

## *The Davinci Code*: Separating Fact From Fiction

### Lecture One: *The Da Vinci Code's* Argument

#### I. Introduction

Dan Brown's 2003 thriller, *The Da Vinci Code*, has topped the New York Times Best Seller list for weeks. It has also spawned a host of questions among Christians about the nature of our heritage, for at the heart of the book is a depiction of the Christian church as a sinister force, a religious body that from its inception has rested on false historical and theological assertions, a fact its leadership clearly recognized from the outset and took base and violent steps to suppress alternative, more accurate accounts of its development. *The Da Vinci Code* is, of course, fiction. However, the book seems to claim to be more than fiction as indicated by its preface which begins in bold letters:

#### **Fact:**

"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 Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci."

It adds: "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."

The underlying theme of the book is that the Christian Church, specifically the Roman Catholic Church, has sought from its inception to hide the true history of Jesus Christ. The purpose of my lecture series is to examine this assertion and discern if Mr. Brown, besides penning a quick-read detective thriller, has managed accurately to reveal to the world the most elaborate and sustained cover-up in human history.

This first lecture begins by identifying the key elements of Mr. Brown's argument, as expressed primarily through his mouthpieces, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, and Holy Grail enthusiast, Leigh Teabing.

Their argument, when ferreted out of the chase scenes, betrayals, murders, and attempted murders, centers around seven main topics: The Knights Templar, the Priory of Sion, the Holy Grail, the Bible, the nature of Jesus of Nazareth, the career of Mary Magdalene, the Merovingians, and the essentially sexual nature of early Jewish worship of God, on which the Christian Church was meant to be based.

I will try to present Mr. Brown's arguments with a straight face, though I confess that I share the sentiment expressed by critic Sandra Miesel who said, "So error-laden is *The Da Vinci Code* that the educated reader actually applauds those rare occasions where Brown stumbles (despite himself) into the truth." For my part, I think Dan Brown has produced a literary tour de force, albeit unintentionally. Those who know their history cannot help but regard the novel as a comic farce: attempting to create an academic Sherlock Holmes, Dan Brown unwittingly produced instead a bluestocking Inspector Clouseau.

[Note: all pagination references and quotes come from Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, Doubleday Press, 2003]

## II. *The Da Vinci Code's* Argument

### A. The Priory of Sion

As noted above, the book's primary assertion is that "The Priory of Sion is a real organization." Robert Langdon asserts that the Priory of Sion was founded in Jerusalem in 1099 by a French king named Godefroi de Bouillon, immediately after he had conquered the city. (157)

"King Godefroi," asserts Robert Langdon, "was allegedly the possessor of a powerful secret – a secret that had been in his family since the time of Christ." (157) Fearing that this secret might be lost he founded a secret brotherhood, the Priory of Sion, and charged it with protecting his secret.

During the Priory of Sion's years in Jerusalem, the group learned of a stash of hidden documents buried beneath the ruins of Herod's temple, which had been built atop the earlier ruins of Solomon's Temple. These documents corroborated Godefroi's powerful secret and were so explosive that the Church would stop at nothing to get those documents from him.

However, the Priory of Sion vowed that these documents would be retrieved from the rubble beneath the temple and protected forever so that the truth could never die. In order to retrieve the documents from within the ruins, the Priory created a military arm – a group of nine knights who were called the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ, commonly known as the Knights Templar.

It is sheer fabrication, says Langdon, to believe that the Knights Templar were founded to protect the Holy Land. The group's real purpose, as founded by the Priory of Sion, was to retrieve secret documents.

"And did they retrieve them?" Sophie asked. Langdon answers, "No one knows for sure . . . but the one thing on which all academics agree is this: the Knights discovered something down there in the ruins . . . something that made them wealthy and powerful beyond anyone's wildest dreams. (158)

Langdon explained that the Knights resided by the Temple so they could excavate in total secrecy through solid rock. "And you said they discovered something?" Sophie asks. "They certainly did," Langdon answers (and what happened to "No one knows for sure" ?). Langdon then explains how the Knights' labor had taken nine years but they had finally found the object of their search. They took their treasure from the temple and traveled to Europe where their influence solidified overnight. (159) On the basis of what they had discovered under the temple the Knights either blackmailed the Vatican or the Catholic Church tried to buy the Knights' silence. On the basis of that blackmail they were granted unlimited powers by the Pope.

However, by the 1300's the Knights Templar had become so powerful that Pope Clement V decided that they had to be squelched, and he spearheaded an operation worthy of CIA to end their existence. And what was his purpose? Clement's real objective was the treasure trove of secret documents, but they slipped out of his fingers. The Knights had long ago slipped the treasures to the Priory of Sion's leaders, who then smuggled them to safety. And what was the subject matter of these secret documents? The Holy Grail.

## B. The Holy Grail

This Holy Grail, of course, is not a cup, not a chalice from the Last Supper of Christ. Rather such chalice references are all metaphors. "The chalice resembles a cup or vessel, and more important, it resembles the shape of a woman's womb. This symbol communicates femininity, womanhood, fertility. . . . Legend tells us that the Holy Grail is a chalice – a cup. But the Grail's description as chalice is actually an allegory to protect the true nature of the Holy Grail. That is to say, the legend used the chalice as a metaphor for something far more important." (238)

The Holy Grail is in fact a person, a woman. The Holy Grail represents the sacred feminine and the goddess which has been lost, virtually eliminated by the church.

The Grail is in fact a symbol of the lost goddess. "When Christianity came along, the old pagan religions did not die easily. Legends of chivalric quests for the lost Grail were in fact stories of forbidden quests to find the lost sacred feminine. Knights who claimed to be 'searching for the chalice' were speaking in code as a way to protect themselves from the Church that had subjugated women, banished the Goddess, burned nonbelievers and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine." (239)

Evidence that this is true is found in Da Vinci's depiction of the Last Supper. Da Vinci, a Priory of Sion grandmaster, put the secret of the grail in the painting. He painted a woman in the picture as Jesus' companion; the Holy Grail is in fact Mary Magdalene.

## C. The Bible

Da Vinci passed on this subliminal message in artistic code to counter the fundamental lie about Christianity's origins. How did this lie come about? Because, said Teabing, "The fundamental irony of Christianity is that the Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great." (231)

Constantine, asserts Teabing, was not really a Christian. He was baptized on this deathbed because he was too weak to protest. He saw the Christians warring against the pagans and decided to back the Christians as a way of uniting Rome under a single religion, which happened to be Christianity. Yet all the elements of Catholic ritual are taken directly from earlier pagan mystery religions. Constantine remained a pagan himself.

For example, though originally Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, Constantine shifted it to the pagan's veneration day of the sun; Sunday worship was a late development in the Christian church. Moreover, Constantine was the one who gathered leaders at the Council of Nicea, where the divinity of Jesus was decided. "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." "Not the Son of God?" "Right. Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea." "You're saying that Jesus' divinity was the result of a vote? "A relatively close vote at that. . . . But by officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world a entity whose power was unchallengeable. This not only precluded further pagan challenges to Christianity but now the followers of Christ were able to redeem themselves only via the established sacred channel -- the Roman Catholic Church." 233

Teabing asserts: "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 own power. I've written several books on the subject."

"Nobody is saying that Christ was a fraud or denying that He walked the earth and inspired millions to live better lives. All we are saying is that Constantine took advantage of Christ's substantial influence and importance. And in doing so he shaped the face of Christianity as we know it today." (233)

"Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries after Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling his life as a mortal man." So Constantine financed a new Bible which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made him Godlike. Those earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned. (234)

But we know the truth because fortunately these alternate gospels survived : Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950's, as were the Nag Hammadi documents. These tell the true Grail story and speak of Christ's ministry in human terms. The Vatican tried to prevent these documents from being published because they show the historical discrepancies and fabrications of the received Christian faith, 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 and used His influence to solidify their own power base. Thus, "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false. As are the stories about the Holy Grail." (235)

#### D. Jesus of Nazareth

So what is the truth about Jesus? Jesus was a mortal, married man who fathered a child.

"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 and the obligation for a Jewish father was to find a suitable wife for his son. 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." 245

However, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi records are the earliest Christian records, and they offer accounts that do not square with the Gospels. In fact the Gospel of Philip says that 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." (246)

Teabing explains "as any Aramaic scholar will tell you the word *companion* in those days literally meant *spouse*." He says that there are "countless references to Jesus and Magdalene's union" (247) He reads from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene where Peter is upset with Mary's predominance. In Da Vinci's Last Supper Peter is depicted as threatening Mary, who was the holy vessel who bore Jesus' child. In fact, these documents found by the Templars reveal the royal blood line of Jesus. (250)

Dan Brown, incidentally uses Leigh Teabing to acknowledge his considerable debt to the widely-panned book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, published by Baigent (an anagram for "Teabing"), Lincoln and Leigh. They published this truth about Jesus' bloodline, and the Church was outraged because, "This was a secret the Vatican had tried to bury in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (!) 254

After all, part of what the Crusades were about was gathering and destroying information: the threat Mary Magdalene posed to the men of the early church was potentially ruinous; she was both the woman to whom Jesus had assigned the task of founding the Church and she had physical proof that the newly-proclaimed deity had spawned a mortal bloodline. So the Church defended itself against her power by perpetuating the image of Mary as a prostitute and by burying evidence of Christ's marriage to her, though as Langdon says, "the historical evidence supporting this is substantial" (254!)

Of course, news of the child of Christ would undermine the critical notion of Christ's divinity and therefore the Christian Church would be undermined in its claim that it was the vessel through which humanity could gain access to the divine.

#### E. Mary Magdalene

Mary was pregnant with Jesus' child at the time of his crucifixion, so she fled to France and found safe refuge in a Jewish community, where she had a daughter named Sarah.

Among the treasure trove of documents discovered by the Templars was the entire family tree of Jesus. There is a document tracing the early descendants of Christ. Moreover there are thousands of pages of unaltered pre-Constantine documents written by the early followers of Jesus revering him as a wholly human teacher and prophet. Part of the treasure includes the "Q" document, a book of Jesus' teaching possibly written in his own hand.

Plus, among these documents was the "explosive" Magdalene Diaries, Mary's personal account of her relationship with Christ, his crucifixion, and her time in France. All of these were found by the Knights Templar under Solomon's Temple. That's what made the Knights so powerful ! (256)

But there's one thing more: these treasures include a sarcophagus containing the bones of Mary Magdalene, and the true quest is to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine, the wronged Queen with proof of her family's rightful claim to power.

Thus, the Priory of Sion was charged all these years with protecting the Sangreal documents that trace Jesus' bloodlines and the tomb of Mary Magdalene, plus perpetuating and protecting the bloodline of Christ, which always lives in perpetual danger. (257) And of course the Priory of Sion members worship Mary Magdalene as the Goddess, the Holy Grail, the Rose and the Divine Mother. (One cannot help but ask, how did it come to pass that Christ is not divine but Mary Magdalene is?) (255)

#### F. The Merovingians

The Priory of Sion feared that if the secret of Jesus and Mary Magdalene surfaced and challenged fundamental Catholic doctrine, then the bloodline would be endangered. So Christ's line grew quietly under cover in France until making a bold move in the fifth century, when it intermarried with French royal blood and created a lineage known as the Merovingian bloodline.

The Vatican undertook stealth missions to erase members of the royal bloodline, nearly succeeding in their assassination of Dagobert in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. In fact the Merovingian line was almost exterminated. But his son Sigisbert secretly escaped the attack and carried on the lineage, which included Godefroi de Bouillon, founder of the Priory of Sion. (258) Of course, Godefroi de Bouillon was the same man who ordered the Knights Templar to recover Sangreal documents from beneath Solomon's Temple and thus provide the Merovingians' proof of their hereditary ties to Jesus.

The Priory of Sion's role is not only to protect Sangreal documents and the tomb of Mary Magdalene; they are also charged with protecting the bloodline of Christ, those few members of the royal Merovingian bloodline who survived into modern times. Da Vinci, Mozart, Victor Hugo among others were all attempting to tell the secret history of Mary and Jesus, even as they sought to carry on the other work of the Priory of Sion. (261)

The Priory and the Church have had a tacit understanding (though Brown does not say when this was reached): the church does not attack the Priory and the Priory keeps the Sangreal documents hidden.

Yet, apparently, this agreement is founded on a lie because the Priory has always had a plan to unveil the secret. The Church found out about this plan and launched an all-out attack to stop the Priory of Sion from shouting the true story of Jesus from the mountain tops. (267) If the modern Church finds the "Holy Grail" it will destroy it, and the Church will have won its age-old war to "rewrite history." (268)

### G. The Sexual Nature of Ancient Jewish Worship

Finally, Brown depicts the practitioners of the worship of Mary Magdalene as honoring her through participation in the Hieros Gamos, an ancient pagan fertility rite. This rite, says Robert Langdon, goes all the way back to early Jewish religious traditions -- in the Temple no less. (309)

In fact, says Langdon, the Holy of Holies housed not only God, but his powerful female equal, Shekinah. Those Jews seeking spiritual wholeness would come to the Temple to visit priestesses, with whom they made love and thus experienced the divine.

In fact, the Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH was "derived from "Jehovah," the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve "Havah." (309)

Of course, for the early Church, mankind's use of sex to commune directly with God posed a serious threat to the Catholic power base. It left the church out of the loop, undermining their self-proclaimed status as the sole conduit to God. For obvious reasons they worked hard to demonize sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act. Modern religion decries sex as "shameful, teaching us to fear our sexual desire as the hand of the devil." (310)

The definitive Hebrew symbol, the star of David, symbolizes the perfect union of male and female, marking the Holy of Holies, where the male and female deities Yahweh and Shekinah were thought to dwell. The practitioners of the Hieros Gamos, so goes Brown's argument, follow that ancient religious tradition.

### III. Conclusion

The above assertions constitute the bulk of The Da Vinci Code's argument, the Code's code, so to speak. We will begin in the next lecture to examine the validity of that "code" by taking a glance at the fascinating history of the Knights Templar, whose actual story is far more fantastic (and tragic) than any Mr. Brown could create.

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