

***Debunking the Da Vinci Code:
Revealing the False Claims Behind Dan Brown's
The Da Vinci Code***

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What is *The Da Vinci Code*?

1. A novel, written by Dan Brown, published by Doubleday, March 2003.
2. Debut #1 New York Times Bestseller List (remained there 72 weeks!)
3. Set to become Major Motion picture (Director, Ron Howard).
4. Created a virtual “Da-Vinci/Mary Magdalene Frenzy.”

The Story-Line of the Novel

1. Jacques Saunier, curator of the Louvre Museum, in Paris, France is murdered by an Opus Dei “monk” named Silas.
2. Harvard Professor of “Symbology,” Robert Langdon, and French detective, Sofie Neveu, work together to solve the mystery of her uncle Jacques’s murder.
3. Leigh Teabing, eccentric history “expert” and Holy Grail quester helps Langdon and Neveu discover that her uncle was actually head of the Secret Society entrusted with guarding the secret location and identity of the “Holy Grail.”
4. This secret society, called the Priory of Sion, has kept the secret of the Holy Grail since the time of Jesus. The secret: *Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a child with her, and his blood-descendants live on somewhere in France. Hence, Mary Magdalene is the true “Holy Grail,” which held the “blood” of Jesus.*
5. This secret was encoded into the works of the famous Renaissance artist and inventor, Leonardo Da Vinci, who was also secret Grandmaster of the Priory of Sion.

Meeting the Objection: “Isn’t the Novel ‘Just Fiction’?”

1. Before I begin, I need to address an important objection that is raised every time the topic of this book comes up. People will say: Isn’t the novel “just fiction”? What are Christians so worked up about?
2. True: the *story*—i.e., the murder mystery—is of course fiction. However, the novel makes many *historical claims* that are presented throughout the book as factual.
3. For example, there is the “Fact” Page at beginning of book:
 1. Priory of Sion;
 2. Opus Dei, and
 3. “All descriptions of documents in this novel are accurate.”
4. More importantly, there are the following claims:
 - *Jesus was not celibate but had sexual relations with Mary Magdalene, his wife.*
 - *Mary Magdalene, not Peter, was established by Jesus as head of the Church. She bore his children, and his royal bloodline.*
 - *Jesus was not divine, but merely a mortal man.*
 - *None of Jesus’ followers believed he was divine; the Catholic Church made up the doctrine of his divinity hundreds of years later.*
 - *The Bible is not an accurate account of Jesus, but is false and was put together by a pagan emperor hundreds of years after Jesus and altered to make it look as if he was God.*
 - *Pagan goddess worship was not misguided, but a good thing that was stamped out by the violent Catholic Church. (124-25).*

- *The history of the Catholic Church is a giant cover up, a conspiracy that has fought for centuries to destroy any knowledge of the “secret” of Jesus and Mary Magdalene’s marriage (125).*
 - *This secret has only been preserved by the Priory of Sion, a secret society which boasted members such as Leonardo Da Vinci, and which kept alive the good practices of paganism.*
3. If any of this is true, then Christianity is basically a sham, a false religion, a lie, a cover up. This is in fact what the main character of the novel says in a climactic scene. After revealing the truth about Jesus and Mary, Teabing declares:

“What I mean, is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*.” (235).

4. In other words, the basic message is: “Everything you were ever taught by your parents or the Church about Jesus and Christianity is historically *false*.”
5. Brown himself supports this conclusion. QUOTE: “The secret I reveal is one that has been whispered for centuries. It is not my own. Admittedly, this may be the first time the secret has been unveiled within the format of a popular thriller, but the information is anything but new.” (www.danbrown.com)

1. The Celibacy of Jesus and His Marriage to Mary Magdalene

1. Brown: *Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene. First, he had to have been married because he was Jewish, and Jewish men did not practice celibacy. Second, The Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were not included in the Bible, prove that Mary was Jesus’ wife.*
2. FICTION: Jesus could not have been celibate, because he was a Jew:

Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard view of Jesus as a bachelor...” “Because Jesus was a Jew, and the social decorum at 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” (Teabing and Langdon *DVC* 245).

3. Fact: Absolutely NO evidence for Jesus’ being married in the New Testament.
4. Jesus’ mother, step-father, and cousins mentioned in New Testament, but no mention of a wife.
5. Jewish men and women *did* practice celibacy (Essenes; Therapeutae).
6. All scholars, both Protestant and Catholic, agree that Jesus embraced and endorsed celibacy: “Eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom” (Matt 19:12). Early Church embraced Celibacy: St. Paul the Pharisee and Rabbi (1 Corinthians 7)!
7. FICTION: the gnostic “gospels” and DSS show Jesus was married

Teabing calls “the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea scrolls” the “earliest Christian records. Troublingly, they do not match up with the gospels in the Bible.” E.g., the Gospel of Philip says: “And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth...” When Neveu objects that the text says nothing of marriage, Teabing smiles “*Au contraire*.” For “As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*.” (245-46)

8. FACT: Absolutely NO evidence for Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene, in the New Testament *or* in the Gnostic Gospels, much less the Dead Sea Scrolls!

Ironically, it is the text cited by Brown that is fraudulent and doctored! It does not actually say that Mary “was the companion of Jesus.”

9. What are the Gnostic Gospels? Found in Nag Hammadi, 1945; all scholars agree they were written centuries after Jesus lived. “Gnosticism” was a philosophy focused on *gnosis* (“knowledge”). The material world does not matter, only the spiritual; secret knowledge given to the elect few brings salvation. Jesus came to give this knowledge; what we do in the body does not matter.
10. *Even* the Gnostic Gospels do not say Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. (Brown’s faulty “companion” argument for *Gospel of Philip*). They do say that the disciples complained that Jesus “loved her” more than them; but that it is it.

Sophie said, “You think Jesus Christ had a girlfriend?”

Teabing, “No dear, I said the Church should not be allowed to tell us what notions we can and can’t entertain.”

Sophie: “Did Jesus have a girlfriend?”

Her grandfather was silent for several moments. “Would it be so bad if He did?”

Sophie considered it and then shrugged. “I wouldn’t mind.” (247)

11. End Result: Jesus died crucified—notice no resurrection—and his bloodline lives on through Mary Magdalene’s daughter, “Sarah” whose descendents are somewhere in France.

2. The Divinity of Christ

1. Brown: *Jesus Christ is not God. In fact, for the first four centuries after Jesus, Christians did not believe that Jesus was God, but merely a man. Constantine and the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. “made up” the doctrine of Jesus’ divinity and forced it on the Church.*
2. FICTION: No one believed in Jesus’ divinity until the Council of Nicaea.

“My dear,” Teabing declared, “until *that* moment in history”—i.e., the Council of Nicaea—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,” Teabing said. “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea... By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable... now the followers of Christ were able to redeem themselves *only* via the established sacred channel—the Roman Catholic Church.” (233) “It was all about power... 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.” (233)

3. This is totally ridiculous. The New Testament documents, all written in the first century A.D., are filled with affirmations of Jesus’ divinity (John 1, 8, 10, 20; Philippians 2; etc.).
4. In fact, the first christological heresy, “Doceticism” (Gk *dokeo*, “to seem”) denied the *humanity* of Jesus, not his divinity (2 John).
5. All the council of Nicaea did was define in precise theological and philosophical terminology, *how* Jesus is divine: he is *homoousios*, “one in being with the Father” (Nicene Creed).

3. The Truth of the Bible

1. Brown: *The Christian Bible was a fraudulent document made up by the pagan emperor Constantine to trick people into believing Jesus was divine.*

Teabing: “The Bible is a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds...” (231)

“Aha! The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.” (231)

“Because Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries *after* Jesus’ death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling his life as a *mortal* man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke. From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history. 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)

2. As with many heresies, Brown is right in what he affirms but wrong in what he denies: the Bible *is* a product of man, but of the infallibly guided men who led the Catholic Church in the fourth century A.D.: the successor to St. Peter, Pope Damasus I, and the bishops of the Council of Rome in 380 A.D. And Jesus had promised Peter and the Apostles that “the Gates of Hell” would never prevail against his Church, and the Holy Spirit would lead them “into all truth” (Matthew 16; John 16). Hence, the Bible is also a product of the work of God, for it was the Holy Spirit who infallibly guided the Pope and the bishops, as successors to the Apostles, to authoritatively declare which books were inspired Word of God.
3. There is no way Constantine could have “invented” the Bible, since the canon of the Bible did not come into existence until 380 A.D., 50 years after Constantine’s death, when the Catholic *Pope*, Damasus I, not the emperor, held a council at Rome which infallibly decided which books would make it into the OT and NT. All of the books decided on go back to the first century A.D., to the time of the apostles.

4. The Priory of Sion and Leonardo Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*

1. Brown: *The Priory of Sion was a secret society founded in 1099 A.D. to protect the secret of Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail and Jesus’ blood descendents. Many famous men, such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, and Victor Hugo have belonged to this society. Leonardo Da Vinci, former Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, encoded secret messages about the secret of Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail into his paintings, most especially the Last Supper. The society worships “the sacred feminine” goddess through the ancient rite of hieros gamos (“sacred marriage”) a pagan orgy ritual (124).*

2. FACT: the Priory of Sion was actually a club founded in 1950’s by Pierre Plantard, a Frenchman “whose balance has been called into question” (Archbishop Hughes) known for fraud, embezzlement, and fanciful claims about the organizations’ history. It fell apart in 1993 when Plantard swore under oath that he was not really the “true King of France”; he died in obscurity in 2002 (Catholic Answers “Cracking the Da Vinci Code”).
3. It is Brown who adds the orgiastic rituals of goddess-worship to the Priory’s history, revealing the fact that it is *he* who is trying to “indoctrinate” and “brainwash” people into thinking that pagan sexual orgies are a legitimate way to “worship” the sacred feminine and that they need to be brought back into practice.

4. With regard to Da Vinci himself, it should go without saying that if the Priory of Sion was not founded until 1950, and Da Vinci lived around 1500 A.D., he was not a member, much less a “Grand Master.” Moreover, the so-called “clues” to Mary Magdalene’s presence in the Last Supper are laughable, being reduced the fact that John the Apostle (seated next to Jesus) has no beard (and therefore must be a woman!) and that there is a hidden “M” shape between Jesus and him, showing “he” is really Mary Magdalene!!

Summary and Implications:

1. Return to the initial objection: Isn’t the novel “just fiction”? What are Christians so worked up about?
2. CONSEQUENCES:
 - If Jesus was married, he did not consecrate himself entirely to his bride, the Church. He does not stand as a sign of contradiction against the materialistic cult of sex and the body that is the religion of our culture.
 - If Jesus was not divine, Christianity is a sham and should be abandoned.
 - If the Church lied in the creation of the Bible, then she cannot be trusted in anything (esp. matters of morality!)
 - If the Priory of Sion is correct, we should revive paganism and re-institute goddess-worship in order to end the oppression of women and bring peace to the world.
3. Mr. Brown is of course free to say what he likes. However, Catholics are free to respond by pointing out that the supposed “history” behind the novel is not only false, but a bigoted anti-Catholic attack on the Church. I will end with a quote from Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel (see *Da Vinci Hoax*, 294-95).

Further Resources

1. Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel, *The Da Vinci Hoax*.
2. Amy Wellborn, *De-Coding Da Vinci*.
3. Darrell Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to Questions Everybody’s Asking*.
4. Catholic Answers WebSite: “Cracking the Da Vinci Code.” (www.catholic.com).

Fact and Fiction
in
The Da Vinci Code

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In this brief presentation on Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, I will not even attempt to treat *all* of the historical, theological, and moral errors present in the book. There are simply too many of them; it would take a whole book to address each one in adequate detail (indeed, several books have been written doing just that).¹ Nor do I wish to critique the style of the novel or its plot (poor as they are), since Mr. Brown is quite free to say what he likes in the realm of fiction and to create whatever imaginative world he chooses. Rather, I would like to focus my comments primarily on the *false historical and theological claims that Brown makes about Jesus and the Catholic Church*. These almost always incorrect and often slanderous remarks are strewn throughout the novel, primarily through the speeches of his two main characters, supposed experts in the realm of history and religion, Harvard professor Robert Langdon and expert Grail historian and eccentric, Leigh Teabing. As Brown has made clear from interviews (most notably on ABC) and on his own website,² while he readily admits that the story of the novel is pure fiction, he maintains that the historical claims that lay the foundation for the story are true and accurate.³ It is these claims, almost all of which are either downright false or distortions and half-truths, which I would like to focus on.

In the following outline, the claims of Brown will be given in summary fashion in bold-faced print. Historical and theological refutations of these claims will then follow.

The Celibacy of Jesus

1. Jesus of Nazareth was married. Indeed, he *must* have been married because he was a Jew, and Jews of his day did not practice celibacy; marriage was a requirement.

It is very telling that the central historical claim of Brown's novel—that Jesus of Nazareth was married—has absolutely *no* evidence to support it and strong evidence to contradict it. If this is true of the major claim of the book, how much credence should we give to its more minor claims?

As for the suggestion that Jesus was married, the primary argument against the claim is simple: there is *absolutely no historical evidence* to support the claim that Jesus was married. Although we have four lengthy historical

¹ Most notable among these are: Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel, *The Da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in the Da Vinci Code* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004); Amy Welborn, *Decoding Da Vinci* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004).

² See www.danbrown.com.

³ See especially the list of "Facts" with which Brown begins the novel.

accounts of his life and ministry from the first century A.D., not a single one of them *ever* mentions him having a wife or children, either during his ministry or before the three or so years he spent traveling and preaching about the kingdom of God, before he was crucified in 30 A.D. Not only the Gospels, but *all* of the writings of the New Testament, are *entirely silent*; they give no reason to believe that Jesus was ever married or had children.

Now, in most cases, the argument from silence is regarded as the weakest of arguments, but in this instance, the silence is very significant, for several reasons. (1) First of all, for 2000 years, all Christians, even Protestant Christians whose tradition does not embrace the vocation of celibacy, have agreed that Jesus was unmarried. One of the reasons this belief has gone unchallenged for almost two millennia is that there is simply no evidence to challenge it.

(2) Second, and even more important, the New Testament speaks very often about the *rest* of Jesus' family: his mother Mary, his foster-father Joseph, even his cousins, James, Joses, Simon, and Judah (the so-called "brothers" of Jesus), both male and female—all of these figure quite prominently in the Gospels and appear with great frequency.⁴ But *never once* is there ever mention of Jesus having had a wife, much less a child. The absence of such mention strongly suggests that no such persons existed.

(3) Third, and perhaps most important of all, *Jesus himself endorses a life of celibacy and calls his disciples to the celibate life*. This takes place in at least two places, one in which Jesus' calls the disciples to become "eunuchs"—i.e., childless, celibate men, "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:12), and another in which he promises eternal rewards to the man who "has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:29-30). Indeed, it is the celibacy of Jesus and (at least some of) the disciples which led to the widespread practice of celibacy in the early Church, most notably by St. Paul the Apostle (1 Corinthians 7).

(4) Fourth, and finally, it is false to suggest that all Jewish men at the time of Jesus had to get married. In fact, celibacy was practiced by several prominent Jewish groups, most notably the monastic Essenes of the Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls (1st century B.C.) and the Therapeutae, another Jewish monastic group that lived in Egypt at the time of Jesus (1st century A.D.). Indeed, one of the greatest Hebrew prophets, Jeremiah, was also celibate (see Jeremiah 16). Hence, while it might have been unusual for Jesus to remain unmarried, it was by no means unprecedented.

2. Jesus of Nazareth was married to *Mary Magdalene* and had children with her. The Catholic Church has spent 2000 years trying to cover up this devastating secret.

This is perhaps the most preposterous of all Brown's claims; and it should be noted, again, that it stands at the very center of his book. If this claim fails, the entire house of cards built upon it comes crashing to the ground. For if there was no secret marriage for the Catholic Church to cover up, then all of Brown's claims about her attempts to do so—which form the basis of the entire plot of the story,

⁴ See, e.g., Matthew 1-2, 13, 27; Mark 3, 6; Luke 1-2; John 2, 19; Acts 2; Galatians 2; etc.

as well as the history behind it—is false. Needless to say, it also proves the absolute absurdity of the claim that Mary Magdalene is the “true Holy Grail,” the woman who holds the blood of Jesus.

And, of course, this is precisely what happens. For the simple fact of the matter is that there is *absolutely no historical evidence*, not a single document from antiquity, that even *claims* that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, much less proves that they were. So where does Brown get the idea from?

He gives at least two main arguments to support his case.

(1) First and foremost, in his interview with ABC, Brown attempted to make the New Testament account itself support his claim that Mary Magdalene and Jesus were married by appealing to the one scene in the New Testament in which Mary Magdalene plays any kind of central role: the resurrection appearance to her in John 20. In this account, Brown claims, Mary’s marital relationship with Jesus is clear from two points: (a) that she tries to embrace him when he appears to her, and (b) that she calls him “Rabboni,” which Brown claims means “husband” (John 20:16). Both of these claims are totally false, as even a cursory reading of the text reveals. For one thing, Mary does try to “touch” or “hold” Jesus, but, far from embracing his bereaved “widow,” he rejects her advance, saying: “*Do not hold me*, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God” (John 20:17). Hence, Brown’s claim that Mary could only have embraced Jesus in this way if she was his wife runs up against the hard fact that Mary does *not* embrace Jesus because he tells her not to! Moreover, the claim that “Rabboni” was only used to refer to one’s husband is even more absurd, since John himself translates the Hebrew word into Greek and tells the reader what it means: “She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (*which means Teacher*)” (John 20:16). Again, we see here not the basis for a marital relationship between Jesus and Mary, but what Christians have always believed: a teacher-disciple relationship.

(2) Second, in the novel itself, Brown claims that two Gnostic “gospels,” *The Gospel of Philip* and *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, prove that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, but that their testimony has been covered up by the Catholic Church. His primary argument is from *The Gospel of Philip*, which dates from some 100 to 200 years after the time of Jesus. The text runs as follows:

As for the Wisdom who is called “the barren,” she is the mother [of the] angels. And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene... [loved] her more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [...] The rest of [the disciples ...] They said to him, “Why do you love her more than all of us?” The savior answered and said to them, “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. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness.”⁵

In the “light” of this text, Brown claims that Jesus and Mary were married, since, as any “Aramaic scholar” could tell you, “the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*.”⁶ There are several enormous problems with this. First and foremost, the text does not even say that the “companion” in question is that of Jesus! Indeed, it appears that the “companion” is of “Wisdom” who is called “the barren.” Even more devastatingly, Brown reveals his total ignorance of the text when he claims that in “Aramaic” the word “companion” means “spouse,” since *the Gospel of Phillip* is *not even written in Aramaic*, but in Coptic, an descendent of ancient Egyptian. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the most shocking image given to the reader, that Jesus used to “kiss” Mary Magdalen often “on her *mouth*,” is based on the translation Brown used, which *added* the all-crucial word “mouth” to the Coptic text! All the gospel actually says is:

her more than... the disciples
kiss her... on her
the rest of
they said to him, “Why do you love her more than all of us?”

A couple of points should be obvious here to the close reader. First the text never says Jesus kissed Mary Magdalene on the mouth. For all we know, it could say Jesus used to kiss Mary often on her hand, or on her cheek. Second, on the level of common-sense, if Mary *was* Jesus’ wife, the disciples would have known this, and it would be downright ridiculous to ask Jesus why he “loved her” more than all of them: the reason, because she was his wife!! But, of course, again, there is no *evidence* for the suggestion that Mary was Jesus’ wife, only Brown’s wild flights of fancy, intent on turning even the most fragmentary piece of esoterica into a key support for his claim. Third, and finally, the absurdity of Brown’s argument can be demonstrated by simply looking at other people Jesus kisses. In the Gospels, Judas kisses Jesus in Gethsemane: does that mean they were married? Indeed, in one of the very Gnostic texts Brown so loves, *The Second Apocalypse of James*, a parallel story in which Jesus kisses the disciple James takes place. The context is clear: Jesus’ kiss is a spiritual act which imparts revelations to his disciple, not a clue to the “secret marriage” of Jesus and James!⁷

Finally, one might ask: if Jesus really was married, would the Church really have struggled so hard to cover it up? What is the big deal anyway, if, as Brown claims, all Christians in the first four centuries believed that Jesus was just a “mortal man,” and not God? In the end, it appears that the easiest way for Brown to get Christians to doubt that Jesus was divine is to get him into bed with

⁵ *The Gospel of Philip* 63:30-64:10. In James M. Robinson et al., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988).

⁶ Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 246.

⁷ See *The Second Apocalypse of James* 56:15-57:20, in Robinson et al., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 274.

Mary Magdalene, whether history supports his case or not. This is sacrilegious sensationalism at its worst.

3. One of the reasons the Catholic Church has sought to cover up Jesus' marriage it is opposed to sex as something "evil" and "a shameful act."

This is perhaps the easiest claim of Brown to rebut, simply by making the following points. First, the Catholic Church has never taught that sex *per se* was something "evil" or "shameful." Indeed, it could not, for the very first commandment ever uttered by God in the Catholic Bible is "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks quite explicitly of "the great good of marriage" (CCC 1618). Even more obviously, marriage—the spiritual and physical union of a man and a woman—is one of only seven sacraments! (See CCC 1601-1666). Moreover, it should not go unnoted that this sacrament, the sacrament of matrimony, is considered to be completed when "the consent that binds the spouses to each other" in the exchanging of wedding vows "finds its fulfillment in the two 'becoming one flesh'" (CCC 1627)—i.e., in the physical union of the marital act. So much for sex being evil. As always, Mr. Brown has exchanged accuracy and precision for gross distortion; a simple adjective would have clarified the half-truth he is pushing, for the Church *has* always taught that *extramarital* sex is in fact a sin. Indeed, it is one of the few acts that actually makes it into Paul's lists of mortal sins—i.e., sins that cause one to lose the inheritance of the Kingdom of God (see CCC 2353; 1852, citing Gal 5:19-21). One need only look around us at the destructive force of extramarital sex in our American culture to see its devastating and, yes, "evil" effects, especially on women, children, and the oft-forgotten elderly who are often forced out of obligation to care for the children of their unwed, unwanted daughters and grandchildren.

The Divinity of Jesus

1. For the first four centuries of Christianity, Christians did not believe Jesus was God, but merely a "mortal prophet." This can be proved from 80 or more "lost gospels" that which were "considered" for the New Testament but which did not make it into the Bible.

Here is where the theological rubber hits the road for Brown vs. the Catholic Church. As Carl Olson states: "The importance of this topic is self-evident: if Brown is correct, Christianity and the Catholic Church are shams because both are based on the doctrine of Jesus' divinity. Likewise, if Brown is incorrect, it is further proof that the *Da Vinci Code* and Brown's claims that it is historically accurate and thoroughly researched are shams."⁸

Again, the claim that no Christians believed Jesus was divine until the fourth century A.D. shows an utter lack of historical knowledge on Brown's part. Indeed, the evidence points precisely in the *opposite* direction, as can be shown

⁸ Olson and Miesel, *The Da Vinci Hoax*, 109-110.

by making two brief points. First and foremost, the writings of the New Testament, which *all* serious biblical scholars—both Christian and non-Christian—admit was written in the first century A.D., within 20-70 years after Jesus' death, are *filled* with affirmations of the divinity of Jesus (Matthew 1; John 1, 58, 10, 21; Romans 8, 10; Phillipians 2). Second, and perhaps equally devastating for Brown's position, it is widely known (except by Brown) that the earliest christological heresies in the early Church, one which took place during the time of the New Testament, did not deny the *divinity* of Jesus but his *humanity*!! This heresy is known as "docetism," from the Greek word *dokeo*, which means, "to seem," because its adherents were teaching that Jesus only "seemed" or "appeared" to be a man, but that he was not fully human, but rather simply a divine being walking about on earth. Evidence for this heresy is present in the letters of John, which denounce as heretics those who "will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" (2 John 7). It was only much, much later, in the fourth century, that Arius would come on the scene and deny the fullness of Jesus' divinity, and even he did not claim that Jesus was merely a "mortal prophet," only that he was a lesser deity, created by the eternal Father, and not "one in being with the Father" (Nicene Creed).

Indeed, all one has to do is *read* the so-called "gospels" of the Gnostics, which originated many centuries after Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth, and compare them with the canonical accounts given in the New Testament to find that it is the *New Testament Gospels* which present a very human Jesus, with emotions and tears and cries and pain and suffering, while the Gnostic gospels present a phantam from another world, the "higher world" of secret gnosis privy only to the initiate. Moreover, it is the New Testament Gospels that present a very *Jewish* Jesus, while the Gnostic texts reveal remarkable ignorance of the Judaism of Jesus' day but great familiarity with the Gnostic theological debates of the second through fourth centuries after Christ.

2. The doctrine of Jesus' divinity was created by the pagan emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. when he "upgraded" Jesus to the status of God. It was Constantine who created a "new Bible" that left out "those gospels that spoke of Christ's *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike" (p. 231, 234). These other "earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned."

Again, Brown presents us with what is quite simply a preposterous rewriting of history which could be disproved by anyone with access an encyclopedia of early Church history, much less reference to the primary source writings of the Church Fathers. While it is true that Constantine commissioned the great church historian and bishop Eusebius, to prepare copies of Christian Scriptures, these were probably restricted to the writings of the Apostles and did not constitute an entire "Bible" per se. Indeed, as Eusebius' own *Church History* bears witness, the canon or authoritative list of books that would be included in the Christian Bible had not been decided by 325 A.D.

The Falsity of the Bible

1. In addition to claiming that the Bible was a Constantinian sham, Brown also alleges that the historical truth of the biblical accounts have been disproven by the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were found in the 1950's and the Coptic Scrolls of Nag Hammadi, Egypt, which were discovered in 1945. He alleges that these documents "tell the true Grail story," but that "the Vatican" tried to suppress the release of the DSS because they confirmed 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 their own power base." In short, "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (p. 254-55 PE).

Again, while statements like these might raise some serious doubts for those who have never heard of the DSS or the Nag Hammadi library, anyone with even a basic familiarity with the texts will see immediately that Brown, as usual, has no historical idea what he is talking about. Not only do they not "tell the true Grail story"—since the "Holy Grail" as a term cannot be found before the 12th century A.D.—they in no way "disprove" the veracity of the Bible.

For example, with regard to the DSS, there is absolutely no way they could ever prove the falsity of the New Testament accounts about Jesus, since *no mention of Jesus or the early Church, indeed, not a single Christian manuscript*, was even discovered at the Dead Sea. All of the documents found there were *Jewish* writings, most from before the time of Jesus, some from the Old Testament, some from the writings of an ancient Jewish group of *celibate* men (!) known as the Essenes,⁹ others previously unknown. As for the Vatican's supposed attempt to "suppress" these documents, most of the major scrolls were published within a decade of their discovery—it was only the 700 or more fragments and scraps which would take the next 30 years to be painstakingly pieced together before they could be published.

As for the Nag Hammadi library, even those scholars who *want* these documents to be given a place of authority alongside the New Testament—scholars such as Elaine Pagels and the Jesus Seminar—admit that they do not date from the time of Jesus but from hundreds of years after he lived (ca. 2nd-4th centuries A.D.). Indeed, the only one of these texts that any mainstream scholars give historical credence to is the so-called *Gospel of Thomas*, and the reason it is because *it looks the most like the New Testament Gospels!* But even it lacks the historical details and Jewish character of the four canonical accounts, and reflects the gnostic theology of eclectic early Christian sects.

Opus Dei

⁹ See, e.g., James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

1. Brown: *Opus Dei is a Catholic "sect," a kind of personal army for the Pope, in which a "monk," Silas, serves as an assassin, killing the Grand Masters of the Priory of Sion in order to keep the secret of Jesus and Mary Magdalene from getting out.*
2. Opus Dei is a movement that was founded in 1928 by Josemaría Escrivá, a Catholic priest, in order to promote holiness among lay people who are not called to the religious life. In 1982, Pope John Paul II raised Opus Dei to the status of a papally approved order and personal prelature, with its own priests ministering throughout the world. In 2002, Pope John Paul II canonized the founder of Opus Dei as "the saint of ordinary life."
3. According to Brian Finnerty, the U.S. Opus Dei communications director, regarding Silas' the "monk's" practice of corporal mortification: QUOTE: "The author's description of Opus Dei's 'practices', as represented by Silas' bloody purging rituals, are at best grossly distorted and at worst fabrications. He has taken pious accounts of the penances of some of the Church's great saints, including St. Josemaria Escriva, and transformed them into a monstrous horror show" (Catholic Answers, "Cracking the Da Vinci Code.")

Jesus and Mary Magdalene

Brown: *Jesus established Mary Magdalene, not Peter, as true female head of the Church, but the patriarchal Church "smeared" her name and excluded women from Church leadership.*

Jesus did in fact give women a very special place among his disciples (see Luke 8:1-3), but he chose *only men* to be his 12 apostles. Even though he appears to Mary Magdalene first after the Resurrection, he gives the power of the priesthood to forgive sins only to the 11 apostles (John 20).

Jesus and Mary had children; his bloodline lives on in France (255); Mary Magdalene should be worshiped as a "Goddess" (255)

Emphasize that Brown's portrait of Mary Magdalene also assumes that Jesus' life ended with the Crucifixion: there was no resurrection