

UNRAVELLING THE ENIGMA OF THE DA VINCI CODE

Introduction

There is a bestseller novel (Doubleday Publishing) in 2003, written by Daniel Brown, a former English teacher at Philip Exeter Academy entitled *The Da Vinci Code* that has sold for six million copies and Hollywood will make a movie out of it. It made a direct attack on the deity of Christ & the Bible and has created quite a stir in the evangelical community for its malicious attacks on historic biblical Christianity.

This popular book questions and casts doubts on some significant themes concerning **the reliability and historicity of the Bible, on the nature of Christ, the origin and development of Christian belief and the activities of the Church** in its early formative years which we will consider briefly here.

False Claims Exposed

According to Dan Brown, Christianity was apparently started by a “Jesus Christ” who was viewed only as a prophet. He made no claim to deity (contra Phil 2:6 where Jesus stated it is not robbery to be equal with God) and he was apparently married and his wife is Mary Magdalene who was handpicked to lead the Church. He further claimed that the Church leaders treated Mary as a whore and erased evidence of this family ties and this was supposedly the greatest “cover-up in human history”. The Church purportedly tried to “get rid of the evidence” by sending in the Crusades to destroy them in Jerusalem (creative depraved imagination here).

The 454-paged book is a diatribe aimed at **undermining established biblical Christian beliefs, the Bible and early Church leaders**. There are conspiracy themes, to create mass confusion or doubt among Christians and aimed at rewriting history. The heart of the attack was the claims that almost everything our early Church fathers and the Bible taught us about the deity and life of Christ is false. It was diabolically designed to undermine the biblical Christian faith. The following are some of the bold and unsubstantiated claims made by Dan Brown in this book that can be challenged with factual information.

A Cunning Malevolent Attack

The Da Vinci Code paints the Bible as little more than a fraudulent compilation of texts used by scurrilous deceivers, bent on controlling the masses. Dan Brown alleged that the “pagan” Roman emperor Constantine collated the Bible instead. There is also an allegation here in the book (234) that Constantine commanded and financed the new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and then later embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The truth is that there is no credible historical evidence of such an event at all. The gospels were well authenticated and accepted already before Constantine’s time and are an accurate inspired record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (though not exhaustive). Truth is stranger than fiction!

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Old Testament had been compiled even before Jesus’ time. As for the New Testament, its formation began by the end of the

first century (about AD 90-100) almost 200 years before Constantine. The Apostle Peter recognised the Pauline epistles as on par with the other Scriptures referring to the Old Testament (2 Pet 3:16). During the second century, the gospels and the epistles were already accepted by the Church as canonical. The Church father, Irenaeus (c 180) acknowledged the canonicity of the four gospels and the well-respected Origen (c 185-294) completed a listing of New Testament books which he viewed as authoritative which is similar to the list of New Testament books that we have today in the Canon. Historical documents showed **a consensus of the Church in the canonicity of the Bible culminating in the Council of Carthage in 397 AD and Council of Hippo (393 AD)**. So the fact is that Constantine here has nothing to do with this canonicity of the Bible as claimed by Dan Brown, which is a misconstruing of facts to support a fallacious claim.

On the contrary, **the four gospels were coherent and it clearly acknowledged both the humanity and the deity of Christ**. The Apostle John in 1 John 4:1-4 defended vehemently the humanity of Christ against the Docetists and Gnostics, heretics of the first century. Therefore, the claim that the humanity of Christ was erased from the gospels was not true at all. He also claimed that the earlier “gospels” were outlawed, gathered up and burned. The only religious documents that were burnt during Constantine’s reign was **the erroneous and heretical writings of Arius, a Presbyter, who was condemned as a heretic for denying the deity of Christ, in the Council of Nicea in AD 325 by the universal Churches** (not Constantine) and that was acceptable and endorsed by biblical standards (1 Tim 3:16, John 20:28, Phil 2:6, Matt 26:64,45). There are no other gospels (or Arius writings) that were in the third century and no original gospels of the first century as claimed by Dan Brown in his book. There is a lot of speculative and unfounded material in this book by Dan Brown that is dubious, baseless and questionable that one needs to be vigilant against. Satan’s lie **“Hast God said it?”** (Gen 3:1) is still **an effective ploy to deceive and derail believers** from the biblical doctrines of Christ and his Word today.

Today, the deity of Christ is still being undermined by cults and liberals and those affected by Jewish traditions. The book by Dan Brown also alleged that the earthly aspects of Jesus’ life were omitted from the Bible (244). This is an extraordinary assertion as the four gospels has the earthly aspects, including his hunger, fastings, emotions of anguish, sadness and his relational interaction with his mother, friend and followers in its sacred pages. Dan Brown referred to “alleged instincts and relationship with Mary Magdalene” in his book (261). **It is a scandalous and fallacious allegation that has to be refuted vehemently**. There is no such factual record in the gospels to support thus as there is no event that happened at all. This diabolical conjecture is mischievous (to say the least) and utterly blasphemous and has to be rejected firmly. There is also no proven conspiracy to cover up any relationship of Christ with Mary Magdalene as alleged. The Bible records the life of the latter in the gospels. She is pictured as one who came to tell the disciples about Christ’s resurrection (John 20:1-4) after she was thoroughly converted and the claim in the Da Vinci Code is without basis nor have any factual reliable support or evidence.

Gnosticism Examined

It is instructive to note that the author, Dan Brown is quite influential and favourable to ancient gnosticism. Richard Abanes explains on pages 21-22 of his book, *“The Truth behind the Da Vinci’s Code”*.

“Gnosticism acquired its name from the Greek term for knowledge (gnosis).” Its followers believed that salvation came through “higher knowledge” – that is, divinely revealed truths about the nature of reality. This gnosis, for example, included a revelation that all human souls had originally existed in a spiritual realm of light (pleroma) until a tragedy of some kind caused them to start being imprisoned in fleshly bodies on the earth. Flesh, therefore, indeed, all physical matter was viewed as intrinsically evil. Gnostic “salvation” equalled liberation of the soul from the body-the freeing of the inner spirit from the confines of matter. Such liberation, however, could only be achieved through gnosis or special hidden knowledge, which brought about detachment from the evil world (similar to Eastern religions like Buddhism). To achieve this enlightenment, one needed to know the truth about God, himself and life (ie new age practices like Yoga). Ancient Gnosticism also preached two gods: a good deity of light and an evil deity of darkness. The good deity (the Principle, or All-Father) was seen as the epitome of love. This God was responsible for having created, not the world we see, but rather, the other god - the one who did create the world. This second deity, the evil demiurge, seeks only to impede human souls from returning to God and reuniting with the Divine. The good God is utterly removed from the world. He is unknowable. The All-Father, however, did send a Redeemer – Jesus. But the “Gnostic Jesus”, unlike the Jesus of Christianity, was not a Saviour or God who died for sins. He was simply a bringer of gnosis. According to many Gnostics, he also was a complete spiritual being, but not God. These Gnostics believed that he was not truly present in the flesh, because all flesh and all matter are evil. He may have appeared to be physical, but in reality, he was only projecting a phantom body. He claimed that Jesus’ mission was twofold: To reveal the truth about our “former state; a state that people had forgotten” and points the way back to God and to “release the divine spark of light, imprisoned in matter.”

Gnosticism was a well-known heresy condemned by the Apostle John and others in the first century (1 John 4:1-4, 2 John 7-8) and today it rears its ugly head again in the 20th century New Age Movement which is prevalent and pervasive in the world and one may need to expose it all over again, even in some Churches today.

Warnings from Scripture

There will continue to be **outrageous and subtle claims and allegations undermining the authenticity of gospels, the atoning work and deity of Christ, the Trinity and the inspiration, authority, sufficiency, perspicuity, canonicity and providential preservation of the Word of God** in these last perilous days of deception and delusion. The Da Vinci Code is only a case in point. These last days are filled with false teachers and apostates (2 Pet 2:1-2). The Apostle John warns us in 2 John 9-11, *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and*

the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. Paul adds in Rom 16:17, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them* and Paul in Tit 3:10 continues, *A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.* We have to **be vigilant, alert and discerning to examine and expose such false claims** appropriately with the Scriptures (1 Thes 5:21,22).

Conclusion

Abanes concludes with these words (78), “The truth is that Christianity is a religion solidly based on a variety of historical documents, collectively known as the New Testament. These texts plainly tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, a unique historical figure whose claims of deity were accepted by millions of people whose lives were changed. As for Dan Brown’s fanciful conspiracy theory about the Church’s cover-up of a Magdalene-Jesus union, **it is almost beyond comprehension that a tale so rooted in demonstrable falsehoods could so quickly and easily be embraced by the public.** And yet the Da Vinci Code’s reputation as a “factual book” continues to spread. As of March 2004, countless Internet sites had been infected by dozens of quotes from the book quotes that were being hailed as “true statements”. **But in the end, the truth will endure and those who are willing to look at the facts will undoubtedly see it.** Of this, we can be certain, as the Old Testament tells us, of Scriptures and history.” Solomon in Prov 12:19 says, *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

(For more information on the current subject, read Richard Abanes on “*The Truth behind the Da Vinci’s Code*”, Eugene: Harvest Home Publishers, 2004).

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