

Sunday 5/28/2006 Message Notes: *Did DaVinci have a Code?* -- William Mark Bristow, Pastor

. I seldom read sermons, but today I must be – “to the point” in particular and take no liberties with my subject: Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code*.

As TOTAL fiction the book is, to quote Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple, “A rattling good detective yarn.”

The movie is – well – it’s probably faster to read the book.

As TOTAL fiction – I have no real problem with the work. It certainly tramples Christianity and the Church – but, well, “sticks and stones . . .”

The problem lies in that some things are given as fact – beginning on the fly page.

“The Priory of Sion – a European secret society founded in 1099 is a real organization. In 1975 Paris’s Bibliotheque Nationale discovered parchments known as Les Dossiers Secrets, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Issac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci.

The Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei is a deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion, and a dangerous practice known as “corporal mortification.” Opus Dei has just completed construction of a \$47 million National Headquarters at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City.

All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate”.

-- THE DA VINCI CODE, fly page.

BUT ARE THESE “FACTS” as stated accurate?

Without giving away the plot – a murder occurs in the first scene amidst the masterpieces of the Louvre. The dying man wanting to pass on a secret draws strange cryptic messages, numbers, and arranges himself as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Vitruvian Man*.

Enter the books main characters: Robert Langdon, a Professor of “Religious Symbolology” (Harvard University) and Miss Sophie Neveu, Cryptologist with the DCPJ, Paris.

These two must solve the cryptic clues – discover the secret – and more importantly, solve the murder. Then the ante is raised: Robert Langdon is implicated as the chief suspect, and soon “on the run.”

We soon meet officials from the Vatican meeting at the Pope’s summer palace – in complete secrecy – plotting murder and assassinations. All of these men are introduced as officials in Opus Dei. We meet a Bishop Aringarosa and his hired albino hit man. We are soon privy to the fanaticisms of the albino –self-mutilation with the flagellum (whip) and the cilicé (a mid-evil “crown of thorn” worn tight on the upper thigh under the clothing to inflict self-injury and great pain). (In reality, rather than a secret sect, Opus Dei, is an "arm" of the Catholic Church promoting Holy Living and faithfulness to Christ and the Church among laity.)

As the fiction unfolds we meet Sir Leigh Teabing – a wealthy noble obsessed with The Holy Grail (the supposed cup of The Last Supper, from which Christ drank, and in which, as legend has it, Joseph of Arimathea caught Christ’s blood at the crucifixion).

Now we are introduced to a most secret order, the Priory of Sion and their military arm, The Knights Templar, who, for a thousand years have guarded the secret of the Holy Grail.

As we learn that Leonardo da Vinci was a Grande Master of the Priory, Teabing informs us that da Vinci painted clues to the Grail in his most famous work, *THE LAST SUPPER*.

In the movie with the aid of a touchpad computer and hi-res video Teabing highlights portions of *THE LAST*

SUPPER as he explains that Mary The Magdalene is the Holy Grail – the cup of Christ – which held the blood of Christ – as His WIFE, bearing a daughter, Sarah.

*"Quite literally," Teabing said. "The word Sangreal derives from San Greal -- or Holy Grail. But in its most ancient form, the word Sangreal was divided in a different spot." Teabing wrote on a piece of scrap paper and handed it to her. She read what he had written, "Sang Real" Instantly, Sophie recognized the translation. Sang Real literally meant **Royal Blood**. -- The Da Vinci Code p 250.*

That Mary The Magdalene came to France after the Crucifixion and bore a daughter is a long told Legend in France, and is the claim of the Merovingian Kings (Princess Diana's bloodline claimed to be of the Merovingian descent).

(The legend is better treated in the book, "Holy Grail, Holy Blood" by [Michael Baigent](http://www.amazon.com) and is available at www.amazon.com.)

Two Gnostic "Gospels" are quoted from to "prove" that Mary the Magdalene was Christ's wife, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene.

And the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the 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?" Gospel of Philip. -- The da Vinci Code, p 246.

And Peter said, "Did the Savior really speak with a woman without our knowledge? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?" And Levi answered, "Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like an adversary. If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Sure the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us." Gospel of Mary Magdalene. - The da Vinci Code, p 247.

Sir Leigh Teabing makes three statements in this discourse of fiction with which I am prepared to take issue:

- . 1) *"What I mean," Teabing countered, "is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is FALSE."*
- . 2) *"The Bible is a product of MAN, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds ... More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament ... The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great."*
- . 3) *"Constantine was a very good businessman. He could see that Christianity was on the rise, and he simply backed the winning horse . . . Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet ... a great and powerful man, but a MAN nonetheless. A Mortal. ... Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. ... A relatively close vote at that." (Compilation of several statements made by Sir Leigh Teabing in The Da Vinci Code, Chapters 55, 56,58.)*

It is with Point 2 – the Canon that we take issue first.

I have here with me a copy of the historical record of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. And not one line of it deals with the "Canon" (Canon comes from a Hebrew word meaning "measuring reed.") Much less is there any hint anywhere that Constantine decided what was Sacred Text or Canon and what was not!

The following excerpts are from a wonderful text, titled, "HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE." By Neil R. Lightfoot, published by Baker Book House, Co.:

About the middle of the second century a Christian writer, Justin Martyr, stated that on Sundays in the Christian worship assemblies the "memoirs of the apostles" were read together with the "writings of the prophets." (Justin Martyr, First Apology, Chapter 67).

...No later than the last half of that (2nd) Century when substantial lists of the New Testament books appear. An example of one of these lists from this time is known as the Muratorian Fragment. The only books not included (from our New Testament) in the list are Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter and 1 John. And were it not for a text seemingly derived from a mutilated copy the list would undoubtedly be more complete.

In the third century Origen (a theologian of the Church) names all of the New Testament books, but says that Hebrews James, 2 and 3 John and Jude were questioned by some (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI, 25).

In 367 A. D. Athanasius of Alexandria published a list of 27 New Testament books which were accepted in his time and these are the same 27 which are recognized today.

There were also a number of good books which were circulating among Christians of that day, written by uninspired men. Especially important among these are the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas.

By the time of our Lord it is evident that the Old Testament canon was well-defined. ... As to the New Testament books, not long after they were written they were being read regularly in the church assemblies. They were held in high esteem by early Christians – the words of Jesus and His apostles could not be less authoritative than the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In this way the New Testament canon gradually took shape; so that within a century or two the New Testament books as they are known today had been collected and constituted the supreme authority for the primitive church.

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize that no church through its councils made the canon of Scripture. No church – in particular the Roman Catholic Church – by its decrees gave to or pronounced on the books of the Bible their infallibility. The Bible owes its authority to no individual or group. The church does not control the canon, but the canon controls the church.

Dealing with Point 1 – that the church and our fathers have “ill-informed” us about Christ and the church.

Having dismissed the silly notion that one man formed the books of the Bible into the Sacred Text – then the church and ministers who proclaim the Word of God are proclaiming God’s Holy Truth. My by-line has always been, “If I tell you one thing and the Word of God teaches something else – then the Bible is always right!!”

Point 3 – Did the early believers see Jesus as mortal – and he was “made a God” by Constantine’s control of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A. D.??

Here is the Nicene Creed: We believe in one **God the Father Almighty**, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one **Lord Jesus Christ**, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [*ek tes ousias*] of the Father, **God of God**, light of light, **true God of true God**, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father [*homoousion to patri*], through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men and our salvation descended, was incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, **ascended into heaven** and cometh to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. Those who say: There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that He was made out of nothing (*ex ouk onton*); or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance [than the Father], or that the **Son of God** is created, or mutable, or subject to change, [them] the Catholic Church **anathematizes**. (The Catholic Encyclopedia on Cd-Rom)

How great was the dispute raised by Arius’s doctrine that Jesus was not God at the Council of Nicaea? At the outset Eusebius records that most of the 300 Bishops (many of which had been tortured or threatened with death because of their faith – these were not wishy-washy men) stopped their ears when Arius declared that Jesus was not God. In the first vote 17 Bishops voted with Arius – in the final vote all but 3 found the scriptures declared His diety. **(Hardly Teabing’s “relatively close vote!”)**

Is there any evidence from History, Secular documents, or Sacred texts that Jesus was married? -- None from any reliable source at all. On this both liberal and conservative scholars for the most part – agree.

What of the Legends of the Merovingian Blood line having descended of Jesus and Mary Magdalene? -- A fun read.