

Delivered By Grace
Colossians 1:12-13
Rev. Josh Buice

**Beware Lest Any Man Spoil You Through Philosophy And Vain Deceit:
A Quick Review Of The Da Vinci Code**

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Introduction

In reading the Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, I became profusely aware that the fact that the best-selling novel and movie has caused such a stir is due to the Church's neglect to educate her people of true and proper history regarding the Church. The blame for this neglect may be placed at the feet of ministers such as myself who are commissioned not only to be protectors of the truth of Scripture, but must also be protectors of truth in general. Jude exhorts his readers to "*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* presents the opportunity for Christians to fulfill this command while at the same time educating the Church of true and proper history.

Accordingly, this quick review of *The Da Vinci Code* will serve either (1) those who may not have time to read the novel or (2) those who may not want to subject themselves to overt attacks on the truth of history, the trustworthiness of Scripture, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is a quick review and, thus, will not discuss all of the inaccuracies in the novel; other books have exposed these inaccuracies and are included in this bibliography. Rather, this review will proceed by providing a summary of the novel, a list of provocative quotations lifted directly from the novel, and a truthful account of the glaring inaccuracies of the novel. I have provided footnotes of respected scholars and researchers to substantiate the true historical account, a courtesy which Dan Brown neglected to provide to his readers.¹

Before proceeding, may we be reminded of the Apostle Paul's warning, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Colossians 2:8).

¹ Please note that references to page numbers of the novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, will be abbreviated as DVC followed by the page number.

Summary

One of the main characters, Jacques Saunière, is murdered in the opening pages of the book. Saunière is a fictional character later revealed to be the Grand Master of a secret society known as the Priory of Sion. The Priory of Sion is supposedly a European secret society founded in 1099 A.D. This society is purported to have possessed a stash of hidden documents which contain the truth of history that the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has kept suppressed for 2000 years.

The Priory of Sion created a military group, the Knights Templar, to protect these documents so that the documents could be released at a specific time in history. For a thousand years the legends of this secret have been passed down from Grand Master to Grand Master. Leonardo Da Vinci, the novel claims, was Grand Master from 1510-1519. Da Vinci planted certain symbols in his paintings which reveal the truths of the hidden documents.

At the heart of these hidden documents is the claim that Jesus is not the Son of God; he was simply a prophet with staggering influence. The novel claims that the RCC voted to institute Jesus as the Son of God at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. for three reasons: (1) to diffuse any pagan challenges to Christianity; (2) to suppress women; and, (3) to deem the RCC as the only sacred channel of authority. Hence, at the directive of Emperor Constantine, a new Bible was financed which included only those books that supported the RCC's agenda.

Accordingly, the hidden documents purport to contain the truth of history. This truth includes the following ideas: (1) Jesus Christ was a mortal man; (2) Mary Magdalene was a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin; (3) Mary Magdalene married Jesus Christ; (4) Jesus Christ directed Mary Magdalene (not Peter, as the RCC claims) to carry on the Church; (5) Mary Magdalene was pregnant with the female child of Jesus Christ at the time of the crucifixion; (6) Mary Magdalene secretly fled to France to keep the child safe; (7) the bloodline of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ still exists presently; (8) Mary Magdalene is a goddess to be worshiped; and, (9) the Holy Grail is an allegorical symbol which represents the goddess, Mary Magdalene, since she carried the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. The RCC, of course, is portrayed as having sought to destroy these hidden documents for 2000 years. Their fear has been that the bloodline of Christ would eventually rise and destroy the RCC. Therefore, the true intent of the hidden documents is to restore the "sacred feminine," i.e., goddess worship in the form of Mary Magdalene.

The second main character, Sophia Neveu, is the granddaughter of Jacques Saunière (the last man on earth to know the whereabouts of the hidden documents). Neveu is later revealed to be a direct descendant of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Saunière left her a cryptic message in his own blood just before he died. This message led her on a wild chase to find the hidden documents. The cryptic message instructed her to find one, Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of symbology.

The third main character, Robert Langdon, unbeknownst to him, was to help Neveu in her quest. Eventually Langdon and Neveu enlist the help of Oxford scholar and Holy Grail historian, Leigh Teabing.

The fourth main character, Leigh Teabing, is later revealed to be the mastermind behind the murder of the top leaders of the Priory of Sion. His intent is to find the hidden documents himself so that he can reveal their truths to the world.

The rest of the novel is a thrilling and fascinating search for the Holy Grail, i.e., the tomb of Mary Magdalene, which contains the hidden documents, which contains the supposed truth of history.

Provocative Quotations From *The Da Vinci Code*

The following is a sample of the most provocative quotations from the novel. Page numbers from the paperback edition are provided so the reader can search the context of the quotation. All italics in the quotations are original. May we once again be reminded of the wisdom of the Apostle Paul, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Colossians 2:8).

- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "The Bible is a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. . . . 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" (DVC, 250-251).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . A relatively close vote at that" (DVC, 253).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that made Him [Jesus Christ] godlike" (DVC, 254).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "The scrolls [i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls found in the 1950's and the Coptic Scrolls found in 1945] 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" (DVC, 254-255).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "What I mean is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*" (DVC, 255).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) "As I said earlier, the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record" (DVC, 264).

- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) “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. As a result, Peter expresses his discontent over playing second fiddle to a woman. I daresay Peter was something of a sexist” (DVC, 268).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) “Jesus was the original feminist” (DVC, 268).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) “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” (DVC, 270).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) “The Priory of Sion, to this day, still worships Mary Magdalene as the Goddess, the Holy Grail, and the Divine Mother” (DVC, 275).
- (Teabing speaking to Neveu) “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 lost sacred feminine” (DVC, 277).

A Truthful Account Of Inaccuracies

The following is a truthful sample of the glaring inaccuracies which will expose the carelessness with which Dan Brown handled the true historical record.

The Priory Of Sion

Brown’s opening words are:

“F A C T :

The Priory of Sion—
a European secret society founded in
1099---is a real organization.
In 1975 Paris’ Bibliothèque Nationale
discovered parchments known as *Les
Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous
members of the Priory of Sion, including
Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo,
and Leonardo Da Vinci” (DVC, 1).

This statement, indeed, is false. Researcher Richard Abanes provides the truth of history:

There have been at least three organizations called “The Priory of Sion.” The first was a Roman Catholic monastic order founded in Jerusalem at the **monestary** of Our Lady of Mt. Zion in about 1100. This group of monks known as the *Ordre de Notre Dame of Sion* (Order of Our Lady of Zion) ceased to exist in

1617, when it was absorbed by the Jesuits.

The history of the second and third Priories of Sion can be traced to Frenchman Pierre Plantard (1920-2000) who in 1942 founded an anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish group known as Alpha Galates. . . .

The third Priory of Sion, also started by Plantard, can be traced to the early 1960's, when he became obsessed with the idea of being an occult master and a descendant of kings.²

Abanes also notes that the *Les Dossiers Secrets* discovered by Bibliothèque Nationale have been proven to be documents forged by Pierre Plantard himself.

Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*

The novel claims that in Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the person sitting next to Jesus is Mary Magdalene. Historically, that person has been identified as John, the beloved disciple. Admittedly, the person has feminine characteristics. However, Abanes states, "According to Bruce Baucher—Curator of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago—John's appearance reflects the way Florentine artists traditionally depicted Jesus' favorite disciple. . . ." ³

Apparently, this style was en vogue at the time Da Vinci painted it. In order to move away from this style of art, the next era of painters, such as Michealangelo and the like, began painting men with robust, bulging muscles in order to differentiate themselves from the previous era of Florentinian artists.

The Council Of Nicaea: The Divinity of Jesus Christ

The novel's intriguing character, the Brit, Leigh Teabing states, "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . A relatively close vote at that" (DVC, 253). This statement could not be further from the truth. In fact, it is quite shocking that the fictitious Oxford historian should make such an obvious historical blunder.

The true historical record is that Emperor Constantine sent out 1800 invitations to bishops inviting them to participate in the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Accounts differ as to the total attendees, but it was between 250 and 400.⁴ Most historians have

² Richard Abanes, *The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code*, (Eugene: OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004), 48-49. Abanes is a national author and authority on cults and religions. See also Andreas Köstenberger, *The Da Vinci Code: Is Christ True?* (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 35-36. Köstenberger is professor of New Testament and Director of Ph.D/Th.M Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He can be reached at akostenberger@sebts.edu or at (919) 761-2491.

³ Abanes, 72; Köstenberger, 30.

⁴ Attendee Eusebius counted 250 attendees; Attendee Athanasius counted 318 attendees.

settled on approximately 300 attendees.⁵

The divinity of Christ was voted on at the council, but Christ's divinity was already an established and accepted doctrine since the time of the apostles. The Council of Nicaea simply officially recognized what the New Testament and previous church history had already confirmed. In addition, it was anything but a close vote. All attendees affirmed Christ's divinity except two bishops; both were immediately excommunicated. The Oxford Dictionary states, "This Creed, with four anti-Arian anathemas [damnations] attached, was subscribed by all the Bishops present except two (Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais); and these last were deposed and banished."⁶ Supposing there were 300 attendees, the vote passed by 99%, hardly "a relatively close vote" as Teabing suggests.

The Council Of Nicaea: The Canon Of Scripture

Teabing further misrepresents the Council of Nicaea by arguing that the RCC selected only those gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) which supported the RCC's agenda. Teabing inaccurately comments, "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that made Him [Jesus Christ] godlike" (DVC, 254).

Firstly, as with the case of the divinity of Christ mentioned above, the council simply officially recognized what was then the prevailing view. Bock states, "The vote at Nicaea, rather than establishing the church's beliefs, affirmed and officially recognized what was already the church's dominant view."⁷ Keep in mind the Council of Nicaea convened in 325 A.D. The 2nd century early church father Irenaeus states of the four gospels in our Bible today, "It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are."⁸ Irenaeus made this statement a full 150 years or more before the Council of Nicaea convened. Origen (185 A.D.-254 A.D.) rejected the Gospel of Thomas on his first homily on Luke 1:1 nearly 100 years before the Council of Nicaea. In addition, the Roman Emperor Diocletian (245 A.D.-313 A.D.) in 303 A.D. ordered the destruction of the sacred books of Christians. These historical facts provide evidence that the Council of Nicaea did nothing more than formally and officially recognize what was already generally accepted as the dominant view.

Secondly, there were careful, specific, and proper procedures followed in selecting the New Testament books of the Bible (sometimes called the New Testament canon).

⁵I. Ortiz de Urbina, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 10 (Detroit: Tomson Gale, 2003), 347, states, "About 300 bishops were present . . ."

⁶ *The Oxford Dictionary Of The Christian Church*, ed. by E.A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1144.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2004), 102. Bock is a professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, TX.

⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8.

Köstenberger explains,

When the ancient Church compiled the canon, it recognized which writings bore the stamp of divine inspiration. Four criteria were used: (1) apostolicity, that is, direct or indirect association of a given work with an apostle; (2) orthodoxy, that is, whether a writing conformed to the rule of faith; (3) antiquity, that is, whether a writing was written during the apostolic era; and, (4) usage, that is, whether it was already widely used in the churches of the early period.⁹

The truth of the matter is that every New Testament book was either written by an apostle or under the auspices of an apostle. The latter is a criteria required for the writing to be included as Scripture. Bock similarly concludes, “The key point here, despite modern debate over authorship is that these texts [Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] have an inherent claim to apostolic roots that the other gospels [the Gnostic gospels] lacked.”¹⁰ Specific Gospels were not chosen to support an agenda. Rather, they were chosen because they had apostolic roots; the Gnostic gospels (*The Gospel Of Truth, The Gospel Of Thomas, The Gospel of Philip, The Gospel Of Mary*, etc.) were written much later and lacked any apostolic roots, thus nullifying them as divine Scripture.

The Truth Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ

I have in short declared the glaring inaccuracies of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. What Dan Brown and the characters in his book have failed to realize is that Scripture warns us of such man-made philosophies and vain deceit. Once again, as the Apostle Paul was writing to the Colossian church to combat the false teachings of Gnosticism, he states, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Colossians 2:8). Dan Brown and his fictitious characters have been ensnared by the very philosophy and vain deceit of which Scripture perfectly warned them. Had they taken time to read the scriptures instead of undermining them, they may well have heeded the Lord’s warning.

Dan Brown and the characters in his book would profit greatly by understanding that “There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one” (Romans 3:10-12). If Dan Brown and the characters in his book realized their sinful condition before an Holy God, then they would come to the realization that God chose believers “in Christ before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:4-5). This would lead them to the question, “How do I know if I am chosen?” The Apostle Peter succinctly **answers**, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). The Apostle John agrees, proclaiming, “For

⁹ Köstenberger, 25; Bock, 110. See also Michael Green, *The Books The Church Suppressed*, (Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2005), 41-71. Green is a distinguished scholar in the U.S. and the U.K. and has authored over 40 books.

¹⁰ Bock, 118.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The "whosoever" that the Apostle John mentions are those whom God chose before the foundation of the world to be saved.

Hence, the Apostle Paul brings this discussion full circle as he writes to the Corinthian church, saying, "Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. . . . so we preach and so ye believed" (I Corinthians 1:1-11).

Man must come to grips with his sinful condition before a Pure and Holy God. Man must believe that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. Man must turn from his sin and follow Christ. If Dan Brown and the characters in his book could perceive this simple truth, they would no longer be following after the goddess, Mary Magdalene; they would be following after the God of very God, Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I have sought in this quick discourse to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). If the faith was "once delivered" (as God states), then there are no new documents to find, no new truth to discover, and no new codes to decipher. We have the very words that God breathed. We *have* the faith "once delivered." Now it is our duty to go and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and yes, Christ will be with us always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

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