

Decoding the Da Vinci Code

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Slides #1-2

*Many have made a trade of delusions
and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude.*

*Blinding ignorance does mislead us.
O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!*

These two quotes from Leonardo da Vinci refer to the great deception that the church has perpetrated upon the world over the last two thousand years, according to *The Da Vinci Code*.

Sophie, the female character in Dan Brown's bestselling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, is being "educated" on the "truths" of Christianity by the book's expert historian, Leigh Teabing. After reading these quotes by Leonardo Da Vinci, Sophie remarks, "Da Vinci is talking about the Bible?"

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Teabing nods and says:

The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven. . . . The Bible is a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not magically fall 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. (pg. 231)

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Teabing continues:

Jesus Christ was a historical figure of staggering influence, perhaps the most enigmatic and inspirational leader the world has ever seen. As the prophesied Messiah, Jesus toppled kings, inspired millions, and founded new philosophies. As a descendent of the lines of King Solomon and King David, Jesus possessed a rightful claim to the throne of the King of the Jews. Understandably, His life was recorded by thousands of followers across the land. . . . 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. (pg. 231)

Sophie then asks, "Who chose which gospels to include?"

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Teabing enthusiastically replies:

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

Constantine . . . held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea. . . . At this gathering . . . many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon [including] . . . 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. . . . Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . A relatively close vote at that. (pg. 233)

Why would the church want to “change history” and portray Jesus as divine? Brown’s character, Teabing goes on to tell us.

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It was all about power . . . Many scholars claim that the early church literally *stole* Jesus from his original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power. (pg. 233)

According to Teabing, the vast majority of educated Christians know this! Teabing says in fact, “almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*.” (pp. 234-35) By “fathers,” he means church leaders throughout the centuries since Christ’s time on earth.

Then to rewrite history, he says, the church gathered and burned all the true records of Christ. But fortunately, he adds, some of the gospels Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive and were discovered in the 1940’s and 50’s. He says:

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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. (pg. 234)

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The quotes by Da Vinci, “*Many have made a trade of delusions. . . Blinding ignorance does mislead us*”, are very applicable—but not to those who have

taught or embraced traditional Christianity. They do apply, sadly, to *The Da Vinci Code* and to those who are misled by Brown's allegations. Through the characters in his book, Brown alleges that the gospel as it is recorded in our Bibles and proclaimed by the church is a false gospel. He accuses the church of maliciously suppressing the truth and "re-writing" the history books. What we find is that these are the very things that Brown has done!

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The plot of this book revolves around a secret society called the Priory of Sion that is safeguarding documents that would prove that Jesus was married, fathered a child to Mary of Magdala (Mary Magdalene), and is strictly human. The book alleges that Mary Magdalene (or particularly her womb) is the true Holy Grail. Another group, Opus Dei (an ultra-conservative Catholic organization) is trying to find and destroy these documents. The book is a historical novel, murder mystery, romance novel combination that is fast-paced, well-written, and intriguing. Yet it is also more than this, because the storyline serves as a vehicle for Brown to refute traditional Christianity and promote his own "gospel" (the gospel of the "sacred feminine") and his own version of history.

We're going to look at five main areas and examine Brown's claims to see if they can be substantiated.

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Traditional Christianity teaches that:

- † Jesus was both human and *divine*, and that this was held to be true from his original followers until the present.
- † The *four gospels* are the genuine and accurate records of Christ's life and teachings.
- † The *church* is the guardian of the truth concerning Jesus.
- † Mary Magdalene was a *follower* of Jesus (one of several women). She was not an apostle, nor was she the wife and mother of his child.
- † Women have been *lifted up* by the church, and oppressed under polytheism.

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The Da Vinci Code's version of history and its gospel teaches that:

- ◇ Jesus was a great man, but was *only* human. He was in no way divine.
- ◇ Dead Sea scrolls, Nag Hammadi codices, & the "secret" writings guarded by the Priory of Sion are the genuine and accurate records of Christ's life and teachings.
- ◇ The *Priory of Sion* is the real guardian of the truth concerning Jesus.
- ◇ Mary Magdalene was Jesus' *wife* and the mother of his child.

- ◇ Women have been *oppressed* by the church, but previously thrived under polytheism

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As we begin examining the claims of *The Da Vinci Code* against the claims of Christianity, let's begin with the person of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus? Who did he claim to be? Who did the apostles and the early church believe he was?

According to the Da Vinci Code, "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . A relatively close vote at that" (pg. 233). Brown's character says that Jesus was held to be human until Constantine, and due to a political agenda (to gain power) he and the Vatican created a story of Jesus' divinity (pp. 233-34). Is this true? What evidence is there *for* this and *against* this?

First, Brown is correct in that there was a council held at Nicaea in 325 A.D. that discussed the deity of Jesus Christ, and Emperor Constantine did initiate and facilitate bringing many Christian bishops throughout the Roman Empire together for this. But, the question is: was the notion of Jesus' deity introduced and established there as the result of a vote—a close vote at that?

To answer this question we must examine what Jesus' followers wrote from the earliest records, shortly after the time of Jesus' earthly life, until 325 A.D. and see what they believed. The earliest writings of the church are the writings in the New Testament—in spite of Brown's allegations. As we'll examine a bit later, the four gospels and the letters of Paul were widely read and embraced and quoted by the early church. Both conservative and liberal scholars acknowledge this. All of Paul's letters were written before his death in 64-68 A.D. The gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke, Acts, and the NT letters were also written by this general time (within about 30-35 years of Jesus' crucifixion).

What do *these* writings say? Let's start with a quick survey of Paul's letters:

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Romans 9:5

⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. . . . God was pleased to have all his fullness

dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The author of Hebrews also depicts Jesus as much more than just mortal:

Slides #15-16

Hebrews 1:1-3; 8-9

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

⁸ But about the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

What about the gospels? We read in the gospel written by the apostle John:

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John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. . . .

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 8:57-58

⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

⁵⁸ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 20:26-28

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

“Peace be with you!”²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Finally, let’s look at the gospel of Mark:

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Mark 2:5-12

⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,⁷ “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things?⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralytic,¹¹ “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

What we find is that Paul and others taught the deity of Christ almost immediately, as did the Gospels. Writings that date to at least 50 AD or before show that this was a firmly established belief and creed of the early church. After the time of the NT writings, the early Church Fathers (Clement, Ignatius, Justin Martyr) also testify to this, as does the testimony of the many Christians who were martyred for their faith because they refused to renounce Jesus’ Lordship and divinity.

Let’s look at what some of the early church leaders wrote concerning Jesus (well before the council of Nicea):

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- Ignatius: “God Himself being manifested in human form . . .” (A.D. 105). Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter XIX.
- Clement: “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as God” (A.D. 150). The Second Epistle of Clement, chapter 1.
- Justin Martyr: “the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God” (A.D. 160). The First Apology of Justin Martyr, chapter LXIII.
- Irenaeus: “He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this” (A.D. 180). Against Heresies, book III, chapter XXI
- Tertullian: “. . . Christ our God” (A.D. 200). The Apology, Of Patience, chapter XIII

- Origen: “no one ought to be offended, seeing God is the Father, that the Saviour is also God . . .” (A.D. 225). *Origen de Principiis*, book I, chapter II
- Novatian: “Christ is not man only, but God also” (A.D. 235). *A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity*, chapter XVI.
- Cyprian: “That Christ our God should come, the En-lightener and Saviour of the human race” (253 A.D.). *Treatise XII, second book, testimonies*.
- Lactantius: “We believe Him to be God” (A.D. 304). *The Divine Institutes*, book V, Of Justice, chapter III.

This is just a sampling of the many references to the deity of Christ throughout the years preceding the Council of Nicea. Now, what about the Council at Nicea? What happened there?

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It was not uncommon for the early church to have councils (cf. Acts 15) to discuss and seek unity on important doctrinal matters. Prior to Nicea, a man named Arius was spreading a false teaching that Jesus was a created being like other humans. Arius was labeled a heretic and was put out of the church by Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria. Arius moved to Palestine and continued his teaching there. This stirred up debate and controversy. Constantine, who wanted a peace and unity in the Roman Empire, called together over 300 bishops from all over the empire. Many bishops traveled thousands of miles to attend—bearing wounds and scars resulting from persecution for their faith. At the council, Arius’ teachings were soundly rejected and Christ’s deity was overwhelmingly affirmed. They adopted a creed that affirmed this to which only two bishops voted against (not exactly a close vote). Also, it can be mentioned that not even Arius and his followers denied Jesus’ deity (in the Greek polytheistic mind, gods created or gave birth to others gods). Arius and his followers simply taught that Jesus was created and not eternal.

The portion the Nicene Creed that affirms what these church leaders overwhelmingly believed about Jesus in relation to his deity is as follows:

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We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, light from light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one Being with the Father;
 through him all things were made.

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So, do the historical records support the allegations of the Da Vinci Code? Not in the least! But this brings us to the second area we need to examine: The DVC's claim that the church re-wrote the history books and nearly destroyed all of the documents that would reveal the truth? What about the Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi Codices, and the "secret" documents safeguarded by the Priory of Sion?

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First, manuscripts can be dated by the type of material they were written on (papyrus or parchment) and the type of handwriting script used. These indicators, as well as references and quotes from other early writings help scholars date materials. For instance, if Ignatius writes about or quotes from portions of the four gospels or NT letters in 105 A.D., it's good support that these documents existed before then! Irenaeus (before A.D. 181), Tertullian (around A.D. 206), and Origen (before A.D. 254) said there were four gospels, and Origen named them! So, these gospels clearly existed and were accepted as Scripture well before the Council of Nicaea. Through these means, we are confident that the books of the NT were all written in the first century. They could not have been written in 325 A.D. or later because all the evidence says differently.

But what about the charge that the gospels and other NT writings were "doctored up" by Constantine? When we examine all of the biblical manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts, we find that there are no significant variants (differences among them) in relation to the deity of Christ. The manuscripts that can be reliably dated to well before the time of the Council of Nicaea and those copied after it are all in one accord concerning the deity of Christ.

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Second, the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered by the Dead Sea in 1947 are Jewish texts (not Christian) and don't make reference to Christ. They are scrolls of the Old Testament copied before the birth of Christ and other Jewish writings of the Essenes.

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The so-called gospels and other writings discovered in the desert of Upper Egypt, in the region of Nag Hammadi, in 1945 (a collection of thirteen ancient codices or books containing over fifty texts) are the writings of a group referred to as Gnostics. The evidence indicates that the earliest of these documents were originally written around 80 years after the NT documents.

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Essentially, the Gnostics believed that:

- This world is unredeemably bad.

- Salvation is escape from the world, by means of self-knowledge.
- God is completely transcendent.
- Between God & the world are numerous intermediate spirit beings, called aeons, one (or more) of whom made this world.
- Somehow, some of the divine spark was trapped in the world in (some) humans.
- The Redeemer came down to give knowledge by which humans may be saved.

From a PowerPoint presentation on “Gnosticism” by Robert C. Newman as derived from Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism* and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

Gnosticism portrayed the God of the OT as an evil spirit. They taught that salvation depended on the individual possessing a quasi-intuitive knowledge (gnosis) of the mysteries of the universe. The Gnostic “gospels” mentioned in the DVC are vastly different than the four gospels and NT writings, and were labeled as heretical by the early church fathers. Yet, even these writings didn’t deny the deity of Christ—just his humanity!

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Last, what about the “secret” documents held by the Priory of Sion? The so-called *Les Dossiers Secrets* deposited at the Bibliotheque nationale de France, in Paris are a series of forged documents, created by a man named Plantard in the 1960s. Since no other “secret” documents have been brought forth or discovered, and since there is no evidence they ever existed, there is not much to say about them! It should also be mentioned that there is no reasonable evidence of a secret organization that dates back to the Middle Ages with the purpose of guarding such documents.

In the end, there is no evidence of an attempt by the church to re-write history and deify Christ, nor is there evidence of older, more accurate Christian documents that refute the teachings of our Bibles.

So, what about the DVC’s claim that our Bible’s are strictly manmade and are inaccurate and unreliable? Could it be that *none* of the writings we have get the record straight? We read in the DVC that:

Slide #31

The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven. . . . The Bible is a product of *man*. Not of God. The Bible did not magically fall from the clouds. Man created it . . . (pg. 231).

Yes, the Bible did not arrive by fax or fall from the clouds. Humans are part of the equation of how the Bible was produced. To say, however, that the Bible is the product of man, not God is to say (or imply) that it is *solely* a human product—

expressing the beliefs, notions, and opinions of human authors about God, the person of Jesus, morality, and the world around us. If this is the case, then the Bible certainly has no claim to inerrancy. If this is so, then the Bible is not a suitable standard or guide for our belief and practice.

Yet, this presupposition that many bring to the Bible (that it is merely a human work) faces much evidence to the contrary. First, let's be clear on what the Bible says concerning its origin. Paul writes in a letter to Timothy:

Slide #32 – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the context it was written, Paul is telling Timothy to endure persecution and continue teaching the gospel because what he learned—what he believes, lives by, and teaches is from Scripture. And this scripture, which clearly refers to all of the OT (and apparently the gospels), is God-breathed. That is, God “spoke” these words via the Holy Spirit through human authors. So, why is all scripture useful (or profitable) for teaching . . .? Because it is sourced in God, not man, and is thus true!

From Peter, we get a fuller glimpse at how this process works. Peter wrote:

Slide #33 – 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NIV)

²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Peter says no prophecy of Scripture (prophecy is not just foretelling, but is usually “forthtelling”) had its origins in human will or interpretation, but rather was from God, speaking through men by the Holy Spirit. These men were not robots. Their personalities and writing styles influence what is written, but ultimately it is from God who worked through them to reveal himself and his will to us.

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Some may say OK, but other writings like the Koran and the Book of Mormon claim to be from God, why should we accept the Bible's claims and not theirs? Why should we accept the Bible's claim, period? Here are a few reasons. The Bible is:

1. Historically accurate

2. Internally consistent
3. Corresponds to reality
4. Prophecies were fulfilled
5. Influenced the course of human history more than any other book
6. It transforms lives
7. These can not be rightly be said of any other “religious” writings

Ultimately, however, one’s acceptance or non-acceptance of the Bible as God’s Word is a matter of faith. For those who do trust and follow the Bible as God’s word, the inspiration, truthfulness, love, and wisdom of God are evident in it.

Returning to the charges against the inspiration, accuracy, and authority of the Bible, we need to further address the allegation that the Bible we have is a group of books selected by Constantine from a huge pool of books—many of which were much more accurate than the ones we now have and use.

Slide #35

We were told that:

. . . man created [the Bible] and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion. (pg. 231)

Scripture has NOT *evolved* through countless translations, additions, and revisions. We have many translations of the Bible today in English and other languages, but they are not a string of re-translations and revisions occurring over two thousand years. Rather, most of our Bibles are translated directly from the same very old and reliable collection of manuscripts—some dating to within a few decades of when the Scripture was originally written.

Second, we *do* have a definitive version of the book (although the Catholic Church considers some additional texts to be God’s Word). To say that 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—is ridiculous!

In reality, there were only a handful of other writings that called themselves gospels (the most generous count is 20-30). It is very important to understand that the four canonical Gospels were written from around 50-90 AD, the others from the mid-second to fourth centuries.

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How did we come to have the Bible as we know it today? Recognition of the books of the Bible, as being God's Word, was a process. The Gospels and Paul's letters were recognized by the end of the first century and were never disputed, so they became the basis of judging the other works. The General Epistles and Revelation were recognized gradually over the next 150 years. Nicaea did not create the canon but recognized what was *already accepted*.

What criteria did the early church use in whether or not to embrace a writing as being God's Word? The main factors they considered were:

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- Was it written by an apostle of Jesus (or someone close to an apostle)?
- Did it have widespread acceptance and use in the churches?
- Was it consistent with known scripture (OT and later the gospels & Paul's letters)?

“Canons” or “lists” of books that were considered God's Word were made way before the Council of Nicaea. They were made in part because of heresies and in part because of persecutions to identify which writings are to be read and which to be avoided, which can be burned and which are worth dying for.

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Some of these “canons” are:

The Muratorian Canon (about A.D. 170)

- The manuscript is broken at the beginning, but it starts with Luke as the 3rd Gospel, followed by John as the 4th.
- With the exception of Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter, it includes references to all of the NT books.

Origen (about A.D. 230)

- He says that the following 21 books were acknowledged by all Christians
 - Four Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters (13), 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation
- He says that the following 10 books were disputed by some Christians
 - Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude, Ps-Barnabas, Hermas, Didache, Gospel of Hebrews

(From a PowerPoint presentation on “The Canon” by Robert C. Newman as derived from the writings of Origen)

As we see, Emperor Constantine declared tolerance for Christianity in 313 A.D. He did not invent the deity of Christ or force the 27 books of the NT “canon” on the church. The books of the NT, *not* the Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi texts,

and other “secret” documents, are the genuine and accurate records of Jesus Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and teachings.

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In the DVC, Robert Langdon, Professor of Religious Symbology at Harvard University, tells of the Priory of Sion’s history as one of “secrets, blackmail, betrayal, and even brutal torture at the hands of an angry Pope.” He says it was founded “in Jerusalem in 1099 by a French king named Godefroi de Bouillon, who possessed a powerful secret”—a stash of documents hidden beneath the ruins of Herod’s temple. This society, he said, created a military arm known as the Knight’s Templar, which was destroyed to gain these documents by Pope Clement V on Friday, October 13 of 1307. (pp. 157-159)

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What is the truth about the Priory of Sion? In reality, we find that:

- The original Priory of Sion was founded in 1956 as a social group of friends by two people – André Bonhomme and Pierre Plantard.
- According to Article VII, members are expected “to carry out good deeds, to help the Catholic Church, teach the truth, defend the weak and the oppressed.”
- The Priory of Sion was short lived dissolving at the end of 1956. It was revived many times by Pierre Plantard between 1962 and 1993.
- In the 1960s, Pierre Plantard began writing a manuscript that a Father Berenger Sauniere had supposedly discovered while renovating his church. These forged documents alluded to the survival of the Merovingian line of French kings.
- Between 1961 and 1984 Plantard contrived a mythical pedigree of the Priory of Sion claiming that it was the offshoot of the “Order of Sion” which had been founded in the Kingdom of Jerusalem during the First Crusade.
- In order to give credibility to the fabricated lineage and pedigree, Plantard created “independent evidence.” So during the 1960s, they deposited a series of forged documents, the so-called *Les Dossiers Secrets*-, at the Bibliotheque nationale de France, in Paris.

(Taken from class notes on “The Priory of Sion” by Joe Thomas)

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The Knight’s Templar, on the other hand, was a real organization. But they were not much like the way they are described by the DVC. In truth, they protected pilgrims visiting the Holy Lands and were destroyed mainly by France’s King Philippe IV (not the Pope). Moreover, they were not destroyed because they held

documents that would reveal Jesus' total humanity and physical descendants, but rather primarily for their wealth.

Based on the true history, it should be evident that the *church*, not the Priory of Sion (or any other organization), is the real guardian of the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

What about the DVC claim that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife, the mother of his child, and the one Jesus intended to lead the church? We read in the DVC:

Slide #42-44

“ . . . 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.” (pp. 247-248)

“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.” (pg. 249)

“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.” (pg. 255)

Slide #45

Throughout history, Jesus was believed to be single and without child. There is absolutely no mention or evidence of Jesus having a wife, mistress, or child in Scripture or other writings of the church. Even the Gnostic writings, which Brown appeals to only suggest that Mary was Jesus' companion, that he kissed her, entrusted her with some “hidden” truth, and loved her more than the apostles. These writings do not teach anything about marriage or sexual relations between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Further more, they were written 100-200 years after Jesus' earthly life by a group of people who were not Christians, and they were probably written to be taken metaphorically (for instance some hold that “Mary” is meant to be symbolic for “wisdom”).

So what does the preponderance of evidence tell us? Mary Magdalene was one of the several women that followed Jesus during his earthly ministry and whom he appeared to after his resurrection.

Last, what about the DVC claim that women have been oppressed by the church and affirmed by paganism? We read in the DVC:

Slide #46

“. . . the Priory’s tradition of perpetuating goddess worship is based on a belief that 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 a patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever.” (pg. 124)

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Contrary to what we read in the DVC, women in the ancient world where paganism was dominant were held in very low esteem. In many countries including Greece, India, and China, women had no rights and were considered the property of their husbands. Usually, their social status was like that of a slave. In many cultures, they could be easily divorced or even sold into slavery. Brown’s book says that Constantine changed the world from “matriarchal paganism” to patriarchal Christianity”. The truth be told, there is no evidence at all that there has ever been a matriarchal society even briefly!

It was Christianity that actually elevated women. Even ancient Roman pagan scholars agree that the rise of Christianity was the turning point for women. Husbands who had treated their wives like personal property were commanded to love them as Christ loved the church! We don’t even have to read historical books to know that this is indeed true. Look at any non-Christian culture today such as, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, or other pagan or polytheistic nations. This is not to say that the church and professing Christian males always treat women rightly, but when they don’t it is in spite of the teachings of Christianity—not because of them.

Also, Brown and others who hold the Gnostic gospels to be superior to the four gospels and claim that they herald women conveniently overlook much of what these “gospels” actually teach and select what suits them. For instance, in the final verse of the Gospel of Thomas, the most famous of the Gnostic texts, we read:

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“Simon Peter said to them: ‘Let Mary [Magdalene] leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom.’” (114)

Again, Brown has stood history on its head and presented us with the exact opposite of what is actually the case. It is paganism that oppresses women and Christianity that affirms them!

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There are many, many more fallacies in the DVC that could be addressed. These *are* ably covered in books such as *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* by Darrell Bock and *Cracking the Da Vinci Code* by James Garlow and Peter Jones. We examined just five major allegations that are core to both the church and gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the “gospel” that Dan Brown espouses, and we found that in every case Brown’s allegations are baseless and wrongheaded. We saw that:

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- Jesus was not “upgraded” to divine status at the Council of Nicaea. His followers held that belief from the time of his resurrection onward.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi texts, and other “secret documents” are not the genuine and accurate records of Jesus’ life and teachings. The four NT gospels and other NT writings are.
- The Priory of Sion is not the guardian of the truth about Jesus. The church is.
- Mary Magdalene was not Jesus’ wife and mother of his child. She was one of several women disciples who followed him.
- Women were not exalted under paganism—they were oppressed. Women were affirmed and treated better under Christianity.

Let’s close with the words of NT scholar, Grant Osborne:

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Brown’s anti-Christian novel was not based on “impeccable research” but was contrived from the beginning as a polemic against Christianity and as a propaganda piece espousing a neopagan lifestyle. People everywhere are talking about it, and many are engaging in Christian-bashing. It is important to realize the lack of any viable foundation for the claims that Brown makes.

(Grant Osborne, article *Decoding The Da Vinci Code*)