Defusing *The Da Vinci Code*

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The Da Vinci Code

*Released in March 2003
*40 million copies in print
*#1 fiction title in over 100 years
*Ron Howard Film,
starring Tom Hanks,
May 19, 2006
What’s the big deal?
“It’s just a novel!”  “It’s just a movie!”
Why all the fuss? What’s all the controversy?
“a crash course in art history and the Catholic Church” Stephen Rubin, President, *Doubleday Publishing*

“a compelling blend of history and page-turning suspense” …“a masterpiece” that “should be mandatory reading” *Library Journal*

“an exhaustively researched page-turner about secret religious societies, ancient cover-ups and savage vengeance” *Publisher’s Weekly*
Fiction influences how we think
Imagine a historical novel set in the 1960's about the civil right movement, that claims:

Martin Luther King was not a civil rights leader, but an opportunist who received millions of dollars by cutting a deal with the Klu Klux Klan.

The “I Have a Dream” speech was not written by ML King, but by a Klansman.

The TV footage of blacks being beaten by racist white cops was all faked.
The Da Vinci Code

How do we know Mary Magdalene wasn’t Jesus' wife and the mother of His child?

How do we know Jesus wasn’t simply a moral teacher, who was elevated to deity sometime in the 4th century?

How do we know that the Roman Emperor Constantine didn’t select the books of the Bible, eliminating ones that emphasized Jesus humanity?
How do we know Christ didn’t choose Mary Magdalene to head up his church?

How do we know the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) are more reliable sources than the gnostic gospels (Phillip, Mary, Thomas)?

How do we know the church isn’t involved in a conspiracy to keep these “truths” from the world?
How do we separate the facts from fabrication, history from fiction?
“if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached …”
Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians (11:4, circa AD 55)

“Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth.”
Paul to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:30, circa AD 55)
“false teachers … will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them.”

Peter’s 2nd letter to the early church (2:1, circa AD 66)

“godless men, who … deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

Jude to the early church (1:4, circa AD 65)
Church Fathers

**Irenaeus** (115-202) bishop Lyons, France. Disciple of Polycarp (a disciple of John).
*Irenaeus Against Heresies* (circa AD 185)

**Tertullian** (170-215) native of Carthage, North Africa. Developed the concept of the “trinity”.
“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”
*Prescription Against Heretics* (circa AD 190)
The views of liberal religious scholarship used to be hidden away in dry, dusty tomes on university library shelves.
“FACT: *The Priory of Sion*—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975, Paris's *Bibliothèque Nationale* discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion” (DVC intro)
Founded in 1956 by a Frenchman Pierre Plantard, an anti-semite with ties of the occult.

Plantard planned documents planted forged documents in *Le Biblioteque National* 1970’s. Found to be a hoax by a French court in 1996 (BBC documentary).
DVC vs. Reality

“The Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei is a deeply devout Catholic group that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brain-washing, coercion, and a practice known as "corporal mortification." (DVC intro)
Reality
Founded: 1928 Josemaría Escrivá
a conservative Catholic lay movement

“The Da Vinci Code’s Opus Dei … is not reflective of the real-life organization.” Time Magazine April 24, 2006
DVC vs. Reality

“All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.”
(DVC intro)
Reality

Louvre entrance: 673 not 666 panes

Ancient Olympics: every 4 not 8 years, dedicated to Zeus not Venus

Modern Olympic rings: 5 major continents, not a pentagram
Reality

not “Jah” + “Havah”
YHWH + Adonai (Lord) = Jehovah

Shekinah not “God’s powerful female equal”

Hebrew - no word for term “goddess”
**Reality**

*Madonna of the Rocks* weights 250-300 lbs!
6 ½ not 5 feet tall

Sangreal Documents
“thousands of documents disproving the New Testament”
problem: they don’t exist, in reality or the book!
1. Is the New Testament a historically accurate account of the life and ministry of Jesus?

2. Who is Jesus, and who did His earliest followers believe Him to be?

3. Is there any validity to the idea that Jesus was married?
1. Is the NT a historically accurate account of Jesus?

**DVC vs. Reality**

“The Bible is a product of man … not of God. It has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definite version of the book.”
Reality
It has not “evolved”
5600 Greek manuscripts.
18,000 other manuscripts.

No other work of antiquity comes close in terms of volume of documents, or proximity in time to original autographs.

What criterion were used to include books in the New Testament canon?
Reality
1. Eyewitnesses – written/sanctioned by an apostle, an eyewitness

Matthew – eyewitness
Mark – companion of Peter, an eyewitness
Luke – companion of Paul, an eyewitness
John – eyewitnesses
Reality
2. Authenticity – written by who it says it is?
   No pseudonyms.

3. Conformity – consistent with OT &
   teaching of NT apostles

4. Acceptance – by all
   churches
DVC vs. Reality

“More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion.” pg 231
Reality

80 Gospels? *Five “gnostic” gospels:*
- Gospel of Thomas
- Gospel of Philip
- Gospel of Truth
- Gospel of Mary
- Gospel to the Egyptians

- Apocalypse of Peter
- Apocalypse of Paul
- Letter of Peter to Paul
- The Thunder, Perfect Mind
- Testimony of Truth
DVC vs. Reality

“More than 80 gospels were considered for the New Testament”? 
Reality

Clement - Epistle to the Corinthians (AD 95)

Papias - bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia
   Exposition of Oracles of the Lord (AD 130)

Justin Martyr - foremost apologist (AD140)

Polycarp - disciple of the apostle John (AD150)
DVC vs. Reality

“The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the Roman emperor Constantine.” (DVC 231)
Reality
Constantine and the Council of Nicaea had nothing to do with the canon of Scripture.

Recognized four gospels: early 2\textsuperscript{nd} century

Muratorian Canon AD 175
“four Gospels” and 23 of 27 books

Final Decisions of the Canon: Councils of Hippo (AD 393) & Carthage (AD 397)
DVC vs. Reality

The Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi … highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications [of] the modern Bible.” (DVC 234)
Coptic Scrolls were found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi (Egypt)

Translations of Greek gnostic gospels, originally written AD 250-300.

rejected, never considered canonical:
NOT eyewitnesses
NOT authentic (pseudonyms)
NOT consistent with OT or teaching of apostles
NOT accepted by churches
What are the “gnostic gospels”?

The Gospel of “Philip” AD 250:

“there are many animals that exist in the world which are in human form”

“Winter is the world, summer the other realm. It is wrong to pray in winter.”
What are the “gnostic gospels”?  

The Gospel of “Thomas” AD 150

Jesus said, “Whoever has come to know the world has discovered a carcass, and whoever has discovered a carcass, of that person the world is not worthy.”
DVC vs. Reality

“Fortunately for historians ... some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert.”

pg. 234
Reality
Constantine did not attempt to “eradicate” documents.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were copies of the Old Testament not the New Testament.

Found in 1947 not “the 1950’s”
“It cannot be said of a single writing preserved to us from the early periods of the Church outside the New Testament that it could be properly added to the canon.”

Kurt Aland, Ph.D.
New Testament Scholar
2. Who is Jesus?

DVC vs. Reality

“until [the Council of Nicaea in 325] Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet … a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal.” (DVC 233)
Reality

Jesus testimony about Himself:

“Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2)
“I am the bread of life” (John 6)
“Before Abraham was I AM” (John 8)
“You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One” (Matt 26)
“I am the Alpha and Omega” (Rev 22)
**Reality:** Apostles

John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was God* … and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Col. 1 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him *all things were created* … He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.”
Reality: Apostles

Hebrews 1: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being … Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever ....”
**Reality:** Church Fathers

Ignatius: “God Himself was manifested in human form” (AD 105).

Clement: “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God” (AD 150).

Justin Martyr: “The Father of the universe has a Son. And He … is even God” (AD 160)
Reality: Church Fathers

Irenaeus: “He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this” (AD 180).

Tertullian: “… Christ our God …” (AD 200).

Origen: “No one should be offended that the Savior is also God” (AD 225).
**Reality:** Secular Historians

Josephus (before AD 100)
Roman Tacitus (AD 120)
Roman Suetonius (AD 110)
Pliny the Younger (AD 110)

While they did not believe Jesus was God, they acknowledged the followers of Jesus believed He was God.
If Jesus was simply a mortal prophet, why were His followers – that is the early church – persecuted and murdered?
If Jesus was simply a mortal prophet, why would His followers focus on remembering *His death* - and, of course, resurrection - rather than His teachings?

“Do this in remembrance of Me.” 1 Cor. 11:24
Imagine people today focusing on the death of John F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King!
Why was there a need for the “Edict of Milan” [Edict of Tolerance] in 313 if Christians believed Jesus was simply a mortal prophet?
DVC vs. Reality

“Jesus establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea” (DVC 233)?
Council of Nicea was not about whether Jesus was ‘the Son of God’ – *but what that actually meant*. Was Christ “co-eternal with the Father”?

the *same* essence or *similar* essence (*homooousion*)

Arianism: denied the eternal nature of Christ
DVC vs. Reality:

The decision of the Council of Nicaea was “relatively close vote at that” DVC 233)?
Reality: Vote at Nicaea 318 to 2
Would Dan Brown have considered the 2005 USC-UCLA game (final score 66-19) “close”?
The election results of 1984 “close”?

1984 Presidential Election
Electoral Vote Distribution

Candidate & Electoral Vote Totals:
- Ronald Reagan (R) 525
- Walter Mondale (D) 13
DVC vs. Reality

“Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope the human world” (DVC 233)?
Reality

Constantine played NO part in any decision at Nicaea.

He cared less about what the bishops decided, but that they agreed.

Paid for 50 Bibles for the churches in Constantinople.
“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”
Who are these “many scholars”?

While secular scholars may deny the divinity and resurrection of Jesus, all acknowledge these were the core beliefs of the early Christian community.
Reality

Who are these “original followers”? Peter? James? John? Paul?

Who was part of “the early Church” who stole Jesus from these early followers? When was this message distorted?

No historical record cited (secular or sacred). No dates given. Instead: a fictional “expert”.
“There is not one ranking scholar in the entire world who supports what Dan Brown has done with history. As a professor of ancient history, I can’t stand known, accepted facts from the past lied about. If my students did something like that, I’d flunk them.”

Paul Maier, Ph.D. (Harvard University)  
Fulbright scholar, author of 15 books, Professor of Ancient History  
Western Michigan University
When was Jesus “shrouded in an impenetrable cloak of divinity” and turned into “a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world”?

Ironically, the gnostic heresy was that Jesus was “divine” - but not human!

“Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ Has come in the flesh is from God” (I John 4:2)
Reality

Jesus was fully man and fully God

His humanity:

- hunger *(Matt 4)*
- thirst *(John 19)*
- tired *(John 4)*
- sad *(John 11)*
- happy *(Luke 10)*
- amazed *(Mark 6)*
- angry *(John 2)*
- trouble *(Matt 26)*
- sorrowful *(Matt 26)*
- loved *(John 11)*
Reality

1\textsuperscript{st} century error:
Jesus was divine but not human

21\textsuperscript{st} century error:
Jesus was human but not divine
3. Was Mary Magdalene the wife of Jesus and the mother of His child? Is there any validity to this idea?

DVC vs. Reality
Mary Magdalene: New Testament account

Seven demons were cast out of her by Jesus (Luke 8:2)

Part of an entourage of women who supported and traveled with Jesus and His disciples (Luke 8:1,2)

She witnessed the horror of the crucifixion (Mathew 27:32-56)
Mary Magdalene:

She was present at the burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:57-61)

She, along with two other women, went to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark 16:1)

She was the first person to see Jesus in His resurrected body (John 20:10-18)
DVC vs. Reality

“The Gospel of Philip is always a good place to start.”
Reality

It’s interesting – but not necessarily good!

Written AD 250-300
Pseudonym
No historical/geographic references - “sayings”
Missing HUGE parts of the passage!
DVC vs. Reality

“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.”

Gospel of “Philip” (AD 250-300)
Reality

And the companion of the [ ] Mary Magdalene. [ ] her more than [ ] the disciples [ ] kiss her [ ] on her [ ].
DVC vs. Reality

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

The passage was written in Greek, then translated into Coptic.

Not written in Aramaic

Coptic: a Greek loan word: koinonos “companion” (wife = gyne)

In Aramaic or Hebrew, companion does not mean wife!
DVC vs. Reality

“I shan’t bore you with the countless references to Jesus and [Mary] Magdalene’s union.”
Reality

"Countless References" DON’T exist.

Only references:
Gospel of “Philip”
Gospel of “Mary”
“And Peter said, Did the Savior really speak with a woman with our knowledge? Are we to turn about and listen to her? Did he prefer her to us? … If the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us.”

The Gospel of “Mary” (AD 250-300)
Reality:

No mention of marriage in this passage! “prefer”

Written 250 years after events
Immediately rejected by early church
DVC vs. Reality:

“The marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record” (DVC 245)
Reality:

“The is no credible historical record that Jesus was married. None.”
James Garlow Ph.D.

“Mary was not married to Jesus”
Darrell Bock, Ph.D.

“The reality: No history. No record.”
Paul Maier, Ph.D.
Reality
Leonardo’s Last Supper finished in 1498 has been painted over 7 different times!

“By 1556 there was nothing visible except a muddle of blots.” Robert Wallace *World of Leonardo* (pg. 83)

17th – 18th centuries artist tried to restore it
Two restoration projects since 1946

“Just about everything [Dan Brown] says about Leonardo is wrong.” Jack Wasserman, Ph.D.
Art History, Temple University
DVC vs. Reality

“Behold the greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ.” (DVC 249)
Reality

No “cover up” – no reality to these claims.

Holy Blood Holy Grail
(1983) Michael Baigent & Richard Leigh

Research based 9th century French legends and forged documents planted Le Biblioteque National by Pierre Plantard in the 1970’s!
Could Jesus Have Been Married?

Reality
“Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas?” I Corinthians 9:4

“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. John 19:25
“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple who he loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” John 19:26-27
Could Jesus Have Been Married?

No record from 1st century eyewitness accounts.

Two *brief* passages in rejected gnostic gospels from the late 3rd century (where the words “marriage” or “wife” never appear).

9th century myths and legends from France. Hoax of bogus, forged documents in 1970’s.

Rejected by secular and biblical historians
What would be public reaction be to a major motion picture set in 1940’s Europe denying the Holocaust?

Ignoring all historical records
Eyewitness testimony
Physical Evidence

Based on “secret Nazi documents” that are known forgeries?

Would public reaction be “it’s just a movie?”
Boycott, ignore or engage?
In the 1966 Batman and Robin solved riddles, found clues, and searched for the truth.
Forty years later *The Da Vinci Code’s* Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu solve riddles, find clues, and search for the truth.
Both the *Batman* TV show and *The Da Vinci Code* have cool gadgets.
sinister villains
and exotic locations
“Religion has only one true enemy – apathy – and passionate debate is a superb antidote.”

Dan Brown