

Duh Vinci Code 6-1-05

Author Dan Brown penned the now famous *Da Vinci Code*. It has been on the Amazon.com bestseller list for 50 weeks, selling millions of copies, won the British book of the year award, warranted an hour special by ABC News and MSNBC, and is soon to become a big budget movie. What propelled this book to such heights? What is so appealing about Mr. Brown's fictional mystery? The very first word you will encounter in the book is "FACT" after which Brown lists the earth shaking discoveries that have been kept from us to keep us ignorantly worshipping Jesus as God. Mr. Brown claims to have uncovered a dastardly secret plot by the Christian church. This writer of novels has claimed to uncover accurate historical evidence that shows that everything we believe about Jesus is a lie. He puts that statement in the mouth of one of the highly educated characters in his book, the museum curator.

In the book, we discover that Leonardo Da Vinci left clues in his art about the work of an ancient secret society, the Priory of Sion. Their purpose was to hide and protect the Holy Grail. However, the Holy Grail is not what you thought. It was not the cup at the Last Supper. No, that was just a ruse to throw us off the track. The real Holy Grail was Mary Magdalene and the lineage of Jesus through her.

Of course this is nothing new. It can be found in a 1982 book called *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. They claim that Mary and her daughter fled to the South of France and established the Merovingian line of European royalty. And, oh, by the way, Jesus was just an enlightened man, not divine. That was all a plot by Constantine and a secret Catholic order called the Opus Dei. See, we have all been duped. Let us go home and live a life of debauchery. Well, you might want to listen to the rest of the message before you do something that destructive.

Brown makes these assertions based on the Gnostic gospels. These texts, found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, were discovered in the last century. There is only one copy of them. They were written in Greek between the second and sixth centuries. Though they bear the names of Biblical characters, names like Philip and Mary Magdalene, all scholars agree that those people did not write them. These books never claim that Jesus was married, nor do they claim that He was not divine. So where does Brown come up with these absurdities? (I mean 'assertions'.)

First a bit of background. The Gnostics believed that Jesus was divine, but that salvation was gained through secret wisdom. They meant for their texts to be read symbolically and not literally. Unlike our Bible, the Gnostic Gospels do not include the names of places, towns, rivers, etc. that can be verified historically. Their writers were an offshoot of the early church, rejected by the main stream of Christianity. But did they have the truth?

The Bible as we know it today stands in stark contrast to the Gnostic works. It is meant to be taken literally. Archeologists can verify the names of towns and rivers and lakes. There are thousands of manuscripts that can be compared to one

another to test for accuracy. They are quoted by the early church Fathers in the second through fourth centuries. Most important of all, they were written in the first century by eyewitnesses or those who talked to eyewitnesses. Which writings would you consider more reliable? To even consider the Gnostic gospels, you have to take a giant leap of faith. You would have to believe that people over a hundred years after Christ had better information than those who walked and talked with Him.

The leap that Brown takes cannot be substantiated historically, and is easily refuted by historical documents. He claims that until the Emperor Constantine, Christians did not believe Jesus was divine. According to Brown, the Nicean Council of 325 A.D. was when the plot began to deify Jesus. Constantine initiated the plot and had the Church Fathers rewrite the Gospels with the intent of making Jesus appear to be God.

There is a record of Constantine ordering 50 copies of the New Testament. There is no record in that order to change the New Testament in any way. Did they intentionally exclude the Gnostic gospels? The books of the New Testament were widely used by the early church before the Nicean Council. The only books that were debated were the books of Hebrews and Revelation. Brown's supposed plot breaks down even further when we examine earlier copies of the Gospel of John. The verses that most clearly state that Jesus is God (John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9) are in these manuscripts proven to be copied a hundred years or more before the council met.

Did the early church not believe Jesus was God? The very first creed was "Jesus is Lord!" It is true that the Greek word for Lord can mean a master, or property owner. It also meant God. How did the early church mean this statement? The Roman world demanded its citizens declare an oath to Caesar calling him Lord. They worshipped him as a god. The early Christians would refuse to make the statement, and instead would declare Jesus as Lord. If they simply meant master, it would not have been a problem to declare them both as masters. That was not the intention. They gave their lives to declare Jesus as God. The early church Fathers in numerous writings of the second and third century refer to Jesus as divine.

By ignoring such obvious historical documentation, Brown seems to be declaring that he has an alternative motive. His web site says that he would like to promote the idea of the sacred feminine, that is, goddess worship. Well, I am sure you have seen the same emphasis on bumper stickers and slogans of the New Age. Visit the Creative Life Center and you will only see statues of these goddess images. This subject alone could be another sermon. But I think the agenda is even deeper.

Is there anything on which these assertions find some validity? If you accept there being some historical accuracy to the Gnostic gospels, and that is a big if, then you might stand on the fact that in the supposed gospel of Mary Magdalene, Mary was loved by Jesus above all women, that she was a leader among the apostles, that she had been given secret knowledge by Jesus, and that the other apostles, particularly Peter, were all threatened by her. No scholar of note accepts the validity of the document or the historicity of the claims.

Commented [notes1]: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
John 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 30 I and the Father are one."
John 10:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?
John 14:9 (NIV)

The supposed Gospel of Philip declares that, "The companion is Mary Magdalene. Jesus loved her more than his students and kissed her often on the face more than all of his students." Again, just supposing there is some historical accuracy, one of the characters in Brown's book says that being an Aramaic scholar, he knows the word for companion means wife. One problem with that is the texts are in Greek. The Greek word used means partner, and is used when referring to James and John in regards to their fishing occupation as well. However, what do we do with this kissing stuff? Actually, the text is incomplete and does not say where he kissed her, on the forehead, hand, mouth or face. Any of the words could be placed in the hole in the text. Kissing was a common greeting in that day. The Apostle Paul even wrote to greet one another with a holy kiss. (Romans 16:16) Setting that all aside, the fact of the matter is, the book with Mary's name on it does not claim she married Jesus. If someone were trying to add authenticity to what she said, they would certainly add that important fact.

Commented [notes4]: 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. Romans 16:16 (NIV)

Brown also makes the claim that in Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the person to the right of Jesus is Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail. However, Brown did not even do his art research. Throughout this time period, John was always drawn to look like a young clean-shaven man. Da Vinci usually made younger men in his paintings appear somewhat effeminate. But we have further undeniable proof. One of Da Vinci's early sketches of the painting labeled the characters. Guess what, he wrote "John" on that character.

He also makes a big issue of the fact that Da Vinci did not paint a chalice. He was supposed to be pointing to the fact that Mary was the Holy Grail. Again, Brown misses the point. The painting was not emphasizing the first communion, but an earlier moment when Jesus said, "One of you will betray me." (Matthew 26:21) That is why you see such emotion on the faces of the characters.

Commented [notes5]: 21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Matthew 26:21 (KJV)

But what of that secret society that is protecting the lineage of Jesus, the Priory of Sion. That is the first big FACT with which the book begins and is based. Brown refers to some documents that prove the group exists. The first book, *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, pointed at these secret documents as facts behind that book as well. Those claims prompted a 1986 BBC documentary that proved the documents to be a forgery. That did not seem to matter to Brown.

What is at stake here is not whether or not the early church was chauvinistic, but are we as a society willing to turn away from truth to accept a lie. Will we accept what we want if it gives us the freedom to do as we please in spite of the facts. Will we rewrite history to make it conform to our current popular ideas, and fit into a framework that we think is acceptable to what we would like to believe today? Or do we want truth?

Peter declared that in the end times people would find teachers that would teach what they wanted to hear. *Time* magazine says, "these recently recovered gospels feed America's ever sharpening appetite for mystical spirituality." They want a religion free of doctrine. They do not want one way to God, but to find their own

way under their own terms. When they say they believe the other gospels, ask if they have read each one through and accept it all. They are filled with strange and sometimes bizarre sayings. At the most, their adherents select from the texts parts that they want to justify their own spirituality.

However, the real Bible is clear and consistent. It has stood the attacks of millenniums and still transforms lives and even nations. Brown's heresy began long ago in the very church council he refers to. Arius led a group of people that believed that Jesus was a prophet, but not God, contrary to the majority of Christians in 325 A.D. He was condemned as a heretic because he was. Since that time, numerous people have picked up the heretical banner and tried to convince others that Jesus was not God. Why?

I think there are two driving factors. First, they have a personal desire to live in ways contrary to the teachings of the Gospels. They do not want to believe that we will give an account for our actions. They desire for others to join them in this forsaking of morality. The Gnostic gospels teach that you encounter God through sexual ecstasy. No wonder sex promoting Hollywood cannot wait to make the book into a film. It does not matter that it is misleading; it promotes their agenda.

The Second reason is the demonic. Paul told us that the time would come when doctrines of demons would be taught. ¹ *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.* ² *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.* 1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

Listen to what Peter predicted: ¹ *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.* ² *Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.* ³ *In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.* 2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

John said it is the spirit of antichrist, declaring that Jesus had not come in the flesh, in other words, that He was not God incarnate. (1 John 2:22) There is a spiritual war raging around the planet today. How can the BBC declare something a fraud and then 10 years later say something that promotes the fraud to be the Book of the Year?

Commented [notes6]: 22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22 (NIV)

Here in Sedona, we are at ground zero of this raging war. There are folks that are duped into believing the nonsense in Brown's book. You need to be armed with the truth so that you can share with them the facts in a loving but informative way. Once they know the truth, it is up to them to make a decision between the truth and a lie. I have confronted a number of people with facts and many will not refute them, yet go on believing what they now know to be a lie. We all make a choice.

I believe the bottom line is humility. Will I bow my knee to Jesus, or will I find some other way to be my own god? If I want to believe something badly enough, God said He would send me strong delusion so that I could believe the lie my heart desires. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) Is that what you want? Or will you humble yourself and bow your knee to your Creator.

It is amazing how the enemy of our soul can paint that surrender to God as some horrible act of self-annihilation. Jesus declared that He came to set you free, give you abundant life, and promises an eternity beyond your wildest dreams, if you will accept the incredible love He has for you. (John 10:10) Do you really want to serve yourself? Has self-service filled your heart with love and eternal purpose? Of course not! And it never will. The only way you can truly find what you were created for is to yield to God's love, accept His forgiveness, and bow your knee in worship to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

That is what is behind the Da Vinci code. I titled this Duh Vinci Code because it is such an easily exposed lie. I hope that in the little time we have had this morning, you have seen it for what it is. I hope too, that I have challenged you to live all out for the Lover of your soul, the One who declared Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life. (John 14:6) He is the only way to God. The only way to Him is on bended knee, repenting for your rebellion against Him, submitting to His Lordship, turning from your old ways to follow His loving ways. Do you want the truth? Or would you prefer strong delusion? The choice is yours.

I hope you will take away one other reality that the Da Vinci Code has pointed out. Christianity is not based on the opinions of men, or the natural desires of men. It has sound historical evidence. The New Testament is supported by a mountain of factual information, by eyewitnesses, and by thousands of manuscripts. Ultimately, we accept Jesus by faith, but it is not blind faith in something with little or no credibility. God made sure the skeptic had plenty of evidence to convince them of the validity of the New Testament. He left us enough to convince any honestly inquiring mind that to accept Christ by faith is not turning off your brain. Doctrines of demons will only increase over time. False teachers will become more numerous. However, for the truth seeking heart, the answers will always be there.

Let me close with the words of the Apostle Paul.

^{7b} *Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.* ⁸ *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!* Galatians 1:7b-8 (NIV)

¹¹ *I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.* ¹² *I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.* Galatians 1:11-12 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie

12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6 (NIV)