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**Theological Reflection Paper**  
**The Da Vinci Code**

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A Paper

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## ***Introduction:***

Dan Brown wrote the book titled, “The DaVinci Code”. It has sold millions of copies and has been on the top of the sales lists for multiple years. It is an exciting fast paced novel with murder, intrigue, and adventure. It is a novel, as such a work of fiction but Dan in his introduction states:

“FACT ... All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.”

This is where the problem with his novel exists. He claims his novel is based on FACT, but the novel is far from the truth. Dan Brown mingles some facts, with half-truths and absolutely false statements side by side into his story. This represents poor scholarship at best and a serious attack on the Bible and traditional Christianity at it’s worst.

## ***The DaVinci Code***

The DaVinci Code starts with a murder. Jacques the curator of the Louvre is shot and left to die while locked in one of the exhibit halls after divulging the location of some unknown object. Knowing he was going to die, Jacques creates a model of the famous DaVinci sketch the The Vitruvian Man on the floor with his blood and naked body , writing the name of Robert Langdon by his side. Over the next few chapters of the book Robert is interrogated by the police who think he is the prime suspect. In the middle of the interrogation at the Louvre, the captain and Robert are interrupted by Sophia Neveu. Sophia who we learn is a cryptographer for the police and the granddaughter of Jacques has come to break Robert free. She knows that Robert is not the killer but rather her grandfather used the symbol and the name on the floor to bring Robert and Sophia together. After chapters of chase and hunting for further clues, Robert tells Sophia that they had better see Robert’s long time friend Sir Teabing for more help.

After driving for hours, they arrive at the Teabing residence and after discussion with the Butler eventually they are seated in the reception room waiting for Teabing. Sir Leigh Teabing is presented as an Oxford educated “Historian” and is renowned for his understanding of the

“Holy Grail” and has been searching for it for years. Robert is sure that Jacques is somehow involved in the Holy Grail and believed letting Teabing help was in all their best interests.

After reviewing what has been happening to Sophia and himself, Robert asks Teabing to tell Sophie all about the “Holy Grail”. Teabing looks at her, and assesses she is a virgin on the subject and begins the story. This is where Dan Brown shifts his novel into a fictional wonderland of distorted facts and attitudes that readily fit into today’s readers biases and perspectives.

### ***Biblical Formation:***

Teabing begins, that to truly understand the Grail you must first understand the Bible, and more significantly the New Testament, which Sophie claimed little knowledge of. After a brief interlude on DaVinci, Teabing begins talking about the Bible and it’s formation.

**“The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven. The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God.”**

The Bible did not arrive by FAX from God, but Dan Brown’s assertion through Teabing that the Bible is simply a product of man and his following explanations are far from fact. Key points in Dan Brown’s assertions by Teabing center on:

- *Man created it (the Bible) as a historical record of tumultuous times, it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book(pg 231).*

Man did write the Bible, (under the leading of God 2Peter 1:20-21) but the evolution, countless translations and revisions is false. Biblical texts exist today in the same languages they were first written in and many examples of early documents exist verifying the integrity of today’s text. They have been shown to have minimal additions and were not revised with time. Many translations do exist to enable people of other languages to understand and read the Bible but these do not invalidate the texts that exist today. The assertion that history has never had a

definitive version of the book is blatantly wrong. The Old Testament had an established canon centuries before Jesus was born and by the early second century, the present New Testament books were in wide distribution throughout the world of the time and were recognized as scripture.

- *Jesus life was recorded by thousands of followers across the land ... and more than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them. (Pg 231)*

Dan is correct that only 4 gospels were chosen for inclusion into the New Testament canon. These were all well recognized as being written by authors that either directly knew Jesus or were directly associated with the early apostles. These books were also written in the mid first century where there were many people that still lived to verify what had been included in the gospels. The other gospels, which were almost unanimously rejected and were never widely accepted by anyone, were written in the late second and third century. These gospels were dismissed early because the authors had no link back to the time of Christ. They failed to conform to contextual standards and had large mythological and Gnostic components. About 16 of these “other gospels” exist today.

- *The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great as a way to unify and transform the Roman nation. 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 then outlawed, gathered up, and burned. (pg 231, 234.)*

It is immaterial whether you believe that Constantine was a pagan using the Christian Church to unify the Roman Empire or truly became a Christian and deferred Baptism until near death as was the tradition in the fourth century. Constantine had no influence on what the New Testament canon consisted of. The process of canonization was an ongoing process from the

beginning. Long before being called together at the council, (which Constantine did pay for) the canon was stable for all but a couple of books (NOT the gospels) and the final vote was nearly unanimous.

One of the more serious accomplishments at this council was the creation of creeds that standardized the confessions of faith. Jesus had from the beginning been worshipped as divine. At the council, they confirmed the position that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Thus, the council instead of creating Jesus as divine reasserted His complete humanity – the exact opposite of Teabing's assertion.

On another point, Teabing states that following the council they outlawed the other gospels, and following a complete collection of them, they were burned. This works in conspiracy novels but at that time Christian writings were being circulated on 3 continents. There is no way that Constantine could have effectively collected anything and completely eliminate it and all historical reference to the collection. There would be massive evidence of it and there is none.

- *In the 1950s the Dead Sea scrolls were found in Qumran, which together with the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi tell the true Grail story and speak of Christ's ministry in very human terms . These scrolls highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications confirming the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men with a political agenda – to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and His influence to solidify their own power base (Page 234)*

The Dead Sea Scrolls are documents that were found in 1947. These documents were hidden in caves by the people of the Qumran community years before Jesus. The texts found overwhelmingly predate the New Testament and are mostly copies of the Old Testament and internal Qumran community documents. Rather than being something that the Vatican would want to suppress because it refutes traditional Christianity, there is nothing that is at all Christian in either a traditional or variant form. What these documents do however provide is a significant

verification of the OT documents of today for both the Jews and the Christians and a view into the day-to-day life of first century Israel. Our Hebrew versions of the OT are a very good representation of the Old Testament used and known by Jesus. The other documents although not telling us much religiously, do confirm the day-to-day life style of people in the first century as portrayed in the New Testament writings. This is much different than most of the Gnostic writings which are clearly late second and third century writings and were rejected as canonical writings.

### ***The Divinity of Jesus***

Dan Brown asserts through his characters that Jesus was never viewed as divine prior to the Council of Nicea. This was part of Constantine's plot to take over the Church.

- *My dear, until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet ... (ellipsis provided by Dan Brown) a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A Mortal. (Page 233)*

A theologian named Arius led one of the movements to deny the deity of Christ in the fourth century. He attempted to use logic to deny the deity of Jesus. By using texts like John 14:28 ("The Father is greater than I"), he built a case to show differences between Jesus and God. Dan Brown adopts this as the norm for the pre-Nicene Christianity. This assertion is false. In reality the early Christians overwhelmingly worshiped Jesus Christ as the risen Lord and Savior.

Before the development of comprehensive creeds, Christian leaders had instructional rules of the faith. One example by a prominent second-century bishop named Irenaeus stated from 1 Cor 8:6, "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ." The Greek word for Lord, used here, and heavily throughout the New Testament and the Greek version of the Old Testament is 'kyrios' and from the beginning was always used as a word for divinity. The Romans applied it to their emperor (who they viewed as god) but note that the Jews would NOT use it in reference to the Roman

Emperor because they associated it specifically and uniquely to Yahweh. Also the usage of Kyrios for Jesus is not only in the Biblical canon but also in extra – canonical texts. In the Didache widely believed to have been written no later than the late 100s, the earliest Arminian-speaking Christians refer to Jesus as Lord.

Additional support for the early view of Christ’s divinity include petitioning (prayer) to God the Father in Christ’s name and baptizing in the name of the triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by one of the first great church apologists in the second century Justin Martyr.

- *Jesus’ establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea ... A relatively close vote at that (Page 233).*

There was a vote that confirmed the common, widely held view by the church at the time on the proposition that “Jesus was fully God and fully man, the Son of God”. This vote and statement was to confirm the widespread beliefs that were already in the church. *A relatively close vote* as stated by Teabing it was **not!** The final vote of affirmation was 298 out of the 300 delegates in attendance at the council.

### ***The Mary Magdalene***

Teabing has slowly lead Sophie and Robert to the peak of anticipation – What is the Holy Grail. It is not a cup, but rather a woman – Mary Magdalene to be specific. Teabing continues that DaVinci knew this and has hidden in his painting of the Last Supper Mary, in the place of honor, to his right. Mary Magdalene was the Bride of Christ and Christ’s chosen successor to His future Church. This is the knowledge that was hidden to protect it from those that wanted to destroy it.

- *Sophie could not take her eyes from the woman beside Jesus (in the painting) ... “Everyone misses it” Teabing said, “ Our mind blocks out the incongruity and overrides ... This is the woman who single handedly could crumble the Church”(page 243)*

Recent restorations of Leonardo's The Last Supper present John, at Jesus' right in a significantly feminine view. During the period when The Last Supper was painted, much symbolism was placed into the paintings. In his Treatise on Painting, Leonardo explains that each figure should be painted according to his station and age. A classic type, common to many renaissance paintings, is the "student". A favored follower, a protégé or disciple is always portrayed as very youthful, long haired and clean-shaven, even to the point of looking feminine. The idea being given is that he has not yet matured to the point where he must find his own way. John by tradition has always been portrayed in this way. He is the disciple Jesus loved, the only one at the foot of the cross. He is the ideal student. In addition to other paintings by Leonardo, which portray a feminine John, Chirlandaio and Andrea del Castagno also show a soft, young, and nearly feminine John.

- *The troubling earthly theme kept recurring in the gospels. Mary Magdalene,... more specifically her marriage to Jesus Christ. ... It's a matter of public record. "Teabing said.(Page 244) ...and makes more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor (Page 245)*

Jesus' marriage is a matter of public record only in the mind of Dan Brown and a few conspiracy books. Justification for this marriage belief comes in several forms. Teabing notes the contrasting colors on the robes of Jesus and the supposed Mary – red and blue vs. blue and red. More significant is Teabing's assertion that it was the father's responsibility to provide a wife for his son and Jewish custom virtually forbids a non married Jewish man. Teabing continues that if he had not been married, at least one of the Gospels would have mentioned it. You cannot prove anything from silence. Regarding Jewish tradition, there is some truth here, BUT there are many allowed and documented exceptions. Normal practice is for a male to be married between 18 and 20. However there were many Jewish sects, the Essenes, the Qumrans, and the Therapeute who practiced celibacy. Additionally, many of the Jewish prophets were celibate.

This includes Jeremiah, the wilderness prophet Banus, John the Baptist and many believe that Moses was celebrate. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Hasidic miracle-worker, the Galilean rabbi Pinhas ben Yair taught that abstinence was essential to reception of prophetic wisdom and the Holy Spirit. Thus, even though it may have been normal for a male the age of Jesus to have been married, there is ample evidence of where celibacy is accepted, encouraged or even required. Therefore, it is false to state that it makes sense that Jesus was married like Teabing does. Silence on the subject in the Bible and extra-Biblical material gives no room for a positive proof.

- *From the Gospel of Philip Sophie read, “And the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth.”... Teabing smiled, “As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse”(Page 246)*

Here, Dan Brown introduces the Gnostic Gospels as a reference. The gospels themselves as stated before are not credible because of their dates of writing but what is interesting is that in attempting to make the case that Jesus and Mary Magdalene are married Dan Brown totally misuses the text in question. Teabing asserts that the Aramaic word for companion used in this reference means spouse. This sounds intellectual but note that these gospels were not written in Aramaic. They were written in Greek and the Greek word for companion means companion – not spouse. Additionally, in the Greek the words for “that Jesus kissed her on the mouth” are not even in the text. Dan Brown in order to make a point was inserting words into his own source documents.

- *Sophie read (from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene) “And Peter said, ‘Did the Savior really speak with a woman without our knowledge? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us?(Page 247) ... (Teabing continues) Jesus was the original feminist. He intended the future of His church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene.”(Page 248)*

Peter, is here portrayed as a jealous chauvinist, questioning to John why did Jesus prefer Mary and how could they all follow her. Teabing paints Jesus in a very forward pro Feminist role with Peter as the villain. Again, the Gnostic Gospels are not credible historical documents because of their late authorship. It is interesting to note that what is not mentioned is the final verse of the Gospel of Thomas where Peter sneers that “woman are not worthy of Life.” Jesus responds, “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male ... For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” This seems an odd way to honor one’s spouse, or to exalt the status of woman.

### ***The Divine Feminine***

Dan Brown in chapter 74 takes us into the world of ritual sex and the Divine Feminine. Robert is talking to Sophie about a sexual ritual that she had accidentally seen 10 years earlier between her grandfather and grandmother. Robert during this discussion presented the following:

- *Robert speaking to Sophie says “Historically, intercourse was the act through which male and female experienced God. The ancients believed that the male was spiritually incomplete until he had carnal knowledge of the sacred feminine. Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and ultimately achieve gnosis – knowledge of the divine”.(Page 308)*

Here Robert presents the basis for the divine feminine and ritualistic sex. The incomplete man, uniting in “sacred marriage” with the divine feminine. He claims that goddess worship universally dominated pre-Christian paganism with the “sacred marriage” forming it’s central rite. In fact, goddesses did not dominate the pre-Christian world – not in the religions of Rome, her barbarian subjects, Egypt, or even Semitic lands where the hieros gamos (sacred marriage) was an ancient practice.

- *“Langdon’s Jewish students always looked flabbergasted when he first told them that the early Jewish tradition involved ritualistic sex. In the Temple no less. Early Jews he said believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah. Men seeking spiritual wholeness came to the Temple to visit priestesses ... with whom they experienced the divine through physical union.”*

There is Biblical support for ritualistic sex at the temple, BUT this was not a part of the Jewish worship demanded by YHWH. Rather, it was the infiltration of the Canaanite practices into the Jewish culture and was severely condemned by God through His prophets and Judah was eventually displaced from the land.

As to the female counterpart Shekinah in the excavations at Tel Arad a Jewish temple, with twin altars and stellers was found. The first was to YHWH, and the second smaller ones were to His female companion. This temple is dated late, during the divided kingdom before the deportations of Judah. This is part of the corruption that God condemned Judah for. God had said to worship Him, and Him alone. He did not have a female companion as the Canaanite gods did.

- *Langdon continued “the Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH – the sacred name of God – in fact derived from Jehovah, and androgynous physical union between the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, Havah”*

Most first year scripture students will be able to tell you that Jehoal is a 16<sup>th</sup> century construct of the printers of the time. The printers combined the Germanized form of YHWH (JHVH) with the vowels of ADONAI (eoa) to produce JeHoVaH.

### **Dan Browns Hermeneutics**

Dan Brown through his characters in the DaVinci Code makes extensive reference to and usage of many parts of the post modern hermeneutics. By using these tendencies or biases, Dan

is able to lure many of today's readers into acceptance of the storyline because the readers already deeply believe many of his assertions and are ignorant regarding Biblical History. Dan is merely giving a willing audience the evidence that they already want. Consider:

- *It's all about power. (Page 233) ... The Bible was compiled ... to solidify their own power base. (Page 234) Constantine was a good businessman (Page 232)*

In today's world, people are totally focused on power. The perspective is that if you have power, you must have gotten it through improper means and you will use it to strengthen and hold your position as long as possible. Unfortunately there are many examples in today's world where this is evidenced including corporate collapses like ENRON, and ministry problems like the PTL ministries with the Bakers. These failures are viewed as typical and become the screening view for today's world view.

- *Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false. (Page 235)*

Here, we see a perfect example of the world view showing through. Since our Fathers had power over us, they are suspect, and thus the teachings on Christ are suspect.

- *Langdon smiled, "Sophie, every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith- acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove. Every religion describes God through metaphor, allegory, and exaggeration, from the early Egyptians through modern Sunday School. Metaphors are to help our minds process the unprocessable. The problems arise when we begin to believe in our own metaphors."(Page 341,342)*

It is no mystery that a contextual study of the word "faith" (pistis) in the New Testament and contemporary literature does not bear this definition out. The word is used as a noun to refer to the Christian "faith" as a set of convictions, but in far more cases the meaning intended is in the sense of faithfulness or loyalty as owed to a superior by someone that is indebted for service.

Our faith is not a belief in something that cannot be proved. Rather it is a response to God who

has proved Himself through the gift of His Son. God has shown Himself reliable to His word revealed in the Bible. Our faith is not to a product of our imagination but a response to God's reliability. We are responding to the facts, Christ's life, miracles, death on the cross, bodily resurrection and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In other words, our faith is in evidence that demands a verdict.

### ***Conclusion***

Dan Brown has written an exciting book that takes the reader on a ride through France and England chasing the Holy Grail. During this ride, he has claimed the Bible is not reliable; that Jesus was declared deity only because of Constantine, and that in a power play our Christian faith was manipulated by Constantine and the Church leaders.

As leaders in today's church, it is important that we actively help to strengthen our congregations Biblical knowledge through discussion and education. To actively defend our faith and Biblical views we must make sure that when books like "The DaVinci Code" are presented to the public, we actively present the problems and dangers associated with the work.

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