

# A Response to the DaVinci Code

by Father Ray Kasch

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*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2 Tim 4:2*

The DaVinci Code is much more than a best selling book. It has spawned a movie, countless books and articles praising and damning it and even a kind unholy pilgrimage where tour guides lead Dan Brown's disciples through the same streets where Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu gave chase for the Holy Grail. From the Louvre in Paris to Roslyn Chapel outside of Edinburgh, thousands are looking for the clues to connect the dots. The wait to see the Last Supper in Italy has gone from a few hours in line to the need for a reservation months in advance.

Some are baffled by all of the buzz. After all "*it's just a novel.*" So why should anyone care if a few folks want to buy into a conspiracy story and get lost for a little while in an ecclesiastical version of *The X Files*? What's the harm? The harm is that this book presents itself as more than a who-done-it in a monastery. Dan Brown sets the tone of the book with his opening word "FACT." He goes on to claim that the Priory of Sion is a secret society founded in 1099, that Opus Dei is suspected of brainwashing, coercion and dangerous disciplines and that "*all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are*

*accurate.*”<sup>1</sup> In addition to this Mr. Brown presents a number of characters, like Sir Leigh Teabing, who as experts in their fields give lengthy lectures on everything from pagan symbology to the canon of Scripture. The consequence is that the book reads like an historical novel. The average American, who has a poor knowledge of ancient history, and knows even less about Church history, could walk away feeling as though he had experienced both an enjoyable murder mystery and a painless history lesson all at the same time. This attitude is clearly represented by the books reviewers. The Washington Post Book World said, “*Read the book and be enlightened.*”<sup>2</sup> Note that it did not say “*entertained*” rather it said “*enlightened.*” Or consider this from the Chicago Tribune. “*Brown doesn’t slow down his tremendously powerful narrative engine despite transmitting several doctorates’ worth of fascinating history...The DaVinci Code is brain candy of highest quality.*”<sup>3</sup> The real problem from the Church’s perspective is that one of the several doctorates supposedly being transmitted is one in theology. While misinformation about a painting is of little consequence, errors in theology infect men’s souls and can have eternal ramifications.

Since Mr. Brown claims to have based his book on facts, he invites investigation. Therefore the scope of this paper will be to challenge his facts in three areas. 1. logical fallacies 2. historical inaccuracies and 3. theological heresies.

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<sup>1</sup> The DaVinci Code, Dan Brown, Anchor Books:New York, 2003, introductory page

<sup>2</sup> Brown, back cover of paperback edition

<sup>3</sup> Brown, inside front cover of paperback edition

## LOGICAL FALLACIES

Mr. Brown is guilty of a number of logical ambiguities. Foremost he uses the well known expression of creating a straw man. The Roman Catholic Church is the arch enemy in the novel and to paint it in the worst possible light Mr. Brown puts the Church in no win situations. At the beginning of the novel, Robert Langdon, the professor of religious symbology, gives a speech about how the Church “*launched a smear campaign against the pagan gods and goddesses, recasting their divine symbols as evil.*”<sup>4</sup> That, according to him, is why people wrongly assume that the pentagram is a sign of the devil. But later in the novel the Grail expert, Sir Leigh Teabing accuses Constantine of adopting pagan symbols. “*By fusing pagan symbols, dates and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties.*”<sup>5</sup> This places the Church in a no-win situation. It is evil if it suppresses pagan symbols and it is corrupt if it adopts them, so the only conclusion that you can draw is that the Church is corrupt and evil. Attack the straw man.

Another logical fallacy is his argument by consensus. In common parlance this is known as a snow job. After making an inaccurate statement, he supports it with a list of supposed scholars that agree with him. Mr. Brown does this with the lineage of Jesus. Teabing lectures Sophia about the Grail. (Isn't it ironic, in a book about rediscovering the divine feminine and exposing the evils of male domination, that the heroine Sophia is constantly being lectured by middle aged men as if she were an ignorant school girl?). He says, “*Leonardo is not the only one who*

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, p.37

<sup>5</sup> Brown, p.232

has been trying to tell the world the truth about the Holy Grail. The royal bloodline of Jesus Christ has been chronicled in exhaustive detail by scores of historians.” Then the titles of four books are given. *The Templar Revelation*, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar*, *The Goddess in the Gospels* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.<sup>6</sup> The list looks impressive. In an excellent critique of *The DaVinci Code*, Richard Abanes gives us further insight into these “historians.” Margaret Starbird, who wrote the *Woman with the Alabaster Jar*, is closest to an historian in that she holds a degree in comparative literature and German. Michael Baigent coauthor of *Holy Blood Holy Grail* has an undergraduate degree in psychology and is pursuing a graduate degree in Mysticism and Religious Experience (at Hogwart?). Henry Lincoln, Baigent’s coauthor is a BBC TV personality and scriptwriter. The two authors of *The Templar Revelation* are conspiracy theorists who pursue the occult and UFOs.<sup>7</sup> Making a list of people who agree with you is not proof, particularly if the people you quote are not true experts in the field. It puts one in mind of the old aspirin commercial where a man in a white coat says, “While I’m not a doctor I play one on a soap opera...” and for some people, that is all the convincing they need.

Mr. Brown’s repeats another fallacy in the form of a well known proposition. Since history is only written by the winners we cannot trust history. It sounds logical but this falls apart when further pressed. First it is not true that history is only written by the winners. In ancient times the Bible and Sennacherib both record a battle over Jerusalem. In modern times there have been plenty of books written by Americans about Vietnam. Second, it does not necessarily follow that what a winner

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, p.253

<sup>7</sup> The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code, Richard Abanes, Harvest House: Eugene Oregon, 2004, p.41,42

writes is inaccurate, simply because he is the winner. For example Churchill's volumes on World War II are both insightful and accurate. The conclusion of Mr. Brown's logical fallacy creates yet another. He in essence says throughout the book, "*history is written by winners and so you cannot trust history; but since I'm on the losing side, you can trust my history.*" But why? Because a position is the minority opinion does not make it automatically right any more than with the opinion of the majority. What we should be looking for is not consensus but facts.

Far deeper in the fabric of the novel, and far more damaging than the logical fallacies listed above, is the philosophical underpinning of the story. While the term "epistemological agnosticism" may not be familiar, this kind of thinking is all around us, and may well be the prominent idea of our day. Epistemology is the study of knowing how we know and the post modern world has shifted its thinking from a belief in absolutes that we all know to be true, to disbelief that we can know anything for certain. If we can't know anything for certain then everything is simply a matter of personal opinion. For example I frequently have had people end a discussion about a factual statement in the Bible with "*That's just your interpretation.*" They say this from the presupposition that no one can know anything for sure and so they hide behind a kind of agnosticism. They will even do this when the text under examination has nothing to do with interpretation but rather application, particularly if the application is not comfortable or convenient. The end of this kind of illogic is that my belief is every bit as valid as your belief, not because it is verifiable but simply because it is mine. Those who hold this philosophy in a more radical manner go beyond using it to justify their personal

choices. Some go on to attack the institutions that uphold the idea of objective truth. The university no longer teaches revealed propositional truth and so two remaining institutions are the Church and the Scriptures, not coincidentally the bad guys in Dan Brown's novel.

#### HISTORICAL INACCURACIES

*“So error laden is *The DaVinci Code*” that the educated reader actually applauds those rare occasions where Brown stumbles into the truth”<sup>8</sup>*

Sandra Miesel is hardly exaggerating. In spite of the fact that he claims all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secrets rituals are accurate; he fools only those who want to be fooled. And his errors are not a mistake of the pen that he wished later to take back. In an interview with Charles Gibson on the show “*Good Morning America*” Mr. Brown said that if the book had been nonfiction his factual assertions would not have changed.<sup>9</sup> The following are only his most egregious errors.

#### The Priory of Sion.

This he claims to be a secret society established in 1099 to protect the Grail. It was discovered through some secret documents found in the National Library in Paris in 1975. Even *Newsweek*, whose lead article about *The DaVinci Code* was more supportive of the divine feminine than the Church catholic, had to admit, “*The Priory was a small group created in 1956 by Pierre Plantard – once convicted of fraud – who fabricated the society.*”<sup>10</sup> Evidently his motivation for inventing the society and planting the false

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Abanes, p.11, quoting Sandra Miesel, *Crises Magazine*

<sup>9</sup> *The New Yorker: Annals of Religion, Hollywood Heresy*, Peter J. Boyer, May, 5,2006

<sup>10</sup> *Newsweek, The Mystery of Mary Magdalene*, May 29,2006, p.50

documents in the National Library was so that it would be discovered that he was, as heir of the Merovingian line, the true king of France.

## Dead Sea Scrolls

Teabing again lecturing Sophia says *“Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert”*<sup>11</sup> A little later Teabing refers to the Dead Sea Scrolls as *“the earliest Christian records.”*<sup>12</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 not the 1950’s but more importantly they are writings of a Jewish ascetical group that was a local expression of the Essenes. The Dead Sea Scrolls include an early copy of Isaiah but they do not contain any of the Gnostic Gospels nor do they mention Jesus, not even one time. Mr. Brown was correct however that there is a desert in Judea.

## The Gnostic Gospels.

Teabing once again lecturing Sophia, (Since her name means wisdom, shouldn’t she know this stuff already?). *“To rewrite the history books Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke. Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible which omitted the Gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those Gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier Gospels were gathered up and burned.”* ‘An interesting note,’ Langdon added. ‘Anyone who chose the forbidden gospels over Constantine’s version was deemed a heretic. The word heretic derives from that moment in history. The Latin word *haereticus*

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<sup>11</sup> Brown, p.234

<sup>12</sup> Brown p.245

*means choice. Those who chose the original history of Christ were the world's first heretic.”*<sup>13</sup>

It is only a detail but the word heretic did not derive from Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. St. Paul uses the word in his letter to Titus written about 64AD.<sup>14</sup> Additionally the word heretic was used by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century church apologists who wrote defending the Christian faith against false accusations by pagan writers.<sup>15</sup> Heresy for them was not accepting false books it was accepting false beliefs, even if the Bible is used to defend them.

Scholar and Bishop NT Wright explains the truth about the so called Gnostic Gospels and the philosophy behind them. Those writings that were found in Nag Hammadi, *“and similar material found elsewhere represent what is what is loosely called ‘Gnosticism’ a many-headed spiritual movement known particularly...from the late second century on into at least the fourth. Central to the Gnostic system, which has many bewildering varieties and many internal contradictions, is the belief that the present world of space, time and matter is essentially evil, the creation is of a secondary deity, and that salvation will consist of escaping from it into a different sphere altogether, both here and hereafter.*<sup>16</sup>

Bp Wright makes several important points here. First is the late dating of the Gnostic Gospels. They were not original Christian writings that were in competition with the Gospels. Instead they were much later writings that contradicted the Gospels. For example Bp Wright places

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, p.234

<sup>14</sup> Titus 3:10

<sup>15</sup> Ref Irenaeus' "Against Heresies" and Tertullian's "Prescription Against Heresies".

<sup>16</sup> Decoding the DaVinci Code, NT Wright, Response: Seattle Pacific University, Summer 2005/Vol 28/2 p.4.

the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, at the earliest, while he argues that the writings of Paul were a mere 20 years after Jesus' death and the last Gospel, the Gospel of John, was written by 90AD at the latest.<sup>17</sup>

Second as Bp Wright points out, the premise of Gnosticism is that matter is evil and so the general problem with the Gnostic Gospels is not as Mr. Brown claimed, that they made Jesus too mortal, the problem with the Gnostic Gospels is that they made Jesus too magical. The Jesus of the Gnostic Gospels makes clay pigeons that He brings to life and He imparts "wisdom" that is often obscure. The Jesus of the canonical Gospels heals the sick, gives his flesh for the life of the world and preaches the Sermon on the Mount.

Third the Gnostic Gospels are indeed self contradictory and therefore not the consistent champion for the sacred feminine that Mr. Brown would have us believe. For example while the Gospel of Mary does promote her among the apostles, we read this from the Gospel of Thomas. "*Simon Peter says to them: 'Let Mary go out from our midst, for women are not worthy of life!' Jesus says: 'See, I will draw her so as to make her male so that she also may become a living spirit like you males. For every woman who has become male will enter the Kingdom of heaven.'"*<sup>18</sup> Hardly an endorsement of feminism.

So why were the Gnostic Gospels really rejected by the Church? First because they were written so late and while they have the names of famous characters, no one knows who wrote them. Second and closely related, they do not meet the test of being written by or received from an

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<sup>17</sup> NT Wright, p.5,6

<sup>18</sup> Gospel of Thomas, Saying 114, Doresse translation

eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. Third, they contain historical and geographical inaccuracies. The Gospel of Barnabas says, "*Jesus went to the sea of Galilee and having embarked in a ship, sailed to the city of Nazareth.*"<sup>19</sup> But Nazareth is about 8 miles from the Sea of Galilee in a mountain range. Fourth, they contradict not only the 4 Gospels but the common teaching of the entire Bible. We learn from Genesis that God made the heavens and the earth and they were good. We learn from the Psalmist that the earth is the Lord's and all that it contains. We learn from John that all things were made by the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us. We know from the teaching of Paul that salvation is not complete until the resurrection of our bodies and we receive a new heaven and a new earth. Contrast that with the Gnostic notion that matter is evil, made by a lesser god and that salvation is being freed from matter. This is really a Greek philosophy that does not match God's revelation. The early fathers would have had no more reason to include the Gnostic Gospels in the canon of Scripture than we would today to add the book of Mormon at the end of the Revelation to John. It is not because of some hidden conspiracy, rather it is because truth and error are not to be united, not even in the name of diversity. As one author put it, "*...these Gnostic texts were rejected precisely because they rejected the Christian continuity with historic Jewish faith. Orthodoxy was a serious attempt to be faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rather than to seek the little-G god within.*"<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gospel of Barnabas, chaps 20-21

<sup>20</sup> Christianity Today, editorial, "*A Faith Tailored Just for You*", June 2006, p.22

Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

First Mr. Brown just pulls it out of the hat that Mary Magdalene was also of the tribe of Benjamin and therefore of royal decent. Teabing says to Sophia, “*By marrying into the house of Benjamin, Jesus fused two royal bloodlines, creating a potent political union with the potential of making a legitimate claim to the throne and restoring the line of kings as it was under Solomon.*”<sup>21</sup> What we know of Mary Magdalene is from the Scriptures and there is no mention of her descent. The name Magdalene only tells us that she was from the town of Magdala.

The idea of Jesus married to Mary is preposterous on a number of levels. First there is no mention of it in Scripture and if it were true then surely St. Paul would have brought up that fact when he was commending Christian marriage in Corinthians. Second there is no mention of Jesus being married to Mary even in the Gnostic Gospels. In fact Mary Magdalene is only mentioned in 3 of the 52 Nag Hammadi manuscripts.<sup>22</sup> There is likely an episode of Jesus kissing Mary but it requires filling in some gaps in the manuscript. Here is how the passage actually reads. “*And the companion of the (gap) Mary Magdalene. (gap) her more than (gap) the disciples (gap) kiss her (gap) on her (gap).*”<sup>23</sup> As proof positive as that text is that Jesus and Mary were married, it is important to offer some historical context. As Newsweek writer Anne Underwood points out, “*the passage is less sensational than we might think. In the Gnostic tradition, kisses on lips are not an erotic act but a chaste gesture meant to symbolize the passage of knowledge and spiritual truth. Elsewhere in the Gospel*

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<sup>21</sup> Brown p.249

<sup>22</sup> NT Wright, p.5

<sup>23</sup> Anne Underwood, Newsweek, “*An Inconvenient Woman*”, May 29,2006, p.50

of Philip, Jesus also kisses his male disciples on the mouth.”<sup>24</sup> So perhaps it’s not proof positive after all.

A further argument against even the Gnostic Gospels teaching that Jesus and Mary were married can be seen in the passage just quoted. Teabing shows it to Sophia and it continues, *“The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us.’”*<sup>25</sup> If the Grail Theory were true, Jesus would have responded *“Hello! Because we are married!”* Instead Jesus said, *“Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another.”*<sup>26</sup> I’m not certain what that line means but I am certain that He didn’t say anything about marriage. Lastly, the argument that *“any Aramaic scholar will tell you the word ‘companion’ in those days literally meant spouse<sup>27</sup>”* does not hold water for two reasons. First the Gospel of Philip was written in Coptic and not Aramaic and second *“Scholar Ben Witherington III says this particular word is borrowed from the Greek and most likely means “sister” in a spiritual sense.”*<sup>28</sup>

## Art and Architecture

Contrary to his claim that all descriptions of artwork and architecture are accurate, fiction reigns here too. Mr. Brown claims that the mystical glass pyramid at the entrance of the Louvre is made of the biblically significant number 666 panes of glass.<sup>29</sup> But a quick check on the web reveals that there are 603 diamond shaped and 70 triangular panes

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<sup>24</sup> Underwood, p.51

<sup>25</sup> Brown, p.246

<sup>26</sup> The Gospel of Philip, The Gnostic Library, trans Wesley W Isenberg

<sup>27</sup> Brown, p.246

<sup>28</sup> Exploring the DaVinci Code, Lee Strobel and Garry Poole, Zondervan/Grand Rapids, 2006, p.74

<sup>29</sup> Brown, p.21

of glass.<sup>30</sup> But since the number 673 is neither mystical nor sexy, what are a few panes between friends? Brown also has Roslyn Chapel built in 1466 by the Knights Templar but in fact it wasn't built by the Templars and only became associated with them in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>31</sup> Bp NT Wright has a good laugh at Mr. Brown's description of Westminster Abbey. He says, *"All right Brown knows where the Isaac Newton monument is. But he still makes gaffe after gaffe which could have been corrected with 10 minutes of walking around with his eyes open. The Abbey has towers not spires. You cannot see Parliament from St. James Park. College Garden is an extremely private place, not a 'very public place'...If Brown is so careless and carelessly inventive, in details as easy to check as these, why should we trust him in anything else?"*<sup>32</sup>

Leonardo and his paintings are another place for Mr. Brown's carelessness. While it is true that Leonardo was an eccentric genius, it is wrong to describe him as a flamboyant homosexual, an occultist and an enemy of the church as Master of the Priory of Sion. Like artists of his day, DaVinci had young men as apprentices and while he may well have had homosexual relationships, no man or woman was permanently attached to him. We simply don't know his preferences which means he was not flamboyant. As far as goddess worship and enemy of the Church, Leonardo was formed by science rather than the occult. He may not have been a faithful Roman Catholic for most of his life but according to one biographer he returned to the Church at the end of his life, sought Christian instruction and in a written document commended his soul to Almighty God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and to all the saint in paradise.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.glassonweb.com/articles/article/94/>

<sup>31</sup> Newsweek, *"Fact of Fiction"*, May 29,2006, p.51

<sup>32</sup> NT Wright, p.2

<sup>33</sup> Abanes, p.65

But what of the Last Supper? Is it really filled with symbols of the true Holy Grail and is it Mary rather than John the Beloved at Jesus' right hand? There is a definite V between Jesus and John/Mary. Is that the chalice symbol? Is it V for truth "veritas"? Is it a V for victory over male domination, "vinci"? Is it simply a space so that Jesus is framed in the center of the painting while the others are grouped in threes?

Another mistaken symbol is that of the "*flawlessly formed letter M*"<sup>34</sup> that indicates that this is Mary. It is neither flawless nor an M. If one arm of the M is from the threesome to Jesus' right then the M has a very lazy leg. If the other arm of the M is the threesome on Jesus' left, one you draw around the apostles' hands you end up with a lighting bolt image. Mr. Brown would have done better to get the letter M from the pillars on each wall. In fact with an M on each wall then you can make the case for MM or Mary Magdalene. But then I could be accused of reading something into the painting unlike Mr. Brown.

The one oversight in the paintings symbols that saddens me the most is that if you add all of the shown fingers of the apostles, and use a number to alphabet correlation, the apostle are clearly spelling out the phrase "Go Seminoles". Or are they? As Bp Wright says, "*You can take any great painting and play this kind of game with it.*"<sup>35</sup>

It is true that John/Mary figure looks very feminine and there does seem to be affection between him/her and Jesus. But John is known as the one Jesus loved and so affection between the two of them would be expected. Further, it was the style of the day to paint young men with

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<sup>34</sup> Brown, p.245

<sup>35</sup> NT Wright, p.2

effeminate features. Case in point, Leonardo's *John the Baptist* looks like the love child of Kenny G and Richard Simmons.

We know from the Gospel account that Judas is the only one who left the meal, but he is the one with the sack of money in the threesome with Peter and John/Mary. So if John really is Mary then Leonardo left John out of the picture. But for what purpose? The obvious answer is that all twelve apostles are there including John and Mary is not in the picture.

But why no chalice? *“Teabing’s eyes twinkled. ‘A bit strange, don’t you think, considering that both the Bible and our standard Grail legend celebrate this moment as the definitive arrival of the Holy Grail.’”*<sup>36</sup> There are cups of wine before all of them, including Jesus, as would be true in a Passover celebration. There is not a chalice per se because it is only the later Grail legends that make Jesus’ cup unique from the others. Teabing is wrong that the Bible says anything about this being the arrival of the Holy Grail. There is no such mention in the Scriptures. The point of the meal was that Jesus was giving His Body and Blood for the world. The vessels that carried them were not important. It just says that He took the cup and blessed it. The cup that held the wine was no more important than the plate that held the bread.

#### DOCTRINAL HERESY

Far beyond the mistakes of art and architecture is the seriousness of mistakes in theology. The book is a frontal attack on the Christian faith in novel form. *“‘What I mean,’ Teabing countered, ‘is that almost everything*

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<sup>36</sup> Brown, p.236

*our fathers taught us about Christ is false.”*<sup>37</sup> The attack is more affective and more dangerous because it is so entertaining, and entertainment does not lessen the damage done. All you have to do is to read the bloggers as they celebrate alternative ways of looking at Jesus. But what Mr. Brown offers is nothing to celebrate. As St. Paul said, *“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”*<sup>38</sup>

## The Name of God

In promotion of the divine feminine, supposedly suppressed by the Church, Langdon claims, *“The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH- the sacred name of God- in fact is derived from Jehovah, and androgynous physical union between the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve Havah.”*<sup>39</sup> The fact is that Mr. Brown has it reversed. YHWH was not derived from Jehovah, Jehovah was derived from YHWH. The Hebrew text was originally written without vowels. Later vowels were added above and below the consonants. In the case of the Divine Name, the vowels for “adoniah” or LORD were placed among the tetragrammaton to cue the reader to say LORD instead of the Divine Name which was considered too sacred to say aloud. In the Middle Ages, a copyist confused the two

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, p.235

<sup>38</sup> Galatians 1:8,9

<sup>39</sup> Brown p.309

and added the vowels of LORD to the consonants of YHWH to come up with the name “Jehovah” which really means nothing.<sup>40</sup>

## The Holy Scriptures

As we saw earlier, Mr. Brown claims that the Scriptures that we have today were chosen by Constantine because they agree with his agenda. Speaking of the Gnostic scrolls, Teabing says, “*These scrolls 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 they own power base.*”<sup>41</sup> Once again Mr. Brown has it reversed. The late arrival of the Gnostic Gospels resulted in *their* being the texts with the glaring historical discrepancies and fabrication which reveal an agenda of their authors. For example the Gospel of Philip denies that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit because the agenda of this Gospel is to promote the Holy Spirit as a female entity. Mr. Brown also ignores several important points about the canon of Scripture. First, Constantine did not order a new Bible; rather he ordered 50 copies of the existing Bible from Eusebius the Bishop of Caesarea. Second, the Nicean Council did not decide the Bible that we have today. We have a record of their rulings and canons and not one of them concerns the Scriptures. That is because the Bible was completed well before Nicea in 325. The canon of the Old Testament was accepted by the time of Christ. Irenaeus c. 180 spoke of

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<sup>40</sup> The DaVinci Hoax, Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel, Ignatius Press:San Francisco, 2004, p291, 292, see footnote 292

<sup>41</sup> Brown, p.234

the authority of the 4 Gospels. Origen about 20 years later included Acts, all of Paul's writings, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation along with the Gospels as Holy Writ.<sup>42</sup> By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century all 27 books were received and quoted as authoritative by the church fathers. Thus Constantine did not create the Bible in 325, because it had been in existence for centuries. It is true that the Councils of Hippo and Carthage, 393 and 397 respectively, declared the current canon to be the official cannon, but they were did not create anything new, they simply made it official. With over 15,000 manuscripts and portions of texts to compare, the New Testament is the most reliable ancient document in the world and is supported by secular historians, archaeological evidence and the consistency of its message. We also must not belittle the fact of the fruit it has produced in the lives of millions over the millennia.

### The Divine Feminine

The thesis of the book is that true religion should have a male and female deity and that the Church has suppressed this knowledge to maintain male domination. One of the more offensive statements by Mr. Brown is that early Jewish worship involved ritual sex in the Temple.<sup>43</sup> Then he goes on to say that the Shekinah was God's female equal, making the Holy of Holies a bed chamber. While such actions were true of pagans it was just the opposite for Jewish worship. As one author put it, *"This is a most remarkable claim in light of the fact that two of the most unique features of ancient Judaism were its monotheistic character and its*

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<sup>42</sup> Abanes, p.24

<sup>43</sup> Brown, p.309

*avoidance of the sort of ritualistic sex that was common in the ancient Near East.*<sup>44</sup>

In one sense it is good that Mr. Brown brings up Old Testament worship because it points out another hole in his argument. It was not the Church that suppressed the concept of the divine feminine; rather it was God through the Old Testament prophets. Canaanite religion had gods and goddesses but since God is One, the prophets called for the destruction of altars to Baal and Asherah.

When it comes to the Church, if the goal was to suppress women in general and Mary Magdalene in specific, it did a very poor job. The Church actually elevated the role of women in the ancient world. Rather than being property, St. Paul proclaimed that in Christ there is neither male nor female.<sup>45</sup> Jesus had female followers. He broke with tradition and spoke to and healed women. Mary Magdalene was the first witness of the Resurrection of Jesus and The Blessed Virgin Mary is honored by the Church as the “Mother of God”, declared so in the Councils of Ephesus 431 and Chalcedon in 451.<sup>46</sup>

This however is not enough for feminists who actually decry the Blessed Virgin Mary as a submissive woman. They seek an equal with Jesus and thus the myth of Mary Magdalene as His partner and object of equal worship. The story is so obsessed with the sacred feminine that it claimed that Walt Disney was a modern day DaVinci, placing clues for Mary Magdalene among Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Even the Little Mermaid’s red hair is a clue.<sup>47</sup> Of course he could have

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<sup>44</sup> Olsen/Miesel, p.292,293

<sup>45</sup> Galatians 3:28

<sup>46</sup> Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed Cross and Livingston, Oxford/England, reprinted 1989

<sup>47</sup> Brown p.261,262

something there. Orphan Annie had red hair and was oppressed by a male dominant society and I have always had my doubts about Woody Woodpecker. But I digress.

### The Deity of Christ

The most offensive accusation of the book for Christians is that Jesus did not consider Himself to be divine, nor did anyone else until Constantine and the Council of Nicea. In a patronizing tone, Teabing says to Sophie, “ ‘My dear, until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet...a great powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal.’ ‘Not the Son of God?’ ‘Right, Jesus’ establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea.’ ‘Hold on. You’re saying Jesus’ divinity was a result of a vote?’ ‘A rather close vote at that,’ Teabing added.”<sup>48</sup>

The Council in Nicea was called because a man named Arius was preaching the Son was not eternal and therefore not equal with the Father. Arius was proclaimed a heretic and not by a close vote. Only 2 of the approximately 220 Bishops present sided with Arius.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to note that the Council did not declare Jesus as Divine; rather it affirmed that He was. Some 25 times, Jesus is declared as the Son of God in the Gospels. Jesus Himself declared to be divine such as when He says, “Before Abraham was I Am.”<sup>50</sup> This was a clear claim of divinity, using the Divine Name “I Am” and it was understood this way

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, p.233

<sup>49</sup> Olson/Miesel p.170

<sup>50</sup> John 8:58

by His listeners because they took up stones to kill Him for what they perceived to be blasphemy. In another place Jesus says “*I and the Father are one*”<sup>51</sup> and “*If you have seen Me you have seen the Father*”<sup>52</sup> These are statements that not even a prophet could make. In addition Jesus said He would be the Judge at the end of time<sup>53</sup>, that He could impart eternal life<sup>54</sup>, that He had been with God in heaven<sup>55</sup>, and that He could hear and answer prayer<sup>56</sup>. What mere mortal could make such a claim? When Thomas fell to his feet and said to Jesus, “*My Lord and my God*”<sup>57</sup>, Jesus did not rebuke him but said, “*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*”<sup>58</sup>

The early fathers of the Church also understood the biblical claims of Jesus’ divinity. Ignatius of Antioch 105 AD, Clement 150 AD, Justin Martyr 160 AD, Irenaeus 200 AD, Tertullian 200 AD, Origen 225 AD, Cyprian 250 AD, Methodius 290 AD, all proclaimed Jesus to be divine well before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.<sup>59</sup> While accepting Jesus’ divinity is ultimately an act of faith, no serious scholar can refute that both Jesus and His disciples proclaimed Him to be God. The apostles were not martyred for a really nice guy. They died for Jesus, the Son of God. Hence the famous quote of CS Lewis, “*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and*

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<sup>51</sup> John 10:30

<sup>52</sup> John 14:9

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>54</sup> John 5:21, 40

<sup>55</sup> John 17:5

<sup>56</sup> John 14:14

<sup>57</sup> John 20:28

<sup>58</sup> John 20:29

<sup>59</sup> Strobel/Poole, p.90

*is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."*<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

At a time when the United States is following in the path of Europe and taking steps toward being a post Christian society, I am concerned that Mr. Brown seems to be pushing from behind. His misinformation goes to the heart of the Christian faith and saddest of all is that those who follow the way that Mr. Brown points, in worshipping gods and goddesses, will end up missing the kingdom of God. It is therefore up to the Church and individual Christians to lovingly speak the truth and put honest seekers back on the correct path. Rather than boycotting the book or the movie we should engage the culture. We can celebrate that so many people today are showing interest in spiritual things, and like St. Paul at the Areopagus, commend them for their spirituality and tell them the rest of the story<sup>61</sup>. But remember that the goal is not to win an argument; the goal is to speak the truth in love. St Peter said, *"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Mere Christianity, C S Lewis, The MacMillan Company, 1960, p, 40,41

<sup>61</sup> Acts 17:16-34

<sup>62</sup> I Peter 3:15