

## ***The Da Vinci Code:***

*The Da Vinci Code*, a novel written by Dan Brown, which was first published in 2003, has recently come out in paperback. It is advertised as "the #1 worldwide bestseller." On July 17, 2005 it was reported that 25 million copies of the book had been sold in 44 languages. The novel has now been made into a major motion picture starring, the actor, Tom Hanks. I assume this is Hollywood's response to Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of Christ*.

The book is a mystery thriller centered around the search for the true holy grail, which turns out not to be the cup Jesus drank from at the last supper, but a secret. Namely, that Mary Magdalene had a child with Jesus, named Sarah. This secret, according to Dan Brown, has been kept guarded by a secret organization called the Priority of Sion. And hints of this secret can be found hidden in paintings by Leonardo Da Vinci.

This is one falsehood among numerous falsehoods about Christianity asserted in the book, which if taken seriously might disturb the faith of weak Christians.

Gary Williams, Principle of Oak Hill Theological College in London, lists four reasons why we should not dismiss this book, even though it is a work of pure fiction. First, many readers believe the claims made in this book; and that this novel "throws up sufficient dust to discredit the Bible."

Second, many reviewers of the novel take it the same way. Many in the press are treating the book's conspiracy theory against the Bible's reliability as historically accurate. Third, Dan Brown himself takes the key claims of his book as history, not fiction. He told The Washington Post and Good Morning America that he believes this conspiracy theory behind the book. Fourthly, the theory behind The Da Vinci Code is also found in another book from which Dan Brown took this theory. So, this theory is spreading.

My intention is to discuss topics raised in this novel, in an effort to defend the Christian doctrines Dan Brown tries to discredit.

## 1. The Deity of Jesus Christ

On p. 233, and p. 315 of the paperback Dan Brown, through a character named Teabing, asserts that prior to the counsel of Nicea, in 325, the church did not believe in the deity of Christ, but only in his humanity. Brown is suggesting that belief in the deity of Christ began in the fourth century because of Constantine's influence on the counsel of Nicea. This is an amazing statement, and reflects a profound ignorance of church history.

Jesus himself defended his deity by quoting from king David in the OT, as if to say king David believed in the deity of the Messiah when he wrote Psalm 110 (Matt. 22:43). In John 9 Jesus healed the man born blind, and the man born

began to worship Jesus. In Mark 14 the charge against Christ for which he was sent away for crucifixion was blasphemy for asserting his equality with God. See also these passages of scripture:

Is. 9:6, 7

Jn. 1:1-3; 5:17, 18; 8:58; 15:18; 20:28

Mk. 2:7

Lk. 5:20-24

Col. 1:16, 17

1 Jn. 5:20

Rev. 1:8

There were people in the earliest days of the church who did not believe Jesus was divine; namely, the Pharisees, and others who were not believers.

In the late first century a movement rose up out of the Jewish population of the Christian church in Palestine called Ebionism, advocating that, while Jesus was indeed the Messiah, he was nevertheless only a man.

In the late second century a group called the Alogians appear, who found the doctrine of Jesus' divinity irrational and impractical, along with all of Christianity's mysterious teachings.

There was once a man in a church from Asia Minor at the end of the second century named, Theodotus, who

denied Christ to escape persecution, and justified himself by saying that it was no big deal, because he only denied a mere man. He gained followers in the church called the Theodotians, and was excommunicated.

At the beginning of the third century the leader of a group called the Artemonites was excommunicated from the church at Rome for rejecting the deity of Christ. He said that such a belief was polytheistic (meaning, to believe in more than one God).

In the middle of the third century the bishop of Antioch (the church that sent the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys) named Paul of Samosata denied the Trinity, said that Jesus was not God, but only the godliest of men, undertook to alter the church's hymns; and while he was known to parrot the church's orthodox vocabulary about Jesus, he imported heretical meaning to the words. In A.D. 268 "the bishops under him in Syria accused him not only of [this] heresy, but also extreme vanity, arrogance, pompousness, avarice, and undue concern with secular business; and at the third synod held in Antioch... they pronounced his deposition" (Schaff, 576) with somewhere from 70 to 180 bishops present.

But perhaps the most famous of all, among those from the early church to deny the deity of Christ was a bishop in Egypt (Alexandria) named Arius who believed Jesus was created out of nothing to then create everything else; that

he was not God, but the first and most powerful of all creatures. And in A.D. 321 he and his followers were deposed and excommunicated by a council of a hundred Egyptian bishops. And when he continued to hold assemblies with his adherents they were driven from Alexandria and went up to Palestine to cause trouble until the entire Mediterranean East was turned into a theological battlefield over the deity of Christ. Until finally Emperor Constantine summoned the first ecumenical council of the Roman empire, the Council of Nicea, to settle the question. And out of approximately 318 bishops present, all but two confessed that Jesus is God, and signed their names to the Nicene Creed. Never before in the history of the church had something like that taken place. Those two bishops along with Arius were banished, their books were burned, and they were branded as enemies of the church. Athanasius wrote of the Arians, "...this sort of madness is a Jewish thing, and Jewish in the way that Judas the traitor was Jewish, let them profess openly that they are disciples of Caiaphas and Herod and stop disguising Judaism with the name of Christianity."

And so, to say as Dan Brown says, that prior to the Council of Nicea the church did not believe in the deity of Christ, and that the vote was a close vote is very false. For example, the martyrs of the early church were routinely killed because of their belief in Christ's deity. They wouldn't say that Caesar was Lord because they believed Jesus is Lord.

Practical value: If Jesus is not God he cannot forgive your sins, and he was a blasphemer, and so was David.

In summary, king David believed in the deity of Christ. Jesus believed in his own deity. The apostles believed in the deity of Christ. The early church Fathers after the apostolic era believed in the deity of Christ. And all along they were excommunicating people who did not believe in the deity of Christ. So that the council of Nicea did nothing but reaffirm what the Church has always believed. In fact, the reason the council was called was because some people were teaching that Jesus was not divine, and this was causing problems because it was at odds with what the church had always believed.

## 2. Gnosticism and Ritual Sex Worship

The book promotes modern notions of feminism and sex, implying that Christianity was originally a feminine based religion centered upon sex that the organized church suppressed and covered up, against what Jesus intended. According to the book Jesus passed the mantle not to Peter but to Mary Magdalene. In order to eliminate this matriarchal supremacy from the church, the church demonized women and sex. The church used to worship something called "the sacred feminine", which is goddess worship whereupon they would celebrate communion in the fashion of an orgy (see pp. 133 & 135 of the paperback). Dan Brown would have the reader believe that a religious

group called the Gnostics were the guardians of this sacred form of worship, and that Constantine wiped out the Gnostics.

First of all, the Gnostics were never recognized as part of the Christian church. The Gnostic writings, which so many people are talking about in conjunction with this novel, were not regarded as Scripture. The Gnostic beliefs are refuted in scripture. Gnosticism did not develop into an organized body until sometime in the 2nd century. And when it was recognizable as a religion, the early church Fathers defended Christianity against it. Put another way, from the historic roots of the Church there has always been a clear distinction between Christianity and Gnosticism. Dan Brown blurs this distinction to spin his theory.

Second, the gnostics did not have a very high view of women. The Gnostics did not worship the "sacred feminine." The Gnostics wrote books called the Gnostic Gospels, in which they communicated their philosophy through the mouth of Christ.

This is from the end of The Gospel of Thomas: "Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary 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 of heaven.'" The Gnostics did not worship the sacred feminine.

Brown's theory requires you to believe that the Gnostics were part of the early church (which they never were), and that the Gnostics worshipped the sacred feminine (which they never did).

Gnosticism was a secret society religion that believed in salvation through knowledge, not through Christ. And it was secret knowledge, reserved only for the initiated. They believed material reality was evil. Therefore, they did not believe in the resurrection or the incarnation.

The book is popular because of the way it promotes sexuality. Namely, that you access God not through Christ, but through sex. That is how you worship the sacred feminine. The type of worship promoted in this book is pagan goddess sex worship. Dan Brown would lead you to believe that early Christian worship guarded by the Gnostics was like unto an orgy.

The frightening thing is that we live in a culture that is so biblically illiterate and post Christian that this is plausible. This book is built on the premise that original Christianity was paganism.

-Pastor Ferry