

Fast Facts on *The Da Vinci Code*

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 Christians are called to “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” The popularity of *The Da Vinci Code (DVC)* by Dan Brown may provide believers an opportunity to speak to others about the Jesus of history and Scripture, rather than the pseudo-christ the author of the best-seller promotes.

The Errors

While the *DVC* is a novel, the author contends the *history* the fictional characters in the story relate is true and constitutes a past that has been hidden and re-written by a sinister conspiracy of organized religion. While there are dozens of errors & inaccuracies in the *DVC*'s “corrections” to history, we'll highlight only some major errors.

ERROR #1: *Jesus was merely a man and it wasn't until the Council of Nicea in 325 AD that the deity of Christ was made an official doctrine. Until that time, Christians had esteemed Jesus as a mere mortal.*

The deity of Christ was NOT something the Council of Nicea “officially proposed & voted on,” as Brown contends. The source documents of the Christian Faith (AKA, the New Testament) are explicit in their record that Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man. They tell us . . .

- Jesus was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit.
- He made several claims to deity during His lifetime, some of them leading to the Jews trying to stone Him for *blasphemy*; i.e. John 10:33. It was precisely *that charge* that saw Him fixed to a Roman cross!
- Numerous catechisms (lists of basic beliefs) from the early church have been found with a clear belief in the deity of Christ.
- Hundreds of thousands of Christians were persecuted and martyred because they would not say, “Caesar is Lord,” since that title was reserved for deity, and in their confession, only “Jesus is Lord.”
- Many of the pre-Nicean church fathers indicate in their writings that Jesus was esteemed as both God & man in the early church.
- In a letter to Eusebius, Arius **complained** his views on Jesus faced stiff opposition and that his followers were being persecuted by other Christians. Why would they **oppose** him if his ideas were the accepted view?
- The vote affirming the deity of Jesus at the Council of Nicea was 300 to 2. (Not quite the “close vote” Brown says it was.)
- Examples of early Church documents affirming the deity of Christ . . .
 - “God appeared in a body.” - 7Q4 fragment of *1 Timothy 3:16*, 50-80 AD.
 - “I give glory to Jesus Christ, the God who bestowed such wisdom upon you.” Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Smyraeans*) 100 AD.
 - “For Christ is the God over all.” Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies 10.34*) Late 2nd Century.
 - “In order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King.” Irenaeus 120-202 AD.
 - “The Father of the universe has a Son, who also being the first begotten Word of God, is even God.” Justin Martyr (*First Apology*, ch. 63) 150 AD.

ERROR #2: *Brown has one of his characters say, “The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. . . . More than 80 gospels were considered for the NT, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion.” Pg. 231 “Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike.” Pg. 234 Brown says this all took place at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, a work of the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church.*

- The process of compiling an authoritative body of documents Christians could look to as the basis of faith & practice had progressed for centuries *before* Nicea.
- The impetus for collecting & consolidating an authoritative list of Scriptures was due to challenges by aberrant groups led by men like the Gnostic Marcion in 140 AD and Montanus a few years later.
- By 190 AD early church leaders had agreed on a list today known as the Muratorian Canon which is identical to our New Testament except for the inclusion of two additional books that were later removed when their authorship couldn't be validated.
- The early Church Fathers were concerned with a two things when deciding what books to include in the canon . . .
 - **Authorship** – Had to be written by an apostle or the close associate of an apostle.
 - **Edification/Inspiration** – Had to convey the sense of divine inspiration, as evidenced by a proven track record of edifying the Body of Christ.
- They followed a rigid standard; If in doubt, throw it out.
- Contrary to the *DVC*, Constantine had NOTHING to do with deciding the canon and the Council of Nicea was concerned with no other task but developing a standard position on the deity of Christ.
- Neither the Vatican nor the Roman Catholic Church existed in 325 AD. Both were later developments in the History of Christianity.
- The *DVC* appeals to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Egyptian Nag Hammadi manuscripts as the source material for his “80 other gospels” overlooked at Nicea.
 - Historians and scholars are quite clear that there is no connection between Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were safely in their caves in the Judean Hills years before the time of Christ.
 - The Nag Hammadi manuscripts were a collection of some 60 Gnostic documents, only 5 of which label themselves as “gospels.”
 - Written between the late 2nd and 4th Centuries, they are too far removed from the events to be considered genuine.
 - Nothing in these documents proves what Brown says they reveal; on the contrary, they *contradict* his statements.

ERROR #3: *Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and they had a child.*

- Even among secular scholars, Jesus is universally understood as being single.
- While marriage was the norm & there was a definite social pressure to marry, celibacy was also practiced. Some of Judaism's greatest heroes were single;
 - Daniel, Jeremiah, & John the Baptist.
 - Paul advocated celibacy for those who were gifted for it. (1 Cor. 7)
 - Jesus taught that celibacy was a viable option & some were ordained by God for it. (Matthew 19)
- The Qumran community of Essenes who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls (Brown wants to claim as support for his revision of history) were both monastic & celibate and lived in Israel during the time of Christ. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus commended the Essenes for their devotion to God. So remaining single was not as unusual a choice as the *DVC* contends.
- The Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* Brown uses to base his ideas on has been reliably dated to the late 3rd century. Nothing in it says Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. What we find there, though spurious, points us *away* from such a union between the two.

ERROR #4: *Jesus intended Mary to take over the leadership of the Church. Actually, Jesus was a “feminist” who wanted to restore the worship of the “divine feminine.”*

- *The Gnostic Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd Century, is the basis for

this. But *nothing* in that manuscript says Jesus made Mary the heir of His movement or legacy. It simply says he gave her special revelations he didn't impart to others; consistent with Gnosticism.

- The “divine/sacred feminine” was a pagan religious practice drawn from the religions God called His people *out of*. It's inconceivable Jesus would seek to “reform” the Judaism of His day this way.
- While Brown wants to use Gnostic works as support for his “new history” of the Jesus story, some of those same manuscripts demean women. One goes so far as to say that before Mary Magdalene can be saved, *she must become a man*.

ERROR #5: *A secret organization called The Priory of Sion has existed for over 900 years to safeguard the “true” story about Jesus & Mary and to protect the sacred bloodline of Christ. The Prior of Sion has had several notables serve as Grand Master; among these are, Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, Botticelli, and Leonardo Da Vinci. Da Vinci included codes and symbols in a couple of his paintings as a way to keep the “true” story of Jesus alive.*

- Since the idea that Jesus and Mary were married is discredited, there's no need for an organization to safeguard the secret or protect a bloodline.
- According to facts substantiated in French court cases, *The Priory of Sion* was founded in May, 1956 in France by Pierre Plantard, a radical monarchist who wanted to restore and occupy the throne to France. Plantard forged documents aimed at making the Priory of Sion appear as an ancient organization with a special mission – to protect the physical descendants of Jesus, the Merovingians, one time rulers of France.
- Since *The Priory of Sion* didn't exist until 50 years ago, the claim that famous people from the past have been its Grand Master is absurd.
- One of the most learned scholars of Leonardo, Professor Judith Veronica Field, of the University of London and president of the *Leonardo Da Vinci Society* called Brown's claim of Da Vinci's role with *The Priory of Sion*, “Absurd.”^[1]

Conclusion

In Matthew 24:23-24, Jesus warns about the last days, “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown says, “Look, here is the Christ!” But it's a false Christ.

Many read *The Da Vinci Code* and take it as nothing more than an interesting piece of fiction. Others find in its pages a justification for their rejection of the Gospel. We need to be ready to help people find where they can go to learn about the Real Jesus.

^[1] (cf. Gary Stern, «Experts Dismiss Theories in Popular Book», *The Journal News*, November 2, 2003).