The Da Vinci Code

Introduction &

Major Questions

Robert C. Newman
The Da Vinci Code is a novel that has attracted an enormous amount of attention:
  – A murder mystery
  – Of the thriller sort
  – Containing 454 pages in 105 short chapters
  – A real page-turner!

Yet it claims to be a sort of historical novel:
  – Historically accurate
  – With fictional plot and main characters
  – Consider this claim it makes:
The complete text of page one of *The Da Vinci Code*.

The Priory of Sion – a European secret society founded in 1099 – is a real organization.

All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.
What's the Buzz?

• The book has sold extremely well.
  – Published April 2003, immediate best-seller
  – Sold 40 million copies in hardback
  – Still on NY Times best-seller list June 2006

• A movie based on the book was released in May 2006 & did well.

• The book is exciting & well-written (as this sort of book goes).

• The book is highly controversial.
The Book is Controversial
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- The popularity of the book is not totally about its attraction as a mystery thriller.
- Much of the interest is surely about its claim that traditional Christianity is a hoax.
The Plot of *The Da Vinci Code*
The Murder

- **Victim: Jacques Saunière**
  - Curator of the Louvre
  - (Secretly) Grand Master of the Priory of Sion

- **Murderer: Silas**
  - Large albino Monk connected with Opus Dei

- **Master Plotter: The Teacher**
  - Mysterious, unseen, provides info to Silas
The Hero & Heroine

• Robert Langdon
  – Prof of Religious Symbology at Harvard
  – In Paris to give a lecture when murder occurs

• Sophie Neveu
  – Cryptographer for French Judicial Police
  – Grand-daughter of murder victim
The Plot

• Story begins with the murder ~ 11 pm, inside the Louvre.

• Langdon is awakened at his hotel an hour & a half later by a phone call from the police.

• He is summoned to meet with Bezu Fache, crack investigator of the Judicial Police, at the scene of the crime.

• Fache secretly suspects Langdon, as Langdon’s name was in Saunière's calendar to meet with Saunière earlier that evening.
The Murder Scene

- Saunière has been found dead, naked, and lying in a pose that matches that of Da Vinci’s "Vitruvian Man."

- In the few minutes between being shot & dying, he managed to leave several cryptic clues about what is going on.
The Plot Thickens

• As the police prepare to arrest Langdon, Sophie manages to spirit him away.
• They decipher clues her grandfather has left behind.
• These involve a secret group guarding a devastating secret about the Church.
The Plot Moves On

• The rest of the book is a combination of their flight from the French police (and from Silas the murderer), while simultaneously seeking to locate and decipher the clues Saunière has left behind to direct them to the Grail.

• In the course of their flight, Sophie and Langdon travel to several places in France, then to London, and finally to Scotland.
Sir Leigh Teabing

- They seek out Leigh Teabing, ex-British Royal Historian, who lives in a chateau outside Paris.
- Teabing is one of the world’s experts on the Holy Grail and the Priory of Sion.
- Teabing fills them in on the Grail secret.
Seated on the down beside Langdon, Sophie drank her tea and ate a scone, feeling refreshed after two days of caffeine and food. Sir Leigh Teabing was bearded and bald, with a great deal of leg brace secu- tion. “Most people ask me only why do you seek the Grail?” he turned and asked. “However...the far more relevant question is this: What is the Holy Grail?”

Sophie sensed a rising air of academic anticipation now in both of her male companions.

“To fully understand the Grail,” Teabing continued, “we must first understand the Bible. How well do you know the New Testament?”

Sophie shrugged. “Not at all, really. I was raised by a man who worshiped Leonardo da Vinci.”

Teabing looked both startled and pleased. “An enlightened soul. Su-
Leonardo da Vinci one of the keepers of the secret of the Holy Grail. He hid clues in his art.
The Bible is a product of man … Not of God.
More than 80 Gospels were considered for the New Testament...
“I thought Constantine was a Christian,” Sophie said. “Hardly,” Teabing scoffed. “He was a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed, too weak to protest. In Constantine’s day, Rome’s official religion was sun worship—the cult of Sol Invictus, or the Invincible Sun—and Constantine was its head priest. Unfortunately for him, a growing religious turmoil was gripping Rome. Three centuries after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Christ’s followers had multiplied exponentially. Christians and pagans began warring, and the conflict grew to such proportions that it threatened to rend Rome in two. Constantine decided to do something to help. In 325 A.D., he decided to accept Christianity.”

Sophie was stunned. “Our emperor chose Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.”

Teabing was impressed. “He realized that the war between paganism and Christianity would not be resolved easily. By fusing pagan and Christian elements, Constantine created a version of Christianity that was acceptable to both parties.”

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“Transmogrification,” Langdon said. “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 mystery religion started on Christian icons. Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras—called the Son of God and the Light of the World—was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even Christianity’s weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans.”

“What do you mean?”

“Originally,” Langdon said, “Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the
Jesus' establishment as the Son of God was proposed & voted on by the Council of Nicaea.
“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. “Nonetheless, establishing Christ’s divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable. This transformation of the pagan challenges to Christianity into a means to redeem themselves only via the Roman Catholic Church.”

Sophie glanced at Langdon and gave him a soft nod of concurrence.

“It was all about power,” Teabing continued. “Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. 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. I’ve written several books on the topic.”

“And I assume devout Christians send you hate mail on a daily basis?”
… a new Bible
Some of the gospels managed to survive … The Dead Sea Scrolls … the Coptic Scrolls at Nag Hammadi
Da Vinci's *Last Supper*

- Teabing goes on to explain how Leonardo Da Vinci has hidden clues in his famous painting.
- He says the figure thought to be St John is really Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ wife & mother of his child Sarah.
The Rest of the Plot

• We won't spoil the story by revealing how the book ends.
• But after Jesus' death, we are told, Mary M & Sarah were hidden away in France.
• The church covered this up, male leadership took over & reconfigured Mary Magdalene as a prostitute, rejecting the sacred feminine.
Questions Raised by
The Da Vinci Code
Questions Raised

Include topics such as:

• Christology
• Scripture
• Church History
• Various others:
  – Mary Magdalene
  – Leonardo Da Vinci
  – The Templars
  – The Priory of Sion
Questions about Jesus Christ

• Who was Jesus?
  – Was he merely a human?
  – Was his status upgraded by Constantine?

• Was he raised from the dead after his crucifixion?

• Did Jesus really marry?

• Did he & Mary Magdalene have a child?
Questions about the Bible

- Is our Bible very different from the one the early Christians had?
- Did Constantine prepare a new Bible?
- Did he destroy the Gospels which pictured a merely human Jesus?
- Did he modify the Gospels in our Bible to make Jesus look divine?
- What about the Gnostic Gospels?
Questions about Church History

• What happened at the Council of Nicea?
• Was Constantine a Christian?
• Did the Roman Catholic Church adopt many features from paganism?
• Has it been covering up a huge secret for nearly 2000 years?
Miscellaneous questions

- What do we know about Mary Magdalene?
- Did Leonardo Da Vinci hide clues in his paintings that reveal the secret of the Holy Grail?
- What do we know about the Templars?
- What do we know about the Priory of Sion?
Let's Get Started!