

The Jesus Christ of the Bible

- John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
- John 1:12 “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Evaluating the Da Vinci Code

Kevin T. Bauder

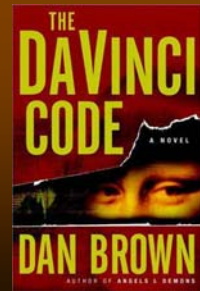
Why Bother?

It's just fiction, right?

- Tremendous popularity (millions of copies sold)
- Hollywood involvement (Ron Howard, Tom Hanks)
- Confused and uninformed people
- The Book Makes Truth Claims

Dan Brown's Introductory Comment, Labeled “FACT”:

“All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in the novel are accurate.” (p. 1)



Questions to Dan Brown

- **HOW MUCH OF THIS NOVEL IS TRUE?**
The Da Vinci Code is a novel and therefore a work of fiction. While the book's characters and their actions are obviously not real, the artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals depicted in this novel all exist (for example, Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings, the Gnostic Gospels, Hieros Gamos, etc.). These real elements are interpreted and debated by fictional characters. While it is my belief that some of the theories discussed by these characters may have merit, each individual reader must explore these characters' viewpoints and come to his or her own interpretations. My hope in writing this novel was that the story would serve as a catalyst and a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of faith, religion, and history.

Questions to Dan Brown

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF CLERICAL SCHOLARS ATTEMPTING TO "DISPROVE" THE DA VINCI CODE?**
The dialogue is wonderful. **These authors and I obviously disagree**, but the debate that is being generated is a positive powerful force. The more vigorously we debate these topics, the better our understanding of our own spirituality. Controversy and dialogue are healthy for religion as a whole. Religion has only one true enemy--apathy--and passionate debate is a superb antidote.

Questions to Dan Brown

- **SOME OF THE HISTORY IN THIS NOVEL CONTRADICTS WHAT I LEARNED IN SCHOOL. WHAT SHOULD I BELIEVE?**

Since the beginning of recorded time, history has been written by the "winners" (those societies and belief systems that conquered and survived). Despite an obvious bias in this accounting method, we still measure the "historical accuracy" of a given concept by examining how well it concurs with our existing historical record. Many historians now believe (as do I) that in gauging the historical accuracy of a given concept, we should first ask ourselves a far deeper question: **How historically accurate is history itself?**

Published Questions from the Official Study Guide

- Now that you've read The Da Vinci Code, are there any aspects of life/history/faith that you see in a different light?
- Has this book changed your ideas about faith, religion, or history in any way?
- Our views on sexuality have changed dramatically since pagan times. Do you think our ideas have changed for the better or worse?
- Would you rather live in a world without religion...or a world without science?
- For most people, the word "God" feels holy, while the word "Goddess" feels mythical. What are your thoughts on this? Do you imagine those perceptions will ever change?
- Will you look at the artwork of Da Vinci any differently now that you know more about his "secret life?"

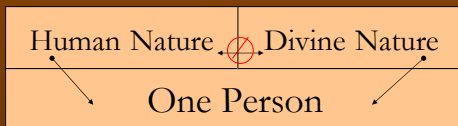
Claims Made by The Da Vinci Code

- Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene (who was an apostle) and they had children together.
- Christianity is merely the winner among a variety of competing faiths among the early followers of Jesus. Neither the deity of Christ nor the current New Testament existed until Nicea.
- True religion involves the "sacred feminine" or goddess principle, which Judaism and early Christianity both acknowledge.

A Married Jesus?

What would be the consequences for the Christian faith?

The Christology of Chalcedon



- One Person without Division
- Two Complete Natures without Combination or Confusion
- Properties of Each Nature Communicate to the Person according to That Nature
- Properties of the Natures Do Not Communicate to the Other Nature

Married with Children?

- Marriage and begetting children are human functions that would have been possible for the human nature of Christ.
- Marriage is honorable and would not have been a sin, even for Jesus.
- Any children would have been begotten according to the human nature and would not have partaken of the divine nature.
- Any children would have been "in Adam," sinners, and in need of salvation. This is no more implausible than Jesus' mother needing to be saved.
- In other words, a married Jesus with children presents no theological liabilities to the Christian faith. It would be compatible with Biblical Christology.

So Why Didn't Jesus Marry?

- Marriage and parenthood carry responsibilities
- Difficult life and ministry
- Necessity of absolute concentration
- Looming death on the cross
- Danger of idolatrized family (look what Catholicism does with Mary now)

A Married Jesus?

How do we know?

The Historical Evidence, Per Brown

- Admittedly, no statement in the biblical documents
- Mary Magdalene traveled with Jesus (Luke 8:1-3)
- Jewish males were expected to marry
- Hippolytus calls Mary Magdalene an Apostle
- Gospel of Philip has Jesus kissing Mary Magdalene
- Gospel of Philip calls Mary Jesus' "companion"
- Gospel of Mary has Jesus showing favoritism to Mary

1. Mary Traveled with Jesus

Luke 8:1-3

¹And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

²And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

³And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

1. Mary Traveled with Jesus

What Can We Conclude?

1. Many women traveled with Jesus, though only three are named.
2. All of these women supported Jesus financially.
3. None of these women is singled out for any special relationship.
4. There is no evidence of a marriage here.

2. Jewish Males Were Expected to Marry

Is This True?

1. The Essenes
2. The Qumran Community
3. John the Baptist
4. Saul of Tarsus
5. "Eunuchs for the Kingdom"

Conclusion?

Brown made this up.

3. What About Hippolytus?

Who Was He?

1. Church father, very late 2nd and early 3rd centuries.
2. Led a split in the church of Rome.
3. Early opponent of Gnosticism, not as reliable as Irenaeus.
4. Remark occurs in his "Commentary on Song Songs" 24-26

3. What About Hippolytus?

What Did He Say?

Lest the female apostles doubt the angels, Christ Himself came to them so that the women would be apostles of Christ and by their obedience rectify the sin of ancient Eve . . . Christ showed Himself to the [male] apostles and said to them . . . , "It is I who appeared to these women and I wanted to send them to you as apostles.

3. What About Hippolytus?

What Can We Infer?

1. The text is not about Mary Magdalene alone, but about all the women who witnessed the resurrection.
2. The word "apostle" is being used in its non-technical sense of "one sent with a commission."
3. These women had indeed been sent to announce the resurrection to Jesus' followers (Matthew 28:1-10).
4. There is no evidence here for a marriage (or for female apostles in the strict sense).

4. The Gospel of Philip?

What Is That?

1. A Gnostic text found at Nag Hammadi.
2. Written in Coptic, translating a Greek original.
3. Probably written in the late 3rd century.
4. Claims that Jesus often kissed Mary Magdalene.
5. Calls Mary the "companion" of Jesus, a term (according to Brown) reserved for spouses and lovers.

4. The Gospel of Philip?

What About That Kiss?

What About That Companion?

Gospel of Philip 63:33-36

And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene [...] loved] her more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her on her [...].

4. The Gospel of Philip?

What Can We Infer?

1. The word "companion" simply means "companion" in both Coptic and Greek (and Aramaic, *contra* Brown).
2. Jesus is said to kiss all His disciples, but Mary more. This is almost certainly a kiss of fellowship, quite common in the culture.
3. The location of the kiss is not evident because the text is fragmented. Customarily, it would have been on the cheek.
4. This is a late document, written more than 200 years after the fact.
5. There is no evidence here for a marriage.

4. The Gospel of Mary Magdala?

What Is It?

1. Another Gnostic document, probably written during the 2nd century.
2. Key passage is too long to print (17:10-18:21).
3. Has Jesus giving special revelations through Mary Magdalene.
4. Pits Peter against Mary Magdalene.
5. Has Levi siding with Mary against Peter.
6. Levi says that Jesus loved Mary Magdalene more than the disciples.

4. The Gospel of Mary Magdala?

How Do We Evaluate It?

1. Let's leave aside the issue of inspiration and canonicity.
2. It teaches that Jesus thought highly of Mary Magdalene and gave her a special revelation.
3. It does not teach or even imply any familial relationship between the two of them.
4. There is no support here for the idea of a married Jesus.
5. It also displays a contemptuous attitude toward women (this will be important later).

A Married Jesus?

- If it were true, it would not damage the Christian faith.
- There is no biblical evidence for a married Jesus, though other family members (mother and brothers) are identified.
- There is no extra-biblical evidence for a married Jesus.
- There is a consensus among liberal and conservative scholars that Jesus was not married.

Many Christianities?

Here's the Theory:

- Jesus was merely a human prophet. He founded a church that had female leaders and even female prophets (Mary Magdalene).
- During the first couple of centuries, there was a power struggle between divergent versions of Christianity. Male domination was a key factor in these struggles.
- Constantine used the Council of Nicea to create a unified version of Christianity that would suit his political purposes. This version was dominated by males.
- The Council of Nicea invented the deity of Christ and compiled a "New Testament" that included only those books supporting Constantine's views. Many gospels were excluded.
- Because Constantine's Christianity won the power struggle, it became "orthodoxy" while other versions became "heresy."

Many Christianities?

What Is True in the Theory

- The 1st century was a time when many religions were being made up. Lots of roll-your-own-at-home religion.
- There really were multiple versions of Christianity, even in the apostolic era. Mandeans, Sabians, Judaizers, Gnostics, etc.
- Several of these early versions of Christianity show up in the New Testament itself. Judaized Christianity and Gnostic Christianity were a significant problem.
- From the very beginning, authority was a key issue. Who has the right to define what is really Christianity?
- This situation became even more complicated after the apostles were dead. There were many competitors that presented themselves as legitimate Christianity. Again, authority was the key issue.

Many Christianities?

The [Christian] Gnostic Theory

- The true, ultimate god is a hidden being who never reveals himself. God is pure spirit and has no contact with the world.
- Spirit is good; matter is evil. The human body in particular is evil. This is an inescapable rule.
- There are many lesser gods (the Pleroma), the lowest of which (the Demiurge) created the world.
- Some people have a spark of the divine spirit trapped within their material body.
- Christ is a member of the Pleroma who came to deliver secret teaching that would set the divine spark free from the body.
- Jesus and Christ are different persons, or else Jesus was a mere phantom for the Christ.
- Christ committed the secret teaching to some of the lesser-known apostles and others, who pass it along *viva voce*.

Many Christianities? The Importance of Irenaeus

- Irenaeus lived and wrote in the middle of the 2nd century. This was nearly 200 years before Nicea, and within decades of John.
- Irenaeus was discipled by Papias and Polycarp, both of whom were disciples of John. He was John's spiritual grandson.
- Irenaeus was the pastor of the Christian church in Lyons, a city in what is now France.
- There were several early opponents of Gnosticism (Tertullian, Hippolytus). Irenaeus was the most important.
- His most important writing was *Adversus Haeresis*, or *Against Heresies*. In this book he dissected and responded to several forms of Gnosticism.
- Irenaeus was the main source of information about Gnosticism until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi MSS in the 1940s. Those MSS have proven that he was quite accurate.

Many Christianities? Irenaeus' Argument

- There are many books that compete for recognition as Scripture and many teachers that compete for recognition as Christian.
- We know who the key apostles were (Peter, John, Paul), and we know what churches they were involved with.
- We know that the apostles taught the first pastors personally, and superintended several generations of pastors.
- The pastors of the apostolic churches are all teaching the same thing and recognizing the same scriptures (especially the four gospels).
- This unanimity could not be contrived. It must represent the consensus of apostolic teaching.
- Gnosticism or any other system that denies these teachings cannot be Christianity.
- Books that deny these teachings cannot be Scripture.

Many Christianities? Just the Facts

- There were many divergent theologies claiming to be Christian. Not all of them faithfully represented the claims of Jesus.
- The New Testament documents attack several theologies as false, including Judaization and Gnosticism (Colossians, the Johannine Epistles).
- The apostolic churches came to a rapid consensus about a definition for Christianity (full deity and humanity for Christ) and about the bulk of the New Testament. All of this was clearly in place by the early 2nd century.
- The apostolic churches and their pastors universally rejected the claims of the Gnostics, who were driven to invent increasingly bizarre stories.
- There is not a shred of evidence for the existence of female apostles.
- All of this occurred 200 years prior to Nicea.

Many Christianities? No.

This theory collapses in the
face of the evidence.

The Sacred Feminine

A Politically Correct Reconstruction

The Sacred Feminine The Assertions of the Da Vinci Code

- All the world's ancient religions recognize a goddess principle that embodies the "sacred feminine."
- This principle links fertility with divinity and sees sexual intercourse as a means of communing with the divine.
- Ancient Judaism recognized this principle: in the temple, Yahweh (male) cohabited with Shekinah (female).
- Jesus also taught the sacred feminine, and the marriage to Mary Magdalene embodies it.
- The sacred feminine was crushed out of Christianity by Constantine at the Council of Nicea. Christianity has been a violent and morally impoverished movement ever since.

The Sacred Feminine Seriously?

- Some polytheistic religions did link fertility and divinity, incorporating sex rites as part of worship (Canaanite and Corinthian religion especially).
- According to the Old Testament documents, this is precisely why God judged the Canaanites. Israel was forbidden to copy them.
- Israelites did sometimes adopt forms from Canaanite religion. They were always rebuked.
- There is no evidence at all for the Yahweh-Shekinah coupling.
- There is no evidence that Jesus taught a “sacred feminine.” In the Gnostic writings Jesus is more misogynistic than in the canonical gospels.
- The orthodox position was in place centuries before Constantine and Nicea.

The Sacred Feminine

In other words, Brown is making it up. He has no serious evidence for his claims about early Jewish or Christian worship.

Conclusions

Issue One: A Married Jesus?

Conclusion:
Brown is making it up.

Issue Two: Competing Christianities?

Conclusion:
Brown is making it up.

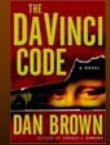
Issue Three: The Divine Feminine?

Conclusion:
Brown is making it up.

So What?

It's fiction, right?

“All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in the novel are accurate.” (p. 1)



If You Find This Plausible, Then...

- Elvis is alive
- With John F. Kennedy
- On a yacht in the Bermuda Triangle
- Monitoring alien transmissions
- From hangar 13
- For the Trilateral Commission

The Jesus Christ of the Bible

- John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
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