

# Cracking The DaVinci Code



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The DaVinci Code is a novel written by Dan Brown in 2003 and has continued on the bestseller list since that time. It sold over 6 million copies in the first year making it the all time best seller for any novel in one year. It has been translated into over 40 languages and will be released as a movie in 2005.

Gene Edward Veith writes in World Magazine:

This book is indeed a thriller, hard to put down, with its exciting action, twists and turns, and unfolding. But this work of fiction puts forward certain ideas as true, and a good number of readers are accepting them as true: Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, and their bloodline continues to this day. His true teachings had to do with the worship of “the sacred feminine.” The church suppressed His message with its patriarchal institutions and dogmatic theology, twisting the teachings of Jesus into an oppressive, life-denying system of harsh moral rules, the subjugation of women, the repression of sexual freedom, and sinister conspiracies to control society. Traces of the true Christian goddess worship can be found throughout the history of Western art, literature, and architecture, because the true faith has been preserved by an elite secret society. (KNOWNOTHINGS, WORLD- July 3/10, 2004 p. 50)

This booklet is an attempt to answer several key questions raised in the book.

#### 1. Do we have a reliable Bible?

*“The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God . . . it has evolved through countless translations, additions and revisions.” (The DaVinci Code 231)*

**This is far from the truth.**

We have massive early manuscript confirmation.

- Though we do not have the original manuscripts, we can be sure that the copies we do have are faithful representatives of those original writings.
  - ◆ We have more than 5000 Greek manuscripts, one dating back to as early as 125 A.D.
    - ◇ We have as many as 20,000 additional copies of translations in such languages as Latin, Coptic, and Syriac.
    - ◇ Checking our NT with these early manuscripts shows that our NT has remain virtually unaltered.

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#### ARTICLES

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- “The DaVinci Code.” Profile, Watchman Fellowship, Inc., [www.watchman.org/profile](http://www.watchman.org/profile).
- Ben Witherington III, “Why the ‘Lost Gospel’ Lost Out,” Christianity Today, June 2004. [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7..26.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7..26.html).
- Gene Edward Veith, “KNOW NOTHINGS,” World Magazine, July 3/10, 2004, 50-52.

who barely escape from the ones who live in error,  
**2 Timothy 4:3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

**2. Did Constantine embellish and change the four gospels?**

*Leigh Teabing -“Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that make Him godlike.” (The DaVinci Code 234)*

Is this really true? Were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John intentionally altered and embellished in the fourth century at the command of Emperor Constantine?

**a. Constantine did write a letter to Eusebius ordering preparation of 50 copies of the sacred scriptures.**

- But nowhere in the letter does he command that any of the gospels be embellished in order to make Jesus appear more godlike.

**b. It is difficult to believe that the same church fathers who had withstood terrible persecution would have suddenly jettisoned their cherished gospels and embraced embellished accounts of Jesus’ life.**

- It is completely unrealistic to believe that the fourth century church fathers would have joined Constantine in a grand conspiracy of this kind.
- It is quite certain that if Constantine tried such a thing, we would have plenty of evidence in the writings of the church fathers. There is none.

**c. We have copies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that are significantly earlier than Constantine and the Council of Nicaea.**

- Though we do not have the original writings, we have portions and copies of NT manuscripts that date back to as early as 125 A.D.
- Although none of the copies are complete, we do have nearly complete copies of Luke and John dating from around 200 A.D.
  - ◆ When we compare these early manuscripts with those that followed the Council of Nicaea to see if any embellishment occurred. None did.
  - ◆ The pre-Nicene versions of John’s gospels include the same strong declarations of Christ’s deity that that we find in the later manuscripts.
  - ◆ These strong statements of Christ’s deity pre-date Constantine by more than a hundred years!

- In addition we have literally thousands of quotes of NT texts from the church fathers who lived 100 years and more before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.
  - ◆ Ignateus (70-110)- quotes 13 NT books
  - ◆ Polycarp (115)- a disciple of John- call NT quotes “scripture”
  - ◆ Iraneus (180)- quotes 20 NT books
  - ◆ Clement of Alexandria (150-212)- 2400 quotes- all but 3 NT books
  - ◆ Tertullian (160-220)- 7000 NT quotes
  - ◆ Origin (185-253)- 18,000 NT quotes
    - ◇ They lived between 100 and 200 years before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

**d. Historical works on the Council of Nicaea give no evidence that Constantine and the delegates even discussed the Gnostic Gospels or anything that pertained to the canon.**

- Twenty rulings were issued at Nicaea, and the contents of all of them are still in existence.
  - ◆ Not one of them refers to issues regarding the canon.

**3. Can we trust the Gospels?**

*Teabing- “Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.” The DaVinci Code 235*

Is this correct? The answer largely depends on the reliability of our earliest biographies of Jesus. (The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

- Each was written in the first century AD
- Although they are technically anonymous, we have fairly strong evidence from early church fathers such as Papias (c. 125 AD) and Iranaeus (c. 180 AD) for ascribing each gospel to its traditional author.
  - ◆ They tell us that:
    - ◇ Mark wrote down the substance of Peter’s preaching and that Luke, the traveling companion of Paul, carefully researched and wrote the biography that bears his name.
    - ◇ Matthew and John were two of the twelve disciples and wrote the books ascribed to them.

therefore the only one qualified to give us the righteousness by which we can stand in God’s holy presence.

- ◆ Deeds of compassion and kindness are found in most world religions.
  - ◇ As are moral codes and ethics.
- ◆ Jesus is what sets us apart.
  - ◇ Augustine, “He who understands the holiness of God, despairs in trying to appease him.”
  - ◇ If God did not take the initiative to save us, we could not be saved.

- In the NT, Jesus is vital and His death and resurrection are essential for salvation. John 14:6; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-11; Titus 2:11-14

The New Testament repeatedly warns us of the danger of false teachers.

**Matthew 7:15** "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

**Acts 20:28** "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

**2 Peter 2:1** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

**2 Peter 2:18** For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those

- ◆ the penalty of sin.
  - ◆ Our sins are as real as a thief who steals money from a bank vault.
    - ◇ And as restitution demands that the money be replaced, so the payment for our sin had to be made before we could be reconciled to God.
  - ◆ Ideas could not bridge the gap between us and God; only an act of atonement could.
    - ◇ 1 Peter 1:18-19
  - ◆ Reduce Jesus impact to his teachings alone, and you cut the heart out of what the NT repeatedly called the gospel.
- Jesus is the only one who can repair the breach between us and the God of the Bible.
  - ◆ We are not saved by Christ's example or his ideas.
  - ◆ We are not saved by a vision or revelation of him.
  - ◆ Our own gnosis or experience, no matter how wonderful it may be, cannot remove the barrier that our sin has caused between God and us.
- Some people say, "God, yes- but why Jesus?"
  - ◆ They assume that there are many ways of access to God.
  - ◆ They fashion God into their own image.
- We must come to the right God in the right way.
  - ◆ Cain and Abel came to the right God, but one brought an acceptable offering while the other was rejected. cf Jude 1:11
    - ◇ cf Nadab and Abihu Leviticus 10
- As the God-man, Jesus is perfectly sinless and

- ◆ If they are correct, then the events recorded in these gospels are based on either direct or indirect eyewitness testimony. cf Luke 1:1-3; 1 John 1:1; 2 Peter 1:16

But did the gospel writers intend to reliably record the life and ministry of Jesus? Were they interested in history, or did their theological agendas overshadow any desire they may have had to tell us what really happened?

- Craig Blomberg, NT scholar at Denver Seminary, writes that the prologue to Luke's gospel "reads very much like prefaces to other generally trusted historical and biographical works of antiquity."
- John tells us that he wrote his gospel so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they might have life in His name. (20:31)
  - ◆ This statement admittedly reveals a clear theological agenda.
    - ◇ But if you are going to be convinced enough to believe, the theology has to flow from accurate history.

Interestingly, both history and archeology are a great help in corroborating the general reliability of the gospel writers.

- Where the gospel writers mention people, places, and events that can be checked against other ancient sources, they are consistently shown to be reliable.

***But what about those gospels that didn't make it into the NT?***

4. **What are the Gnostic gospels? Are they reliable history?**  
*Teabing tells us that the Nag Hammadi texts represent "the earliest Christian records." (The DaVinci Code 245) These "unaltered gospels," he claims, tell us the real story about Jesus and early Christianity (248). The New Testament gospels are allegedly a later, corrupt version of these events.*

**a. What are the Nag Hammadi texts?**

- The Nag Hammadi texts were discovered in Egypt in 1945.
  - ◆ They are written in Coptic, not Greek or Hebrew.
  - ◆ They portray a Gnostic, not Christian, worldview.
- They contain 52 texts not found in our Bibles.
- Five of them are called gospels.

- ◆ Gospel of Phillip, Gospel of the Egyptians, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Truth

**b. Spurious Authorship**

- Not even the most radical liberal scholar seriously believes that those they are named for wrote these.
  - ◆ The early church rejected outright any book written under a pseudonym.

**c. Late Date**

- They are not the “earliest Christian record.”
- Even most of the scholars who want to give these documents credibility say that the very earliest date is about 150 AD and probably later.
  - ◆ At least 120 years after Christ’s crucifixion.
  - ◆ Some of the Gnostic documents date from the 5<sup>th</sup> and even 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Contrast this with the Biblical Gospels, written by eyewitnesses and completed before 70 AD except for John (95 AD).
  - ◆ Darrell Bock, “The bulk of this material is a few generations removed from the foundations of the Christian faith, a vital point to remember when assessing the contents.”
    - ◇ If you had a choice, whose description of Abraham Lincoln would you believe? His contemporaries, or people today who were speculating about his private life and political philosophy- especially if these speculators were determined to put their own political theories into Lincoln’s mouth.

**d. Questionable content**

- For the most part the Gnostic Gospels make no pretense of being an actual record of events.
  - ◆ They are simply the musings of various teachers.
- There is a striking contrast to their NT counterparts.
  - ◆ Salvation comes through secret esoteric knowledge.
  - ◆ They place almost no value on the death and resurrection of Jesus.
    - ◇ They viewed the death of Jesus as irrelevant for attaining salvation.

salvation. cf 1 Corinthians 15

**d. Another Gospel 2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:6-9**

- *To the Gnostic, Christ is of help to us, but he did nothing that was indispensable for our salvation.*
  - ◆ Gnostics didn’t believe that we needed to be saved from the penalty of sin or a final judgment.
    - ◇ Our problem, according to the Gnostics, is not sin, but ignorance. Salvation comes through secret esoteric knowledge.
    - ◇ We simply need to know how to access the gnosis and experience our own enlightenment.
    - ◇ Olsen and Miesel, (The DaVinci Hoax 50) (To the Gnostic) " Salvation is not about overcoming sin through and by God’s assistance; rather it is the overcoming of ignorance through self-knowledge.”
  - ◆ Thus we do not need to believe a given set of doctrines for salvation.
    - ◇ In fact, doctrines and belief systems are actually seen as hindrances to progress along the Gnostic path.
  - ◆ Gnostics would agree that the path we take doesn’t matter as long as we experience our own gnosis.
- *Christianity believes that Jesus is the only one who qualifies as a Savior.*
  - ◆ The Incarnation is the great divide between Christianity and Gnosticism.
    - ◇ Jesus is God, who took on full humanity in order to redeem us from

- The Gnostics did not view Jesus' death as an act of atonement, but rather as an occasion for discovering the divine self within.
  - ◆ To them, the immediate experience of Christ mattered, not the events of his earthly life.
  - ◆ They believed that spiritual experience was the source of religious truth.
  - ◆ An occasion to awaken their own divine possibilities.
- The Gnostics unanimously rejected Jesus' physical resurrection.
  - ◆ One write referred to it as the "faith of fools."
  - ◆ The resurrection was interpreted symbolically to explain how Christ's presence could be experienced.
    - ◇ In the *Gospel of Mary* the resurrection appearances are interpreted as appearances of visions, dreams, and trances.
- The Gnostics believed that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were irrelevant.
- What mattered to them was the immediate presence of Christ.
  - ◆ Accessible to those who experienced gnosis
    - ◇ The enlightenment available to those who were awakened to it.
    - ◇ Thus they encouraged direct experience with God, without the mediation of Christ or the constraints of the church.
- The New Testament, on the other hand, views Jesus' death and resurrection as key to our

- ◇ What was truly important was not the death of the man Jesus, but the secret knowledge brought by the Divine Christ.

- ◇ Salvation came through a correct understanding of this secret knowledge.

- ◆ They separated the human Jesus from the Divine Christ, seeing them as two distinct beings.
- ◆ It is not the Divine Christ who suffered and died, it was merely the human Jesus --or perhaps Simon of Cyrene.
- ◆ In the Infancy Story of Thomas, Jesus strikes dead a boy who bumps him. When the deceased boy's parents complain to Joseph, Jesus strikes them blind. When another observer complains because Jesus made clay sparrows on the Sabbath, Jesus claps his hands and the birds fly off.

- These teaching are incompatible with the NT teaching about Christ and salvation. cf Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-11; Titus 2:11-14.

- Ironically, the teaching of these Gnostic Gospels are incompatible with Teabing's view that the Nag Hammadi texts "speak of Christ in very human terms."

- ◆ The Nag Hammadi texts actually present Christ as being divine, though quite differently from the NT perspective.

Thus, the Nag Hammadi texts 1. have a spurious authorship, 2. are written later than the NT writings and 3. are characterized by an entirely alien theology.

- The church fathers were wise to reject them from the NT canon.
  - ◆ But how did they decide what books to include?
  - ◆ When were these decisions made? And who made them?

**5. Was the canon of the New Testament determined by Constantine and the Council of Nicea?**

*The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. (The DaVinci Code 231)*

Teabing in The DaVinci code tells Sophie that our modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political

agenda- to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and to use His influence to solidify their own power base. (cf 234)

**How was the New Testament canon determined?**

- Was the decision made by a church council?
- Did these books “just happen” to be collected without any specific criteria?
- Was the decision made on the basis of a sinister act of censorship as the DaVinci Code alleges?

**The NT Canon was not the product of a decision by Constantine and the Council of Nicea.**

- Erwin W. Lutzer (The DaVinci Deception 14-15) “Historical works on Nicaea give no evidence that Constantine and the delegates even discussed the Gnostic Gospels or anything that pertained to canon. Try as I might, I have not found a single line in the documents about Nicaea that records a discussion about what books should or should not be in the New Testament. . . . Twenty rulings were issued at Nicaea, and the contents of all of them are still in existence; not one of them refers to issues regarding the canon.”
- An anonymous document written 550 years later (887 AD) tells a fanciful legend about the Council of Nicea placing the canonical and apocryphal books by the altar and praying that God would sort out which were inspired by placing the inspired books on the top.

## 6. How Was The Biblical Canon Determined?

### a. The Old Testament

1. **There are over 3800 assertions in the OT that God is speaking.**
2. **The inspired books were recognized by the people of God at the time of writing. Exodus 24:3-4; Deuteronomy 31:26; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chronicles 32:32; Ezra 7:6; Nehemiah 9:14,26-30; Daniel 9:2**
  - ◆ Exodus 24:4a- “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.”
  - ◆ Deuteronomy 31:26- These writings were carefully laid in the Ark.
  - ◆ Joshua 24:26 So were the writings of Joshua
  - ◆ 1 Samuel 10:25- and Samuel

- He is pure, sinless, and without defect.
- He is the personal Creator, Sustainer, and Judge to whom we must give account.

### b. Another authority Isaiah 8:20 cf Matthew 5:18 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- **Why the ‘Lost Gospels Lost Out (Christianity Today Magazine June 2004)** Gnosticism fundamentally rejected Jewish theology about the goodness of creation, and especially the idea that all the nations could be blessed through Abraham and his faith. When the church accepted the Hebrew Scriptures, it implicitly rejected Gnosticism before it had a chance to get started.
- Jesus view the OT as fully authoritative. Matthew 5:18
- Jesus viewed all three sections of the Hebrew scriptures as inspired. cf Luke 24:44
- Jesus saw the OT references as reliable down to the words and tenses of the words used. cf Matthew 22:29-32, 41-46

### c. Another Jesus 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 cf John 8:23-24; 2 John 7-11

- The Gnostics either denied the historicity of the NT Gospels or considered them unimportant.
- Gnosticism had a tendency to separate the human Jesus from the Divine Christ, seeing them as two distinct beings.
  - ◆ Bock 77 “. . .there were two beings: the living Lord and Savior Jesus, and the human substitute Jesus. . . The earthly, living substitute, a mere human who only represented Jesus, was crucified. The heavenly Jesus did not suffer on the cross; His earthly substitute was sacrificed. The heavenly Jesus laughed at the world’s ignorance.

- craftsman of things material.”
- Bock 75 “Many of these texts portrayed God as a dyad, with the divine mother as part of the original couple.”
    - ◆ Or that God is androgynous or bi-sexual in nature.
  - Gnostics believed that when we encounter God, we are in effect encountering ourselves, for knowledge of self is knowledge of God.
  - They believe we are actually lighting the spark of divinity that exists in all of us.
  - They teach that God, however he or she is defined, is really an extension of ourselves.
    - ◆ In the *Gospel of Thomas*, when the disciples asked Jesus where they should go, he replied, “There is light within a man of light, and it lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness.”
      - ◇ We are not directed to Christ who exists outside of us as a savior, but rather we must look to the light within to save ourselves.
    - ◆ In the *Gospel of Philip*, we discover a more radical notion.
      - ◇ “God created humanity; [but now human beings] create God. That is the way it is in the world- human beings make gods, and worship their creation. It would be appropriate for the gods to worship human beings.”
  - Biblical Christianity teaches a holy God.
  - He is totally other.
    - ◆ We are not gods.
    - ◆ The first lie of Satan and all demonic religion is that we will be like God.
- ◆ 2 Kings 17:13 of 2 Chronicles 32:32- The prophets were recognized as bringing a message from God. and recorded.
  - ◆ Ezra (7:6) and Nehemiah (9:14, 26-30) - possessed copies of the law of Moses and the prophets.
  - ◆ Daniel 9:2- Jeremiah was included in the collection of inspired books.
3. **Not all of Jewish religious literature was considered a part of the list of inspired books.**
    - ◆ Jashar Joshua 10:13
    - ◆ Book of the Wars of the Lord Numbers 21:14
    - ◆ Others 1 Kings 11:41
  4. **Our OT is based on the Hebrew OT canon that was accepted by the Jews.**
  5. **Jesus refers to all three sections of the Jewish canon. Luke 24:44**
  6. **The Council of Jamnia (90 AD) only ratified books that the Jews had accepted five centuries earlier.**
- b. The New Testament**
1. **Christ claimed authority for His teachings. Mt 24:35**
  2. **Christ tells the apostles that they will receive truth from the Holy Spirit in the future. John 14:26; 16:13**
  3. **The apostles claim to be true and to be speaking God’s message. John 21:24; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:2**
    - ◆ John - John 21:24
    - ◆ Paul- 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:2,15, 2 Thessalonians 3:6,12,
    - ◆ Peter- 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:2
  4. **The apostles claim divine authority for each other. 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Peter 3:2,15-16**
    - ◆ Paul for Luke- 1 Timothy 5:18
    - ◆ Peter for all the apostles- 2 Peter 3:2
    - ◆ Peter for Paul- 2 Peter 3:15-16
  5. **There are hints of early collections of NT writings. Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Peter 3:15-16**
    - ◆ Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Revelation were

questioned by some.

### c. The Testimony Of The Early Church Fathers

#### 1. The early church fathers quote extensively from the NT but not from the Gnostic texts.

- ◆ Clement of Rome (95)- disciple of Peter
- ◆ Ignateus (70-110)- quotes 13 NT books
- ◆ Polycarp (115)- a disciple of John- call NT quotes “scripture”
- ◆ Iraneus (180)- quotes 20 NT books
  - ◇ He specifically attacks the Gnostic documents in, *Against Heresies* (cf Bock 112-113,114-115)
  - ◇ 150 years before Constantine and the Council of Nicea
- ◆ Clement of Alexandria (150-212)- 2400 quotes- all but 3 NT books
- ◆ Tertullian (160-220)- 7000 NT quotes
  - ◇ Avid opponent of the Gnostic works
  - ◇ Wrote *The Prescription Against Heretics* to counter the Gnostics
  - ◇ Again he was over 100 years before Constantine and Nicaea.
- ◆ Origin (185-253)- 18,000 NT quotes

#### 2. The early church had very definite criteria that had to be met for a book to be included in the NT.

- From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries of Christianity, many different books were written about the teachings of Jesus and His apostles that never made it into the NT.
- How did the early church decide that these books were to be rejected and not included in the NT?
  - ◆ Divine authorship- Does it claim to be inspired?
  - ◆ Human authorship- Was it written by an apostle or someone associated with an apostle?
  - ◆ Genuineness- Is it from the same author and time it claims to be?

To understand Gnosticism is to understand why it is so attractive to a generation that is committed to diversity and do-it-yourself spirituality.

As we contrast what the Gnostics believe with the historic Christian faith, we are, in effect, giving a critique of today’s religious climate.

Although Gnosticism was a very diverse movement, we will discuss its doctrine in its most popular form.

We will find that it has another God, another authority, another Christ, and another gospel.

#### a. Another God of Deuteronomy 13

- Garlow and Jones (Cracking DaVinci’s Code 166)- “The most striking theme common to all fifty-two texts dug up at Nag Hammadi is the rejection of the Genesis creation account. The Gnostic texts constantly mock the Creator God as a blind fool. Jahweh is the first and mightiest of all oppressive patriarchs. He is the “heavenly counterpart of all blustering macho brutes who think they know everything because they are male. . . The Gnostic is free from any law because the foolish Jahweh made up the law. In this way of thinking, there is no sin, the fall of Genesis 3 is *liberation*, and the serpent of the garden speaks wisdom.”
- Bock (Breaking The DaVinci Code 68) For these groups, there exists the eternal, supreme, transcendent Father who is utterly spiritual and has no contact with anything material. In opposition to Him is the Creator of the physical world, a fallen, wicked, arrogant being often called the *Demiurge*, or “maker” who falsely believes himself to be the only god. These Gnostic or Gnostic-like groups demean and ridicule this imposter and the physical things associated with him because he does not acknowledge the Pure Father of the true immaterial world and because he is the

- ◆ The followers of Mithraism did not keep written records, but chose to pass on their religion through secret rituals.
  - ◇ What we know about the religions comes from outsiders who opposed the legends.
- The cult of Mithras was continually evolving and adapting itself to the needs of a particular group or culture.

### 16. Is Gnosticism Just Another Form Of Christianity?

Millions of people who have never heard the word Gnosticism are devotees of its essential teachings.

- Today there are numerous groups and movements that utilize Gnostic concepts and writings.
  - Wiccans, New Agers, occultists, radical feminists, neo-pagans, and a host of other groups.
- Tragically, Gnostic concepts have infiltrated modern American Christianity.
  - **World Magazine (July 3/10, 2004 p. 51)** Mr. (Harold) Bloom wrote a book titled *The American Religion*. That religion, according to him, is not Christianity but Gnosticism. He makes the point that the religions and denominations that grew up on American soil tend to be experiential, nondoctrinal, and highly individualistic- marks, he says, of Gnostic mythology. The heroes of his book, those who are most Gnostic according to his analysis, are Mormons and liberal Southern Baptists. Whether or not Mr. Bloom is right, it is certainly true that we are experiencing a Gnostic revival today. The current postmodernist worldview, which rejects objective truth in favor of the notion that truth is nothing more than a construction of the mind, is itself intrinsically Gnostic.

- ◆ Acceptance- Was it accepted by the people of God as canonical from the time it was written?
  - ◇ There was surprising agreement by the early churches.
  - ◇ Some churches at first questioned Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Revelation.

When were these decisions made? And who made them?

- There was never an ecumenical council in the early church that officially decreed that the 27 books now in our NT were the right ones.
  - ◆ Rather, the Canon gradually took shape as the church recognized and embraced those books that were inspired by God.
- The various books were not given authority by any council or committee.
  - ◆ Not council or pope imposed upon the churches books that the people of God had not already accepted.
- There was widespread agreement on most of our NT books (including the 4 gospels) by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
  - ◆ Muratorian Canon (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century)- aged and mutilated document with some parts missing.
    - ◇ 23 of our 27 NT books are identified. (cf Bock, *Breaking the DaVinci Code* 112 )
  - ◆ Iranaeus (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century) and Origin (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century) have similar though not identical lists.
- Athanasius (367) has the earliest listing of all the books.
- The Council of Hippo (393) and the Council of Carthage (397) did ratify the 27 books we find in our NT.

**Darrell Bock (123-124)** Attributing the selection of the Gospels to Constantine and the Council of Nicea ignores more than a century of widespread use and recognition of these four Gospels. There was never a time when most church leaders were picking and choosing from dozens of gospels. To suggest otherwise is to morph Constantine into a figure he never was. The four Gospels were well established long before Constantine was born.

**Why the 'Lost Gospels' Lost Out** (Christianity Today, June 2004) "Among the second-century lists of authoritative

Scriptures, never are Gnostic texts listed- not even by the unorthodox Marcion in about 140.”

- No, the NT canon was not a product of a decision by Constantine and the Council of Nicea.
- No, Constantine didn't eliminate 80 gospels and have them burned.
- The NT was clearly recognized and distinguished long before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

7. **Did Constantine commission a new Bible which omitted certain gospels and embellish the gospels we have?**

*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. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned. (234)*

Constantine did write a letter to Eusebius ordering preparation of 50 copies of the sacred scriptures.

- But nowhere in the letter does he command that any of the gospels be embellished in order to make Jesus appear more godlike.

We have copies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that are significantly earlier than Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

- When we compare these early manuscripts with those that followed the Council of Nicea to see if any embellishment occurred. None did.

In addition we have literally tens of thousands of quotes of NT texts from the church fathers who lived 100 years and more before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

- They lived between 100 and 200 years before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

8. **Was Jesus' Deity First Taught At The Council Of Nicea?**

*The DaVinci Code maintains that Jesus' earliest followers didn't believe that He was divine. According to the fictional character Leigh Teabing, the doctrine of Christ's deity originally resulted from a vote at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. He asserts, "until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless." (233)*

*name of God- in fact derived for Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, Havah? (The DaVinci Code 309)*

Again false

- a. The Hebrew name for God comes from the Hebrew word "to be."
- b. Since Jewish tradition forbid the verbal pronunciation for God's name, rabbis in the 16<sup>th</sup> century took the consonants from YHWH and the vowels from Adonai (Lord) resulting in the word Jehovah. This later synthesized name not only did not predate YHWH, it has absolutely nothing to do with an androgynous union.

15. **Is Christianity Unique Or Did It Borrow From Other Religions?**

*Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras- called the Son of God and the Light of the World- was born on December 25, died was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysius. (The DaVinci Code 232)*

- a. **The Old Testament predicted the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus hundreds of years before the superstitions of Mithras surfaced.**
  - The virgin birth Isaiah 7:14
  - His beatings Isaiah 52:14
  - His crucifixion Isaiah 53:1-11
  - His resurrection Psalms 16:10
    - ◆ The New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies.
- b. **It is most probable that the myths about Mithras' developed after Christianity first came to Rome in the first century.**
  - Numerous conflicting myths are associated with Mithras.

Regardless of the author's intention, the Gospel of Philip wasn't written until the second half of the third century. (more than 200 years after the time of Christ.)

- It was a forgery and could not have been written by the Apostle Philip nor the Philip found in the book of Acts.
  - ◆ The same is true of the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. It is too late to be credible.

**12. Did Jesus intend for Mary Magdalene to lead His church after His death?**

*Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene . . . She was of the House of Benjamin . . . of royal descent.” ( cf The DaVinci Code 248)*

- a. There is no record whatever of Mary's tribal affiliation.
- b. The royal blood line ran through Judah, not Benjamin. cf 2 Samuel 7:12-17

**13. Did Jewish tradition involve ritualistic sex?**

*The early Jewish tradition involved ritualistic sex. In the Temple, no less. Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah. (The DaVinci Code 309)*

Again we have pure fabrication.

- a. Nothing is more basic to Judaism than their foundational belief in one God, not two or more. cf Deuteronomy 6:4
- b. The term Shekinah is not found in either the OT or the new, but was used in later Jewish commentaries as a term for God's glory.
- c. The OT frequently condemns the fertility religions of the Canaanites and the use of temple prostitutes.

**14. Is the Jewish name for God really a combination of both a male and female entity?**

*The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH – the sacred*

*“Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity and using it to expand their power.” (233)*

Is it true that Jesus' divinity was the result of a vote of bishops?

Is it true that the early church hijacked Jesus' message and shrouded it with divinity?

Is it true that Jesus was simply “a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal?”

Those are just more examples of dozens of false assertions that are found in *The DaVinci Code*.

**a. The Old Testament Prophesied A Divine Messiah. Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2**

- **Isaiah 9:6** For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- **Micah 5:2** "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

**b. Jesus Claimed To Be God. Matthew 16:13-20; John 5:18, 56-58; 8:23-24; 10:30-33**

- The NT documents were all written in the first century.
- Though we don't have the originals, we have manuscript copies of them that pre-date the Council of Nicea by nearly 200 years.
  - ◆ One manuscript as early as 30 years after the original.
- We also have tens of thousand of NT quotes in the writings of the early church fathers.
  - ◆ Some of these quotes as much as 200 years before the Council of Nicea.
- Matthew 16:13-20
  - ◆ This is a key moment in the life of Jesus.

- ◇ He asked His followers the key question, “Who do people think I am?”
- ◇ Notice Peter’s response
- Many gospel passages clearly teach the deity of Christ. John 5:16-18; 8:23-24; 8:56-58; 10:30-33
  - ◆ Matthew and John were simply recording things they heard when they were present with Christ during His earthly ministry.
- c. **The New Testament Writers Affirm The Deity Of Christ. John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:16; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:1-8**
  - Cf Romans 9:5; 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Revelation 1:8,17; 2:8; 22:12-13
  - The writers of the NT were eyewitnesses as Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the storm.
    - ◆ 2 Peter 1:13-21
- d. **The Pre-Nicene Church Fathers Affirm The Deity Of Christ.**
  - Ignatius of Antioch (110 AD)
    - ◆ “God Himself was manifested in human form.”
  - Justin Martyr (100-165)
    - ◆ “The Father of the universe has a Son. And He . . . is even God.”
  - Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200)
    - ◆ “All distinctions between the Father and the Son vanish, for the one God made all things through His word.”
    - ◆ “He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this.”
  - Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150- ca. 215)
    - ◆ “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus

*disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. 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?” (The DaVinci Code 246)*

*“As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse.” (Teabing in the DaVinci Code 246)*

The word *Companion* was not limited to a spouse.

- First of all, the account did not come down to us in Aramaic, but Coptic. Therefore its meaning in Aramaic is irrelevant.
- The Coptic text transliterates the Greek word “koinonos” for companion.
  - ◆ The word *companion* in either language is frequently used of friendship or partnership. It by no means always means marriage.
  - ◆ Darrell Bock observes that this term can mean “‘wife’ or ‘sister’ in a spiritual sense, but it’s “not the typical or common term for ‘wife’” in Greek.
  - ◆ It is often used in Greek to refer to a “partner” or sharer. (James and John were Peter’s business partners. cf Luke 5:10)
  - ◆ cf Matthew 23:30; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Hebrews 10:33
- Thus the claim that Mary was Jesus “companion” does not at all prove that she was his wife.

But what about the statement that Christ loved her . . . and used to kiss her often on the mouth?

- First, the manuscript is damaged and we don’t know where Christ kissed Mary. (cheek, forehead, hand, etc)
  - ◆ Even if they were authentic, neither specifies that Jesus was actually married.

of her, she and other women helped support His ministry.

- **Matthew 27:55-61** She was a witness to His death and burial.
- **John 20:11-18** She was the first to see the risen Christ.
- **John 20:17-18** Jesus entrusted her with proclaiming His resurrection to His male disciples.

#### 10. Was It Necessary For Jesus To Have Been Married?

*Jesus was a Jew, and the social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried. According to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned . . . If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible's gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood. (The DaVinci Code 245)*

This is purely a fabrication.

- Philo, a first century Jewish writer described the Essenes as those who, “repudiated marriage . . . for no one of the Essenes ever marries a wife. This now is the enviable system of life of these Essenes, so that not only private individuals but even mighty kings, admire the men, venerate their sect, and increase . . . the honors they confer on them.”
  - ◆ Such citations clearly reveal that not all Jews of Jesus' day considered marriage an obligation.
- Many OT and NT passages give approval of singleness. cf Jeremiah 16:1-2; Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:7, 25-38; 9:5

Contrary to the DaVinci Code, it would have been completely acceptable for Jesus to be unmarried.

#### 11. Were Jesus And Mary Magdalene Married?

*Gospel of Philip: And the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the*

Christ as God.”

- Tertullian (ca. 160- ca. 225)
  - ◆ “. . . Christ our God.”
- Origin (225 AD)
  - ◆ “No one should be offended that the Savior is also God . . . “
- Novatian (235 AD)
  - ◆ “. . . He is not only man, but God also . . .”
- Cyprian (250 AD)
  - ◆ “Jesus Christ, our Lord and God”
- Methodius (290AD)
  - ◆ “. . . He truly was and is . . . with God, and being God . . .”
- Lactantius (304 AD)
  - ◆ “We believe Him to be God.”

Dozens of other writings from the early centuries prove that the early church affirmed the deity of Jesus.

- ◆ All of them rooted it in the New Testament scriptures.

#### e. Early Non-Christians Testify That Christians Believed In Christ's Deity.

- A letter from Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan dated around 112 AD said the early Christians “were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day . . . when they say . . . a hymn to Christ, as to a god.”
  - ◆ It is clear that early Christians believed in the deity of Christ long before the Council of Nicea.
- The DaVinci Code's assertions about Jesus and the early church are false.

#### f. The Council Of Nicea Reaffirmed The Deity Of Christ In The Face Of The Heretical Teachings Of Arius.

*“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 the result of a vote?”*

*“A relatively close vote at that,” Teabing added. (233)*

- In the fourth century, a man named Arius gained a wide following by teaching that Christ was not fully God but a created god of sorts.
  - ◆ He believed that Christ was more than a man but less than God.
  - ◆ Arius was a great communicator.
    - ◇ Because he put his doctrinal ideas into musical jingles, his ideas became widely accepted.
- Although many church bishops had declared him to be a heretic, the dispute continued.
- Around 300 bishops met at Nicea in 325 AD to settle the dispute.
- Arius was given an opportunity to defend his views.
- The council overwhelmingly voted to declare Arius a heretic.
  - ◆ In *The DaVinci Code*, we read that the doctrine of Christ’s deity passed by a “relatively close vote.”
    - ◇ This is fiction, since only five of the bishops protested the creed.
    - ◇ In the end, only two refused to sign it.
- The central issue at the Council of Nicea was not whether Jesus was merely human or something more, but how exactly his divinity was to be understood.
  - ◆ Even Arius acknowledged Christ’s deity.
  - ◆ The questions being addressed included:

- ◇ Was He fully divine?
- ◇ Was the Son equal to the Father?
- ◇ Was He a lesser god?
- ◇ What did it mean to say that the Son was “begotten” as found in the Gospel of John?

## 9. Who Was Mary Magdalene?

*According to the fictional character Leigh Teabing in the DaVinci Code, Mary was the wife of Jesus, the mother of his child, and the one whom he intended to establish the church after his death. 244-248*

*In The DaVinci Code, Mary Magdalene plays a key role. The characters in the book assert many things about her.*

1. *It was not an inanimate chalice but Mary Magdalene who is the Holy Grail (236-39, 243-46, 249, 253). The quest for the Holy Grail is not the search for the chalice used at the Last Supper, but for the resting-place of Mary (257).*
2. *The Catholic Church launched a smear campaign against Mary Magdalene at a very early date. They attempted to slander her name in order to erase evidence of her powerful relationship to Jesus. This opposition included violence and murder. (244, 249, 254, 261, 266, 407)*
3. *Jesus and Mary were married and had children. After Jesus’ death Mary fled to France. (245-249, 255, 257)*
4. *Mary Magdalene was the first and greatest apostle. She was of royal blood and of the house of Benjamin. By marrying, Jesus and Mary established themselves as heirs of Solomon’s kingship. (247-249)*

**The New Testament says far less about Mary Magdalene.**

- Mary was a follower of Jesus from the town of Magdala.
- **Luke 8:1-3** After Jesus cast seven demons out