

The Da Vinci Code--True or False?

Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, is a mixture of fact and fiction, leaving the readers to wonder which parts are true. Some people ask, "Why get so bent out of shape over a fiction book?" Simply because Brown asserts that it's a fiction book based completely on facts. In an interview on NBC's *Today Show*, Matt Lauer asked author Dan Brown, "How much of this is based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred?" Brown answered, "Absolutely all of it."

Brown claims that his scenario exposes the greatest cover-up in the history of mankind. But the fact is, he has rewritten history and is trying to cover up his shoddy research, discredited sources, and distortion of facts. When asked how much of *The Da Vinci Code* is true, Dr. Paul Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, replied, "I would say 20 percent truth, 80 percent falsehood." (Strobel, p.25) The following true-false test will erase the question marks from your mind.

True or False? The Priory of Sion is a secret society that began in 1099, when the Knights of Templar discovered long-lost documents beneath the ruins of Solomon's Temple.

False. The Priory of Sion is a hoax. Pierre Plantard and three other men started a social club in 1954 called the Priory of Sion. It never existed "prior" to that.

True or False? Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, and their offspring can be traced through the kings of France to people living on earth today.

False. This false idea can be traced back to Pierre Plantard, who created the hoax. In the 1960's and 1970's, Plantard manufactured the documents making this ridiculous claim. When called into court to testify, Plantard admitted under oath that he had made up the scheme. Furthermore, not one of the non-biblical books that Dan Brown references ever mentions Jesus being married--not even "The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene."

True or False? Constantine was a Roman emperor who claimed to convert to Christianity.

True.

True or False? The Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea "deified" the man Jesus in 325 A.D.

False. This assertion by Brown is pitiful, with not one shred of evidence to support it. Dr. Maier says, "The deity of Christ was never under discussion at the Council of Nicaea. What was under discussion was whether Jesus was coeternal with the Father or not. And this was what was decided." (Strobel, p. 25)

Many documents, dated centuries before the Council met, prove that the early church believed that Jesus was God in a human body. First century documents repeatedly taught the deity of Christ. The apostle Paul, who was an eye-witness of the resurrected Jesus, declared in his letter to the Colossians (60-62 A.D.) that "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9). The Gospel of John states at the beginning of the book that The Word (Jesus) was God and He became flesh and dwelt among us (see John 1:1,14). In the Gospel of Matthew (approximately 63 A.D.) we discover that Peter confessed Jesus as the Son of God (see Matthew 16:13-16)

True or False? At the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, Constantine determined which books would go into the New Testament.

False. Dr. Maier states, "The Council of Nicaea did not decide which books should go into the canon (New Testament) and which should not. Nothing of that is true. Not one of the decrees of the Council of Nicaea deals with the canon. So, again, you have a falsehood (by Brown) multiplied here." (Strobel, p.25) The canon (the standard biblical books) was already known a century and half to two hundred years before Constantine.

True or False? 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. (Brown 234)

False. There is no evidence that the text of the original gospels was "embellished" in the fourth century. Scores of copies of the Gospels already existed in the second century. There was no way that the texts could have been altered. No one had the authority to call in all the copies scattered throughout the

Empire to make alterations. (Garlow, p. 147). Brown's claim is pure mythology.

True or False? At the Council of Nicaea, Jesus was established as the Son of God by "a very close vote."
False. Councils were called to maintain an orthodox faith and prevent the spread of false teaching. Over 300 bishops traveled thousands of miles to attend this conference in Constantinople. The church held from its inception that Jesus was divine (see Matthew 16:13-16), but Arius taught in 318 A.D. that Jesus was a created being. The vote wasn't even close--316 bishops affirmed that Jesus was coequal with the Father, while only 2 bishops denied it.

True or False? Since the beginning of recorded time, history has been written by "winners."
False. On the contrary, many of our historical documents were penned by those who were intensely hated during their time. Most of the biblical texts we possess were written by those who we persecuted, tortured, and eventually killed for their beliefs. They certainly weren't viewed as winners at the time of their writings. *Foxes Book of Martyrs* (Marie King, editor) and *Documents of the Christian Church* (Henry Bettenson, editor) are two books that document historical events by those who would be considered "losers."

True or False? The Nag Hammadi scrolls were discovered in 1945 near an Egyptian village.
True.

True or False? The Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts have been dated earlier than the New Testament writings.
False. The apostle Paul wrote 13 books of the New Testament between the 48 A.D. to around 60 A.D. He was executed for his faith by Nero in 66 A.D. (Garlow, p.89). All the books of the New Testament can be plausibly dated prior to 70 A.D. The earliest date for the Nag Hammadi scrolls is around A.D. 150 and later when Gnosticism as a system began to flourish. The earliest date for the "Gospel of Philip" is around 175 A.D. The official translator of the "Gospel of Phillip" in the Nag Hammadi collection suggests a date about 250 A.D. (Garlow, p.186).
In addition, many copies of the New Testament writings have been discovered and preserved by historians. The Nag Hammadi texts are miniscule in comparison.

True or False? More than 80 gospels were considered for the New Testament.
False. No one knows how Dan Brown came up with the number 80. He simply made up that statistic to embellish his fictional story. Not one shred of evidence supports it.

Sources and Recommended Books:

Cracking Da Vinci's Code, James L. Garlow and Peter Jones, Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2004.
Exploring the Da Vinci Code, Lee Strobel and Garry Poole, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction? Hank Hanegraaff and Paul Maier, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2004.

Recommended Links:

<http://www.rbcdavincicode.org>
<http://pcgmedia.org/davincianswers.html>