

20 Big Lies in the DaVinci Code

Don't be fooled. Here are just a few ways Dan Brown's best-selling book twists and distorts the truth of the gospel.

In a little more than three years The Da Vinci Code has become the best-selling adult novel of all time. It has also become the subject of intense debate among Christians because of its radical claims that undermine basic Christianity.

Why all the fuss over a work of fiction? The answer lies on Page 1, where author Dan Brown asserts that "all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."

In reality, the novel is a model of inaccuracy in almost every subject it addresses. Critics have noted its mistakes in mathematics, French geography and even the layout of the Louvre. More important, Brown's jarring claims about Jesus, the Bible, secret societies and ritual sex are based on shallow research, sloppy investigation and careless thought. However, given the novel's popularity and the staggering bravado in its tone, it is necessary for Christians to provide a critique of its central blunders. Here are 20 of them.

Bible was invented by Roman Emperor Constantine in the fourth century.

The Da Vinci Code reports that "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible," one that left out the Gnostic texts and included the four traditional Gospels.

In fact, Constantine had nothing to do with the making of the Christian canon. He is not even mentioned in the standard Cambridge History of the Bible. The traditional Gospels were

recognized by virtually all Christians 150 years before Constantine.

2. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gnostic Gospels are the "earliest Christian records."

Not so. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 and date from 250 B.C. to A.D. 100. However, these documents have virtually nothing to do with Christianity but with various Jewish groups, rituals and ideas before and during the time of Christ.

The Gnostic Gospels offer a twisted and heretical version of the Christian faith, but they didn't come into existence until about a century or more after the death of Christ.

The earliest Christian records are the writings of the New Testament.

3. The Gnostic Gospels present a positive view of the feminine.

The Gnostic texts are said to picture a human, sexualized Jesus who embraced the sacred feminine. Actually, the Jesus presented in the Gnostic material is often simply weird, and the underlying ideology tends to be radically anti-feminine. Consider this bizarre passage from the Gospel of Thomas: "Simon Peter said to them, 'Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life.' Jesus said, 'Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.'"

4. Early Christians did not believe Jesus was God's Son.

This is a bizarre claim, rooted in either willful ignorance or

blindness to the obvious. After 2,000 years, people continue to debate whether Jesus is the Son of God. But what has never been subject to doubt is that early Christians confessed that Jesus is God's Son, as the following Scriptures indicate: "Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt. 16:16); "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4).

5. The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) invented the divinity of Jesus.

Contrary to Brown's claim, the famous church council met to clarify the divinity of Jesus, not create it. There are thousands of references to the divinity of Jesus in Christian literature and archaeology before the Council at Nicea. This includes the hundreds of claims in the New Testament and the witness of early church leaders through the second and third centuries.

6. Jesus was really a pagan or a witch.

No standard reference works on witchcraft ever include Jesus as a witch or pagan. The novel attempts to argue that Jesus was a copycat figure of ancient pagan deities. This view depends on totally ignoring the Jewish context of the life and teaching of Jesus. If Jesus had been a pagan or a witch, this would have been noticed by the Jewish leaders who opposed Him.

7. Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.

The novel claims that there are "countless references" to their union in ancient history and that the topic "has been explored ad nauseam by modern historians." First, there is nothing in the New Testament or other first century material about such a marriage. Second, there is no explicit mention of the alleged marriage in the Gnostic material of the second and third centuries. All we have in the Gnostic material is one reference to Mary as the "companion" of Jesus. That word,

however, does not usually mean “spouse” or “wife.”

8. Jesus and Mary had a child named Sarah.

The novel claims Mary was pregnant at the time of the death of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea, her uncle, helped her move to France. There she gave birth to a girl she named Sarah. Mary and Sarah found refuge in the Jewish community in France. We are told that “countless scholars of that era chronicled Mary Magdalene’s days in France.” This is nothing but historical junk first made popular by the 1982 potboiler *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. There are no ancient documents supporting any of these claims, and no scholars of that era chronicled these alleged events.

9. There was a smear campaign against Mary Magdalene in Catholic tradition.

To the contrary, Mary Magdalene receives positive attention in the Bible and in Catholic tradition. In fact, she is regarded as a saint, and her Feast Day is July 22. As a close disciple of Jesus, she was one of the first witnesses of His resurrection. The mistaken view that she was a prostitute did not arise until A.D. 591 when Pope Gregory I confused her with a prostitute mentioned in Luke 7:36-50.

10. A secret society named the Priory of Sion started in 1099 and has protected the bones of Mary Magdalene and documents about the bloodline of Jesus Christ.

This is one of the most significant blunders of *The Da Vinci Code*. The Priory of Sion was actually started in France on May 7, 1956, by a con artist named Pierre Plantard (1920-2000). The Priory was first a civic organization. In the 1960s Plantard created the mythology of a secret society led by figures such as Isaac Newton and Leonardo da Vinci.

11. Ancient documents about the Priory were discovered in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris in 1975.

The Da Vinci Code refers to these alleged parchments as Les Dossiers Secrets. These documents are not ancient but are actually forgeries done by Philippe de Chérisey (1925-1985), a co-conspirator with Plantard. They were not discovered by the French library in 1975 but were placed there by Plantard in 1967.

Both de Chérisey and Plantard admitted the hoax before their deaths. In fact, Plantard was forced to admit his fraud before Judge Thierry Jean-Pierre in a French court case in September 1993.

12. There are historical lists of the Grand Masters of the Priory of Sion.

Actually, when Plantard invented the Priory of Sion he copied most of his list of Grand Masters from lists of alleged leaders of other groups, such as the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, a secret society founded in America in 1915. Plantard also changed his list of Grand Masters as he adopted different conspiracy theories about his Priory of Sion.

13. The Holy Grail is not the cup used at the Last Supper but the bones of Mary Magdalene.

The novel states that “the quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine.”

The Holy Grail legends started about A.D. 1180 and continued through the 19th century. They never involved claims about the bones of Mary Magdalene. Isn't it amazing that no Priory of

Sion member has ever given in to the temptation to reveal the location of the bones of Mary Magdalene?

14. The Knights Templar guarded the bones of Mary Magdalene and four huge chests of ancient documents about the bloodline of Jesus Christ and the French kings who descended from Him.

The Knights Templar is a religious military order founded in the early 12th century. Hugues de Payens, a French Knight, led eight comrades in the campaign to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land.

It has never been argued in the historical material about the Templars that they protected either Mary Magdalene or documents about French kings. These claims are the inventions of Pierre Plantard, who declared at one point that he was the descendant of Jesus and the proper heir to the French throne.

15. Leonardo da Vinci was once the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion.

The Priory started 437 years after the death of the great artist. Not one Leonardo da Vinci specialist in the entire world has supported the view that he once headed a pagan sex cult. James Beck of Columbia University calls this "total nonsense." Leonard da Vinci scholars have convened special conferences in order to debunk the novel's false claims about the famous artist.

16. Leonardo da Vinci placed Mary Magdalene next to Jesus in his famous painting The Last Supper.

In da Vinci's time everyone believed that this person was John, the beloved disciple. Renaissance art specialists have always noted that John was painted in a rather effeminate manner. The painting was not meant to reveal the identity of a woman but the tension created among the apostles after Jesus

says to them, “‘One of you will betray Me’” (Matt. 26:21). Of course, even if da Vinci put a woman next to Jesus in his painting, this would not tell us anything about the real Last Supper more than 14 centuries earlier.

17. The Catholic Church killed 5 million

women during the Witchcraft Inquisition. The women targeted as witches were freethinkers, scholars, priestesses, gypsies, nature lovers, mystics and midwives.

The novel radically misinterprets the nature and scope of the Inquisition. First, both men and women were targeted as witches. Second, the female victims were generally older and were not from any specific class or profession. Third, the deaths totaled no more than 100,000, counting both males and females. Most important, the Inquisition was rooted in the real belief that certain men and women actually worshiped Satan and performed diabolical acts of evil.

18. French President

Francois Mitterand ordered 666 panes of glass in the pyramid at the front entrance to the Louvre.

The novel adopts a false rumor that circulated in French society two decades ago. Mitterand did not order 666 panes of glass to be in the pyramid. In fact, the public relations office at the Louvre informed me that the pyramid actually has 673 panes of glass.

19. Early Jewish as well as Christian tradition involved sex ritualism in worship.

There is not a single hint in the entire Old Testament or in

Jewish history that sex rites were part of temple worship. Jewish males did not engage in sex with priestesses in the temple. The word “priestess” is not even used in the Old Testament.

In the novel Jesus and Mary Magdalene are pictured as the ideal participants in an early Christian sex ritual. This wild claim has no basis in history, either in terms of early Christian tradition or even in reference to Gnostic documents.

20 True worship involves sex ritualism.

The Da Vinci Code states that “historically, intercourse was the act through which male and female experienced God” and that “by communing with woman ... man could achieve a climactic instant when his mind went totally blank and he could see God.”

The Da Vinci Code will bring great harm to every innocent religious seeker who follows its endorsement of sex ritual as the path to God. Brown is surely bluffing in his rhetoric about sex in worship. It is impossible to imagine that he really believes his own novel’s ideology.

Would he be willing to participate in the ancient ritual that The Da Vinci Code defends? Would he really recommend this ancient ritual to his wife, family and friends?

In both book and movie form The Da Vinci Code represents a threat as well as an opportunity for Christians. Its danger lies in its strident assertions of falsehoods that undermine basic teachings of the gospel.

Uninformed readers and moviegoers must be made aware of the

historical blunders in Dan Brown's claims. At the same time, the novel and movie create an unprecedented opportunity for believers to witness about the reliability of the Bible and its central redemptive message—that the Son of God became flesh, died on the cross and rose again.

James A. Beverley is associate director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara and professor of Christian Thought and Ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. He is also the author of 10 books, including *Counterfeit Code* and *Religions A to Z*. For information on his writings, visit [www.jamesabeverley.com](#).

Decoding The Da Vinci Code

It can be difficult to know how to separate the facts from fiction in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, first a novel and now a film. Here are a few of the numerous resources available to help decipher the code.

Darrell L. Bock, Ph.D., is the research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. His *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* (Nelson Books) provides "answers to the questions everyone's asking." He includes a glossary of the history of the ancient texts reviewed in the book, definitions and summaries.

James L. Garlow and Peter Jones offer *Cracking Da Vinci's Code: You've Read the Fiction, Now Read the Facts* from Cook Communications' Victor Books. Garlow, a pastor, has a Ph.D. from Drew University and has earned master's degrees in divinity and theology. Jones has earned two master's degrees of divinity, a master's of theology from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. from Harvard. The pair expose the

underlying agenda in Brown's novel. The new student edition, by Adam Palmer and Jeff Dunn, gives the younger generation answers to questions such as: Who wrote the Bible? What is the hidden code? Does the Holy Grail really exist?

Kenneth Boa and John Alan Turner recently released *The Gospel According to the Da Vinci Code* (Broadman & Holman). Boa has a Ph.D., a master's in theology and a doctorate of philosophy. He is the president of Reflections Ministries, which has a mission "to provide safe places for people to consider the claims of Christ." Turner has a master's of theology and is a writer, speaker and consultant for Reflections Ministries and churches.

The pair is concerned with the factual errors in the novel, but even more so with the worldview promoted in all of Brown's writings. The authors explain that Brown says he's a Christian, but "Christianity" means something different to everyone. Boa and Turner challenge Christians to be the ones influencing society and remind the church to stand up for truth and eradicate the "anything goes" Christianity worldview.

Richard Abanes is a nationally recognized researcher and award-winning journalist. He looks at Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Leonardo da Vinci in *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code* (Harvest House) and answers questions about the clues in da Vinci's paintings, Jesus and Mary, the Lost Gospels and the Holy Grail.

Counterfeit Code by James A. Beverley (BayRidge Books) is a comprehensive reply to the theories of *The Da Vinci Code*. On his Web site Beverley says he wrote this book to "help Christians respond in the right way, with the right answers."

Investigative journalist Lee Strobel and Garry Poole offer to individuals the book *Exploring the Da Vinci Code: Investigating the Issues Raised by the Book and Movie*, which includes insights from an investigative trip to London and Paris as well as input from biblical and historical scholars. Discussing the Da Vinci Code, also from Strobel and Poole, is an interactive DVD and discussion package. These four sessions include Strobel's perspectives, interviews with experts, a discussion guide, questions, background material and more.

Even fiction authors take on the claims about Mary Magdalene. From Tyndale House, best-selling authors Karen Kingsbury and Angela Hunt offer two different approaches. In the contemporary parable *Divine*, Kingsbury demonstrates Mary's relationship with Jesus—as her Savior, not as her husband. Hunt, known for her historical research, takes readers back in time in the biblically based *Magdalene*.

For information about Pierre Plantard, the Priory of Sion, and Holy Blood, Holy Grail visit the Web site of Paul Smith (www.paulsmith.org). Tyndale offers the Web site for fiction, nonfiction and church resources, such as *The Da Vinci Deception Experience*. This seven-session series for churches or small groups is based on Erwin W. Lutzer's book *The Da Vinci Deception*. The kit includes a copy of the book, an event starter, six weekly segment overviews, tools and tips for organizing a community event, reproducible handouts, and more.

Sifting through Brown's assertions can be a daunting task. But the materials available can help anyone be successful in their search for the truth.

Leigh Devore