



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 10 No. 14

LORD'S DAY 2 APR 2006

Dear Readers,

UNRAVELLING THE ENIGMA OF THE DA VINCI CODE

There was a bestseller novel (Doubleday Publishing) written in 2003 by Daniel Brown, a former English teacher at Philip Exeter Academy entitled, *The Da Vinci Code*, that has mesmerised and enthralled many and Hollywood has made a movie out of it. The book *The Da Vinci Code* is a publishing phenomenon, selling more than 7 million copies, and being on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 50 weeks. The fallacious and deceptive *Da Vinci Code* has tried to undermine the whole foundation and biblical concept of historic Christianity, and has sparked debates about the legitimacy and authenticity of the Christian faith.

It made a direct attack on the deity of Christ and the Bible, and has created quite a stir in the evangelical community for its malicious attacks on historic biblical Christianity. Dan Brown's thriller, *The Da Vinci Code* contains many errors and misrepresentations. Some of the glaring inaccuracies contained within his bestseller, includes his claim that Jesus was not considered as God until the 4th century, and that the Council of Nicea decided which books should be included in the Bible. Fertile and diabolical imagination is evident here. But there are other false and misleading statements that need to be brought out into the light to warn the saints.

This popular book casts doubts on the reliability, canonicity, preservation and historicity of the Bible, the nature of Christ, the origin and development of Christian belief and the activities of the Church in its early formative years. We will consider them briefly here.

False Claims Exposed

According to Daniel Brown, Christianity was apparently started by a "Jesus Christ" who was viewed only as a prophet. He made no claim to deity (contra Phil 2:6 where it is stated that Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God), he was apparently married and his wife was Mary Magdalene who was handpicked to lead the Church. He further claimed that the Church leaders treated Mary as a whore and erased evidence of this family tie, and that this was supposedly the greatest "cover-up in human history". The Church purportedly tried to "get rid of the evidence" by sending in the Crusaders to destroy them in Jerusalem (creative depraved imagination here).

The 454-page book is a diatribe aimed at undermining established biblical Christian beliefs, the Bible and early Church leaders. There are conspiracy themes to create mass confusion or doubt among Christians (and non-Christians) and aimed at rewriting history. The heart of the attack is the claim that almost everything our early Church fathers and the Bible taught us about the deity and life of Christ is false. The book was diabolically designed to undermine the biblical Christian faith. The following are some of the bold and unsubstantiated claims made by Dan Brown that can be challenged with factual information.

A Cunning Malevolent Attack

The *Da Vinci Code* paints the Bible as little more than a fraudulent compilation of texts used by scurrilous deceivers, bent on controlling the masses. Dan Brown alleged that the "pagan" Roman

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emperor Constantine collated the Bible. It is alleged in the book that “Constantine commissioned and financed the new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike.” The truth is that there is no credible historical evidence of such an event at all. The gospels were already well authenticated and accepted before Constantine’s time and are an accurate inspired record (though not exhaustive) of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament had been compiled even before Jesus’ time. As for the New Testament, its formation began by the end of the first century (about AD 90-100) almost 200 years before Constantine. The Apostle Peter recognised the Pauline epistles as being on par with the other Scriptures, referring to the Old Testament (2 Pet 3:16). During the second century, the gospels and the epistles were already accepted by the Church as canonical. The Church father, Irenaeus (c 180) acknowledged the canonicity of the four gospels, and the well-respected Origen (c 185-294) completed a listing of New Testament books which he viewed as authoritative, and which is similar to the list of New Testament books that we have today. Historical documents showed a consensus of the Church in the canonicity of the Bible culminating in the Council of Carthage (397 AD) and the Council of Hippo (393 AD). So the fact is that Constantine has nothing to do with this canonicity of the Bible, as claimed by Dan Brown. We have full confidence in God’s holy sufficient authoritative Word, for we have the entire inspired Word of God that is indestructible and providentially preserved for us today.

On the contrary, the four gospels are coherent and clearly acknowledge both the humanity and the deity of Christ. The Apostle John vehemently defended the humanity of Christ in 1 John 4:1-4 against the Docetists and Gnostics, heretics of the first century. Therefore, the claim that the humanity of Christ was erased from the gospels is not true at all. Brown also claimed that the earlier “gospels” were outlawed, gathered up and burned. But the only religious documents that were burnt during Constantine’s reign were the erroneous and heretical writings of Arius, a presbyter who was condemned by the universal Churches (not by Constantine) as a heretic for denying the deity of Christ, in the Council of Nicea in AD 325. There are no other gospels (or writings of Arius) that were written in the third century and no original gospels of the first century as claimed by Dan Brown in his book.

Pre-Nicene Christians already acknowledged Jesus’ divinity by praying to God the Father in Christ’s name. Church leaders, including Justin Martyr, a second-century luminary and the first great church apologist, baptized in the name of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—thereby acknowledging the equality of the one God in three distinct persons.

The Council of Nicea did not entirely end the controversy over Arius’ teachings, but it defined the important biblical doctrine of Christ’s deity for the church, defeating Arius, the heretic of the day. The participating bishops affirmed the historic and standard Christian beliefs, erecting a united front against future efforts to dilute Christ’s deity and his sovereign gift of salvation. Today, the deity of Christ is still being undermined by cults and liberals and those affected by Jewish traditions.

In the book, Dan Brown also alleged that the earthly aspects of Jesus’ life were omitted from the Bible. This is an extraordinary assertion, as the four gospels have the earthly aspects of Christ’s life, including his hunger, fastings, emotions of anguish, sadness and his relational interaction with his mother, friends and followers in its sacred pages. Dan Brown referred to “alleged instincts and relationship with Mary Magdalene” in his book. This is a scandalous and fallacious allegation that has to be refuted vehemently. There is no such factual record in the gospels to support this, as it never happened at all and has to be rejected firmly. There is also no proven conspiracy to cover up any relationship of Christ with Mary Magdalene as alleged. The Bible records the life of the latter in the gospels. She is pictured as one who came to tell the disciples about Christ’s resurrection (John 20:1-4) after she was thoroughly converted. The claim in the Da Vinci Code is thus without basis nor does it have any factual reliable support or evidence.

Dan Brown quoted The Gnostic non-canonical Gospel of Philip which says that, “the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her

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often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?"...As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion in those days, literally meant spouse. (*Da Vinci Code*, page 246)

The basis Brown uses for this claim is the Gnostic Gospels, specifically *The Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Philip*. But neither of these contain any mention of Jesus' marriage to Mary, nor do any other Gnostic Gospels. Brown tries to infer that Jesus married Mary from a line in the *Gospel of Philip*. He would have us believe the Jesus and Mary Magdalene were participants in the sex-rites of the Gnostics.

The New Testament never mentions Jesus being married or even suggests it. This malevolent allegation is totally baseless and fallacious. We need not rest on the gnostic gospels which are not inerrant and infallible, as are the canonical 66 books of the scriptures, providentially preserved for us today.

There are many more errors found in Brown's book, but this should be sufficient to demonstrate that his scholarship is poor, his theories are not based on fact, and, in my opinion, his intention is to discredit Christianity by promoting goddess worship and paganism based on heretical texts. It is important that Christians expose this kind of attack on our faith, and it is imperative that we educate people on the true history and message of the Word of God. Since our faith is built on God's Word and on truth, we can depend on facts to present our case. We don't have to resort to lies, conspiracy theories, and revisionist history.

Warnings from Scripture

There will continue to be outrageous and subtle claims and allegations undermining the authenticity of gospels, the atoning work and deity of Christ and the inspired and providentially preserved Word of Christ in these last perilous days of deception and delusion. The *Da Vinci Code* is only a case in point. These last days are filled with false teachers and apostates (2 Pet 2:1-2). The Apostle John warns us in 2 John 9-11, *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.* Paul adds in Romans 16:17, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them* and Paul in Titus 3:10 continues, *A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.* We have to be vigilant, alert and discerning to examine and expose such false claims appropriately with the Scriptures (1 Thes 5:21,22).

Conclusion

Abanes In his book *The truth about the Da Vinci Code*, concludes with these words, "The truth is that Christianity is a religion solidly based on a variety of historical documents, collectively known as the New Testament. These texts plainly tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, a unique historical figure whose claims of deity were accepted by millions of people whose lives were changed. As for Dan Brown's fanciful conspiracy theory about the Church's cover-up of a Magdalene-Jesus union, it is almost beyond comprehension that a tale so rooted in demonstrable falsehoods could so quickly and easily be embraced by the public. And yet the *Da Vinci Code*'s reputation as a "factual book" continues to spread. As of March 2004, countless Internet sites had been infected by dozens of quotes from the book, quotes that were being hailed as "true statements". But in the end, the truth will endure and those who are willing to look at the facts will undoubtedly see it. Of this, we can be certain, as the Old Testament tells us, of Scriptures and history." Solomon says in Proverbs 12:19, *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

Rev Jack Sin, Maranatha BP Church

(NB This article is condensed from the Maranatha Messenger of Maranatha BP Church dated 19 September 2004 and was then published In Life BP Church of Singapore weekly on 12 Feb 2006. Additional copies are available from the Maranatha resource ministry. For more information on this, read Maranatha BP Church website; www.maranatha-bpc.com.)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: STRIVING TO LIVE ABOVE OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS
IN CHRIST (Ephesians 1:3)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 02/04/2006	Next Week: 09/04/2006	a.m. Kazumi Watanabe
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Mok Chee Cheong	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Speaker:</i>	Mok Chee Cheong	Rev Philip Eveson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evening Service: Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) This week: Q76: What is repentance unto life? Q77: Wherein do justification and sanctification differ? Q78: Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers? <i>Next week:</i> Q79: May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace? Q80: Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? Q81: Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved? <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Do stay back and find out the answers from the Word of God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10th Anniversary preparations: This will take place on Jun 25. For those interested in helping out, please see Mok or Jonathan. • Easter Camp: The YAF will be organising the church Easter camp, Apr 14-17. The camp theme is "Living for Jesus". • Ladies Fellowship: All ladies, please take note that there will be a short meeting after the morning worship service. • Mid Week Prayer Meeting: The mid week prayer meetings will begin this Wednesday, Apr 5 at 8pm. • Lord's Supper: Next week, we will be observing the Lord's Supper. Please come with hearts prepared.
<i>Message:</i>	Christian Warfare	Tbd	
<i>Text:</i>	Ephesians 6:10-24	Tbd	
<i>Organist:</i>	Anthony	Anthony	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Alvin Chow	John Poh	
<i>Speaker:</i>	Mok Chee Cheong	Mok Chee Cheong	
<i>Message:</i>	WLC Questions 76-78 See News/Announcement	WLC Questions 79-81 See News/Announcement	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Feng Qian	Ming Yann	
Other Duties			
	Today	Next Week	
<i>Ushers</i>	Alvin/Daniel	John/Wah Soon	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Joyce	Yanning	
<i>Singspirat'n:</i>	Ming Yann/Feng Qian	Esmeralda/Ming Yann	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Maureen	Yoong Chiang/Jonathan	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	YAF Group 1	YAF Group 2	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	No DHW	DHW – Genesis 21	
Appointments of the Week			
Wed 5 Apr	8:00 pm	Mid Week Prayer Meeting: Led by Mok	
Fri 7 Apr	7.00 pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Prayer (led by Anthony)	
Sat 8 Apr	4.00 pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Spkr / C'man: Yoong Chiang	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£198.34	Lunch:	£34.50
<u>The Shorter Catechism</u>			
Q.92 What are the sacraments of the New Testaments?			
Ans: The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.			
<p style="margin-left: 20px;"><i>Comments: The two sacraments of the Old Testament were Circumcision and the Passover. The two sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These sacraments answer the one to the other – Baptism coming in place of Circumcision, and the Lord's Supper in place of the Passover. They teach likewise the same truths – Circumcision and Baptism teaching the necessity of being born again, and the Passover and the Lords Supper teaching the necessity of a sacrifice for sin.</i></p>			