

The DaVinci Code

by Rebecca S. May

- *What does The DaVinci Code claim?*
- *What does The DaVinci Code say about the Bible?*
- *Are the claims in The DaVinci Code consistent with the facts?*

The DaVinci Code (DVC) is one of the most popular novels ever written, with more than 60.5 million copies in print (as of May 2006), and it has been translated into 44 languages (*wikipedia.org*). Many Christian scholars, such as Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, Erwin Lutzer, Hank Hanegraaff, and John Ankerberg, have written excellent responses to the claims Dan Brown makes in his best-selling book. This brochure will highlight the most fraudulent claims made by the DVC and how to respond to those who believe the DVC is credible. For a more exhaustive look at the many unbiblical statements made by Dan Brown, refer to books written by the authors listed above.

The DaVinci Code vs. Itself

When Dan Brown makes fraudulent claims about factual events, it reveals that he is either ignorant about history or is willfully deceiving his readers. In an interview on NBC, Brown was asked, “How much of this is based on reality in terms of things that actually happened?” His response, “Absolutely all of it. . . . all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies—all of that is historical fact” (*The Today Show*, June 9, 2003). Brown uses what is partially true, i.e. the existence of art and architecture, to lead you to believe that his conclusions, as well as his other references to history and the Bible, are true.

The DaVinci Code vs. the Bible

The fact that many statements within the DVC are directly contradictory to the Bible is no secret. For example, the Bible clearly states that Christ chose Peter (Matthew 16:18), not Mary (DVC, p. 248), to lead the church. Christianity is not a sexist religion (DVC, p. 124) but teaches that men and women are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). The New Testament is not based on fabrications (DVC p. 341) but on the careful investigation of eyewitnesses to the events (Luke 1:1-4). These are just a few of many possible examples where Brown directly contradicts the Bible. His claim that the Bible is historically inaccurate is an assumption which ignores the facts.

The reality is, with about “5,600 known manuscripts,” amounting to 2.3 million pages of text, there is not a single book of antiquity that compares to the historical accuracy of the Bible (Dr. Dan Wallace, *Kindred Spirit*, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 7). Whether it is talking about dates, events, people, or places, the Bible has never been proven inaccurate. No prophetic statement, historical fact, or archaeological discovery has ever revealed any inaccuracy within the Bible. As Harvard scholar Dr. Simon Greenleaf said, “You may decide at the end of your investigation into the New Testament to not believe it, but you do not have the right to say it is because there is not enough evidence.”

For more information on the historical accuracy of the Bible see *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F.F. Bruce and *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* by Craig Blomberg.

The DaVinci Code vs. History

You don’t need to believe the Bible is true in order to know that the claims of the DVC are false, since Brown not only contradicts historical facts recorded within the Bible, he contradicts historical facts recorded outside the Bible.

THE PRIORY OF SION—The DVC argues that in 1099 the Priory of Sion was created to protect the identity of Christ’s human descendants and safely pass the secret of the holy grail on to future generations. However, the only documents which

support the existence of such a group prior to 1956 were proven to have been fabricated by a man named Pierre Plantard (wikipedia.org). “The real Priory of Sion is a little splinter social group founded just half a century ago” (*New York Times Book Review*, 2/22/04).

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR—Even though the Knights Templar were real, their mission had nothing to do with the Priory of Sion or the holy grail but rather were men who protected pilgrims while traveling to the Holy Land. Once again, Brown misleads his readers by using real historical people, yet completely changing what they actually did and said.

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA—The Council of Nicea was convened to deal with the particular claims of an Alexandrian religious leader named Arius who taught that Jesus was created by the Father for the purpose of going to the cross. Jesus, therefore, was not eternally co-equal with the Father but achieved divinity by satisfying the purpose for which He was created. But the Council did not meet, as Brown claims, to “create” the divinity of Jesus or to argue over which books to include in the New Testament, and there is never any mention of “other gospels” which Brown claims were omitted by the church (DVC, p. 345).

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE—Brown states that the Roman Emperor Constantine was a pagan who only made a death bed conversion to Christianity. By financing the creation of the New Testament and destroying the more accurate Gnostic gospels (DVC, p. 254), he “successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity” (DVC, p. 124).

Dr. Paul Maier, an acclaimed scholar and professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, is a recognized expert on ancient Near East history, as well as ancient Greek and Roman history. In an interview with reporter Lee Strobel, Maier stated, “It is ridiculous to say Constantine was a lifelong pagan—He was a genuine convert to Christianity. Dan Brown almost makes Constantine an universal editor of the earliest Bible which is just pathetic because the canon was already known two hundred years before.... By Constantine’s time, it was already determined. There’s no question about that.” Maier continues, “And the Council of Nicea in 325 did not decide which books should go in the canon or which should not. Nothing of that is true. Not one of the decrees of the Council of Nicea deals with the canon. So, again, you simply have falsehood multiplied here.”

In conclusion, Maier says, “I think this is the greatest character assassination I’ve ever seen—either fact or fiction—in my life” (*Exploring The DaVinci Code*, pp. 23-25).

GNOSTIC GOSPELS—As to Brown’s claim concerning the other so-called “gospels,” it is interesting to note that the Gnostic writings to which he refers not only speak of Christ as divine but are extremely anti-feminine. Consider this quote from the *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas*. It says that Peter said to Jesus, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus supposedly responded: “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” (v. 114).

It is clear that it was the Gnostic gospels which spoke out against women, not the true gospels of the Bible. Besides being inconsistent with what Christ actually taught about women, these Gnostic texts were not written earlier as Brown claims (DVC, p. 234). They were composed from A.D. 150-225, whereas the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all composed prior to A.D. 95. It is obvious that the first-century apostles who actually walked with Christ would have a better idea of what He did and said as opposed to someone who could only speculate a century later.

Brown’s claim that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married cannot be substantiated in the Bible (the earliest accounts of the life of Christ) or in any ancient text outside the Bible. Brown attempts to use the so-called “Gospel of Philip” which alludes to Mary as the “companion” of Jesus. However, according to the Gospel of Philip, Jesus had three female companions, one of which was Mary Magdalene, another was His mother. It is clear that “companion” here means “friend: a person with whom someone spends a lot of time or a person with whom someone travels” (Margaret Mitchell, *University of Chicago Divinity School*).

Conclusion

If the DVC is wrong about the Priory of Sion, the Knights Templar, the Council of Nicea, the Emperor Constantine, and the Gnostic Gospels, all of which can be proven by reliable historical documents outside of the Bible, wouldn’t it be far more reasonable to conclude that it would also be wrong about references made to things within the Bible?

Yet Brown claims that “The Bible has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book” (DVC, p. 231). This, I believe, is the main point Brown is trying to make in his book, and he goes to great lengths attempting to prove his point. He attacks Constantine, Mary, the disciples, and Jesus. He misquotes, misunderstands, and flat out lies about ancient documents such as the Bibliotheque Nationale, the Nicean Creed, and the Bible. In fact, “the DVC is so intent on proving an unprovable point that it gets tiresomely repetitive” (*Media Spotlight*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 18).

Brown wants you to question the validity of the Bible NOT based on any evidence but because he simply does not like what it says. It seems to me that he knows what many who have studied the Bible know, that it is a historically reliable book which is unequalled. The Bible clearly teaches the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:4) and that it is only by accepting Him as God and Savior (John 17:3) that the sinner will be saved from spending eternity in hell (Acts 4:12). He knows all of this and doesn't like it. So he makes considerable efforts to change history, hoping that by winning the masses to his theory, he might ease his own conscience. Unfortunately for him, and for all who have bought into his lies, there is no hope and no peace for those who reject Christ. And the only place you will find peace is the same place you will find the truth about Jesus Christ, in the Bible.

Questions and Answers

Q: *What does The DaVinci Code claim?*

A: The DVC claims to be a novel which uses real history to tell a fictional story. Actually, it is a fictional story which manipulates history by changing dates, falsifying events, and slandering people. It does not qualify as a novel but should rather be labeled a myth, legend, or propaganda.

Q: *What does The DaVinci Code say about the Bible?*

A: With respect to the Bible, the DVC claims, “the greatest story ever told is, in fact, the greatest story ever sold.” What is so comical about Dan Brown's little rhyme is that his novel is, in fact, “the greatest novel ever sold, and the biggest lie ever told.”

Q: *Are the claims in The DaVinci Code consistent with the facts?*

A: No. Both within the Bible and outside of the Bible, it is hard to find any reference made to historical dates, people, or events that are reliable or accurate with what actually happened. “So error-laden is ‘The DaVinci Code’ that the educated reader actually applauds those rare occasions where Brown stumbles (despite himself) into the truth” (Sandra Miesel, *Crisis Magazine*).