefine words, concepts and practices, particularly those found in Christian history, but even these terms and concepts are derived from other sources, such as those mentioned above.

HISTORY

The author provides the following brief synopsis of *The Da Vinci Code*: "A renowned Harvard symbolist (Robert Langdon) is summoned to the Louvre Museum to examine a series of cryptic symbols relating to Da Vinci's artwork. In decrypting the code, he uncovers the key to one of the greatest mysteries of all time...and he becomes a hunted man."³

Though published in 2003 as a fictional novel, the author has stated in numerous interviews that *The Da Vinci Code* is actually based upon years of interest and research into real places, events and people. As he states on his website:

This particular story kept knocking on my door until I answered. I first learned of the mysteries hidden in Da Vinci's paintings while I was studying art history at the University of Seville in Spain. Years later, while researching *Angels & Demons* and the *Vatican Secret Archives*, I encountered the Da Vinci enigma yet again. I arranged a trip to the Louvre Museum where I was fortunate enough to view the originals of some of Da Vinci's most famous works as well as discuss them with an art historian who helped me better understand the mystery behind their surprising anomalies. From then on, I was captivated.⁴

Though admittedly intrigued, in most interviews about the book Brown claims to have been a skeptic prior to his research. As he stated to Charlie Gibson on *Good Morning America*, "I began the research for *The Da Vinci Code* as a skeptic. I entirely expected as I researched the book to disprove this theory. And after numerous trips to Europe, about two years of research, I really became a believer."⁵

DOCTRINES

There are those who would argue that since this is a fictional novel it does not contain doctrinal beliefs or statements. However, the author himself has repeatedly asserted and defended the truth claims being argued by the characters in the book and maintains that these are certainly based in historical religious traditions: "While the book's characters and their actions are obviously not real, the artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals depicted in this novel all exist (for example, Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings, the Louvre pyramid, the Gnostic Gospels, *Hieros Gamos*, etc.). These real elements are interpreted and debated by fictional characters. While it is my own personal belief that some of the theories discussed by these characters have merit, each individual reader must make the choice whether to agree or disagree with the characters' viewpoints. My hope was that the ideas in the novel would serve as a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of *faith, religion, and history* (emphasis added)."⁶

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Charlie Gibson asked Brown, “if you were writing it [*The Da Vinci Code*] as a nonfiction book, how would it have been different?” Brown replied, “I don’t think it would have... it is important to remember this is a novel about a theory that has been out there for a long time.” When Gibson pointed out that a number of Catholic religious leaders had said this was based on a “crackpot theory,” Brown replied, “Yeah, again, it’s a theory that’s been out there for quiet a while. When I first heard it, I said this is a crackpot theory. I began researching it, after two years I decided this theory makes more sense to me than what I was taught as a child.”⁷

Perhaps Brown is expressing this personally held view through the words of his character Sir Leigh Teabing when Teabing states, “almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.”⁸ His website has a group discussion guide that provides further clues that Brown’s intends for the reader to interact with the book on more than just a fictional level. For example, the reader is asked to consider:

Now that you have read the Da Vinci Code, are there any aspects of life/history/faith that you see in a different light? (Question 2)

Historian Leigh Teabing claims that the founding fathers of Christianity hijacked the good name of Jesus for political reasons. Do you agree? Does the historical evidence support Teabing’s claim? (Question 8)

Has this book changed your ideas about faith, religion, or history in any way? (Question 9)

Would you rather live in a world without religion...or a world without science? (Question 14)

For most people, the word “God” feels holy, while the word “Goddess” feels mythical. What are your thoughts on this? Do you imagine those perceptions will ever change? (Question 17)⁹

Following are the doctrines presented through the book’s characters:

God: Deity is defined as the sacred feminine, the goddess. Brown believes that through the years Christianity has perverted this correct view of God, making God into a masculine patriarchal figure rather than the feminine matriarchal original.

Legend tells us the Holy Grail is a chalice—a cup. But the Grail’s description as a chalice is actually an allegory to protect the true nature of the Holy Grail...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.¹⁰

When Christianity came along, the old pagan religions did not die easily. Legends of chivalric quests for the lost grail were in fact stories of forbidden quests to find the lost sacred feminine... [using] code as a way to protect themselves from a Church that had subjugated women, banished the Goddess, burned nonbelievers, and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine.¹¹

Jesus: Jesus was not God, nor did he claim to be so. He was a mortal prophet who lived as a man, marrying Mary Magdalene and fathering a daughter by her.

At this gathering [Council of Nicea in 325 AD] many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon...until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet...Jesus establishment as the ‘Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea...A relatively close vote at that.¹²

Behold, 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.¹³

Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion...With the help of Jesus’ trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea [she] 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.¹⁴

The Bible: The Bible is not the Word of God but a fabrication of men written, at the direction of Constantine, to support their own views and provide a basis for their own authority. The correct teachings concerning Jesus and the early Church can be found in the Gnostic Gospels.

More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion...The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.¹⁵

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 other gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

These [Gnostic Gospels] are...the earliest Christian records. Troublingly, they do not match up with the gospels in the Bible.¹⁸

Church: Jesus came to establish the Church under the leadership of his wife, Mary Magdalene, and through her to restore the right worship of the sacred feminine. His lineage through their daughter (the Merovingian dynasty of France) continued this proper worship of the Church, and it is still carried out today through a secret society, the Priory of Sion.

At this point in the gospels, Jesus suspects He will soon be captured and crucified. So he gives Mary Magdalene instructions on how to carry on His Church after He is gone...Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene.¹⁹

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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 sacred feminine.²¹

The Priory of Sion, to this day, still worships Mary Magdalene as the Goddess, the Holy Grail, the Rose and the Divine Mother.²²

Sacred Sex/Worship: Through his characters, Brown establishes that divinity can only be properly realized through sacred sex.

The ancients believed that the male was spiritually incomplete until he had carnal knowledge of the sacred feminine. Physical Union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and achieve gnosis—knowledge of the divine.²³

Intercourse was the revered union of the two halves of the human spirit – male and female—through which the male could find spiritual wholeness and communion with God.²⁴

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. Men seeking spiritual wholeness came to the Temple to visit priestesses...with whom they made love and experienced the divine through physical union.²⁵

[Professor Langdon speaking to a class at Harvard] See if you cannot approach sex as a mystical, spiritual act. Challenge yourself to find that spark of divinity that man can only achieve through union with the sacred feminine.²⁶

Conspiracy Theories: Setting aside or rewriting the historical record is essential to the believability of the theories set forth in *The Da Vinci Code*. In interviews, the author has repeated lines from one of the book's characters as to why the historical record should not be trusted:

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 cause and disparage the conquered foe...By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account.²⁷

[The Church] buried evidence of Christ's marriage to her, thereby defusing any potential claims that Christ had a surviving bloodline and was a mortal prophet.²⁸

The Sangreal documents [Secret writings supposedly confirming the theories set forth in *The Da Vinci Code* and allegedly filling four enormous trunks that are protected by the Knights Templar] simply tell the *other* side of the Christ story...which side of the story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration, but at least the information has survived.²⁹

The modern Priory of Scion has a momentous duty. Theirs is a threefold charge...protect the Sangreal documents...protect the tomb of Mary...nurture and protect the bloodline of Christ – those few members of the royal Merovingian bloodline who have survived into modern times.³⁰

The Church and the Priory have had a tacit understanding for years...the Church does not attack the Priory and the Priory keeps the Sangreal documents hidden...However, part of the Priory history has always included a plan to unveil the secret...unveiling [on a specific date] the Sangreal documents to the world and shouting the true story of Jesus Christ from the mountaintops.³¹

CHRISTIAN/BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Despite the author's view, the historical record does not support his contentions. Even were he correct that the winners write history, Christian scholar Douglas Groothuis has accurately noted,

Many sympathetic with Gnosticism make much of the notion that the Gnostic writings were suppressed by the early Christian church. But this assertion does not, in itself, provide support one way or the other for the truth or falsity of Gnostic doctrine. If truth is not a matter of majority vote, neither is it a matter of minority dissent.³²

Constantine did not commission the Bible, nor did he initiate a vote to proclaim Jesus is God. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. affirmed what the Church had taught from its inception—the deity of Jesus. And it was not a close vote as Brown states, rather there were two dissenting votes.

The doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God—One God, was not determined by the vote of a Council; it is established in Scripture: Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5-6, 18, 22; 1 Cor. 8:4. Father is God: 2 Peter 1:17; Phil. 2:11. Son is God: John 1:1; John 8:58; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6-9; Heb. 1:8. Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4. Concerning the claim Jews practiced ritualistic sex at the Temple, Scripture is clear: “No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute,” Deut 23:17, see also v. 18. Lev 19:29; Lev 21:9

RECOMMENDED READING

Cracking Da Vinci's Code by James L. Garlow and Peter Jones. Throughout *The Da Vinci Code*, author Dan Brown skillfully weaves “historical” assertions intended to shake the very foundations of Christianity. Garlow and Jones present compelling evidence that Brown's assertions are not only historically inaccurate, but may also contain a hidden agenda. 252 pages, includes reader's guide.

The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code by Richard Abanes. Nationally recognized researcher Richard Abanes, explores the answers to many of the questions that *The Da Vinci Code*, raises: Were Jesus and Mary Magdalene married? Has the church suppressed the truth about the “Lost Gospels”? What is the real nature of the Holy Grail? This book goes behind the scenes to separate fact from fiction. 96 pages.

Breaking The Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everybody's Asking by Darrell L. Bock. The author responds to the novelist's claims using central ancient texts, uncovering the origins of these codes by focusing on the 325 years immediately following the birth of Christ. This book distinguishes fictitious entertainment from historical elements of the Christian faith. 208 pages.

Church History in Plain Language by Dr. Bruce Shelley. Excellent resource, for both lay people and church leaders, that makes history easy to follow and easy to retain. It reads like a novel and makes church history clear, memorable, and accessible to every reader. 520 pages.

Notes

¹ Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 253.

² Dan Brown, “Partial Bibliography for the Da Vinci Code,” www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/bibliography.html (accessed December 2004).

³ Dan Brown, “Common Questions,” www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html (accessed December 2004).

⁴ www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html.

⁵ *Good Morning America*, 11/3/03.

⁶ www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html.

⁷ *Good Morning America*, 11/3/03.

⁸ *The Da Vinci Code*, 235.

⁹ Dan Brown, “Book Group Questions,” www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/book_group.html (accessed December 2004).

¹⁰ *The Da Vinci Code*, 238.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

¹² *Ibid.*, 233.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245-346.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 247-248.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 257.

²² *Ibid.*, 255.

²³ *Ibid.*, 308.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 267.

³² Douglas Groothuis “The Gnostic Gospels: Are They Authentic?” *Christian Research Journal*, Winter 1991, 19.



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