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**If thou wert in doubt as to what We have
revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been
reading the Book from before thee.... (Surah, 10,
Yunus, verse 94)**

CRASH GOES THE DA VINCI CODE

Dr. Ron Rhodes

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Since Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, exploded on the scene, I have been asked numerous times by interested Christians to provide evidence against the claims in the book. I have generally responded to such requests via individual letters or emails. I had not originally intended to write a formal apologetic against the book. However, the requests continue to come in. I have therefore written this brief special report to provide an apologetic response to the more glaring errors in Brown's book.

This special report is arranged in a question–answer format. There are plenty of quotes from Dan Brown's book, so you will be clear where he stands on each issue. It will be demonstrated that when all the facts are considered, Brown's *Da Vinci Code* poses no threat to historic Christianity.

Is Dan Brown's Da Vinci Theory Based On Fact Or Fiction?

Dan Brown's Position (Based on an NBC Today Show Interview):

- Matt Lauer: How much is this based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred?
- Dan Brown: Absolutely all of it. Obviously, Robert Langdon is fictional, but all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies—all of that is historical fact.¹

18 The Nag Hammadi Library, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), p. 118.

19 John Dart, *Jesus of Heresy and History: The Discovery and Meaning of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 15.

20 Dart, p. 16.

21 Gary R. Habermas, *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Nashville,: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 64.

22 Cited in *The Biblical World*, p. 405.

23 Ibid.

24 *Teachings Of Silvanus*, 85.24–106.14, in Nag Hammadi Library, pp. 347–56; cited by Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 127.

25 The Gospel Of Thomas, Saying 13, Cited in The Nag Hammadi Library, p. 119.

26 F. F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: World missions. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 118.

27 Bruce, p. 118.

28 *The Biblical World*, p. 405.

29 Bruce, p. 155.

30 *The Biblical World*, p. 407.

31 David F. Wells, *The Person Of Christ* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), pp. 64–65.

32 David Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary Of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), pp. 93–100.

33 *The Gospel Of Thomas*, in The Nag Hammadi Library, p. 130.

34 Yamauchi, p. 186.

35 Bruce, p. 154

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It is thus truly amazing that Dan Brown tries to position Christianity as a persecutor of women and the Gnostics as women—supporters. The truth is just the opposite!

What Have We Seen?

In this brief apologetic critique, we have seen that even though Dan Brown claims his book is based on fact, his "facts" turn out to be sheer fiction. His theory is based on bogus documents; he misrepresents and misinterprets history and theology; he is woefully guilty of revisionism; he uses poor logic; he often makes misstatements; he engages in wild exaggerations and speculations; and hence—understandably—he draws flawed conclusions. Crash goes *The Da Vinci Code!*

Notes

- 1 Dan Brown, interview by Matt Lauer, The Today Show, NBC, 9 June 2003.
- 2 Documented in James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2004), p. 112.
- 3 Ron Nash, *Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?* Christian Research Journal, August 1994.
- 4 Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction To The Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1978), p. 28.
- 5 Gleason Archer, *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 19; emphasis added.
- 6 L. Bevan Jones, *Christianity Explained To Muslims: A Manual For Christian Workers* (Calcutta: YMCA, 1938), in *The World of Islam CD-ROM*.
- 7 Greg L. Bahnsen, *The Inerrancy of the Autographa*, in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 161.
- 8 Gary R. Habermas, *ANCIENT Evidence For The Life Of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 65.
- 9 Habermas, p. 66.
- 10 Geisler and Nix, p. 186.
- 11 Geisler and Nix, p. 190.
- 12 Geisler and Nix, p. 190.
- 13 Geisler and Nix, p. 190.
- 14 Norman Geisler, class notes for Bibliology, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979.
- 15 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, i.20.1.
- 16 *The Biblical World*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 404–405.
- 17 *First Homily On Luke*; cited by Yamauchi, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), s.v. "Nag Hammadi," Vol. 3, p. 182.

The Truth Of The Matter:

Brown can be challenged in at least two areas: (1) There are things he claims to be historical which, in fact, are not historical at all; and (2) he completely misrepresents biblical history. Let us briefly consider these two points:

(1) There are things Brown claims to be historical which, in fact, are not historical at all. A primary case in point is the Priory of Sion, an organization that is at the very heart of Brown's story, and which, if proven to be based on bogus history, undermines the entire infrastructure of Brown's theory. This organization is said to guard the secret of Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene. It is claimed to have been founded in Jerusalem in 1099 by a French King. The organization is believed to be watching over Jesus and Mary's descendants, and waiting for the perfect time to reveal its secret to the world. Because of constant threat of danger from the Roman Catholic Church, the organization has allegedly hidden its message in literature, paintings, and even architecture such that only learned people can decipher the meanings.

Brown makes the following assertion regarding this organization on page one of *The Da Vinci Code*: "The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975 Paris's Bibliotheque Nationale discovered parchments known as Les Dossiers Secrets, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci." The question is: Are these parchments reliable?

As a backdrop to answering this question, allow me to point out that Brown obtained much of his information on the Priory of Sion from a book entitled *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln. In this book we find a dependency on the above—mentioned parchments which allegedly prove that Jesus married Mary Magdalene, had a baby named Sarah, and, following Jesus' death on the cross, Mary relocated to a Jewish community in France. Their descendents were French allegedly royalty.

Now, here is the big problem with all this. These parchments are completely bogus. Historically, in 1953, a Frenchman named Pierre Plantard spent time in jail for fraud. In 1954 he founded a small social club named the Priory of Sion.

The purpose of the club was to call for low-income housing in France. The organization dissolved in 1957, but Plantard held on to the name. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Plantard put together a number of bogus documents which "proved" the Jesus-Mary Magdalene theory, with French royalty being their descendants. Plantard claimed that he himself was one of the descendants of this couple.

Some time later, a friend of the French president found himself in legal trouble and Plantard ended up being called to testify in the case. While under oath, the judge asked him about these documents about Jesus and Mary Magdalene, and he admitted he made the whole thing up. An associate of Plantard's also conceded that Plantard made the whole thing up. All this has been thoroughly documented by several French books and a BBC special.²

What all this means for *The Da Vinci Code* is that the Priory of Sion—and the accompanying Jesus-Mary Magdalene theory—is based on bogus information with a capital "B." Hence, Dan Brown's claim that his book is based on historical secret societies is flat wrong.

(2) Dan Brown also completely misrepresents biblical history. He tries to argue that "history is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books—books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe" (page 256).

In this line of thought, the true version of Christianity was Gnostic Christianity, but orthodox Christianity became more powerful and won out over the Gnostics. Because the orthodox Christians won over the Gnostics, they wrote history in a way favorable to their version of Christianity.

Such a claim is preposterous. To begin, anyone who knows anything about Christian history knows that the early Christians were anything but "winners." The early Christians were fiercely persecuted by the Roman authorities (as well as by Jewish authorities). Christianity itself was outlawed by the Romans in the second century, and in the third and early fourth centuries, there was widespread persecution and murder of Christians. Some Christians were thrown into the arena to be eaten by lions, to the entertainment of Roman citi-

in feminine terms. For example, Jesus likened God to a loving and saddened mother hen crying over the waywardness of her children (Matthew 23:37-39). God is also said to have "given birth" to Israel (Deuteronomy 32:18).

Now, it is important to understand that God is not a gender being as humans are. He is not of the male sex, per se. The primary emphasis in God being called "Father" is that He is personal. Unlike the dead and impersonal idols of paganism, the true God is a personal being with whom we can relate. In fact, we can even call Him "Abba" (which loosely means "daddy"). That is how intimate a relationship we can have with Him.

I must point out that if any documents denigrate women and portray them as secondary and defective beings, it is the Gnostic documents. In Saying 114 of The Gospel of Thomas,

Simon Peter is portrayed as saying to Jesus, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus responded: "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."³³

Among the Gnostics, women were viewed as woefully inferior beings. In fact, women could be "saved," the Gnostics taught, only by a return to maleness. Bible scholar Edwin Yamauchi tells us that Jesus' response to Peter in Saying 114 "refers to the ultimate reunification of the sexes, as the Gnostics maintained that the separation of the sexes was responsible for the origin of evil."³⁴ F. F. Bruce provides further insight on the Gnostic view:

Jesus' promise that [Mary] will become a man, so as to gain admittance to the kingdom of heaven, envisages the reintegration of the original order, when Adam was created male and female (Genesis 1:27). Adam was "the man" as much before the removal of Eve from his side as after (Genesis 2:18-25). Therefore, when the primal unity is restored and death is abolished, man will still be man (albeit more perfectly so), but woman will no longer be woman; she will be reabsorbed into man.³⁵

ing. The revelatory process was finished after this "faith" had "once for all" been delivered.

The word "delivered" here is an aorist passive participle, indicating an act that was completed in the past with no continuing element. There would be no new "faith" or body of truth communicated through people in sexual ecstasy.

Did the Church Propagate Lies That Devalued Females and Tipped the Scales In Favor of the Masculine?

Dan Brown's Position:

"Powerful men in the early Christian church 'conned' the world by propagating lies that devalued the female and tipped the scales in favor of the masculine." (Page 124)

The Truth of the Matter:

This is nonsense. God equally values both men and women. In a Jewish culture where women were discouraged from studying the law, Jesus taught women right alongside men as equals (Matt. 14:21; 15:38). And when He taught, He often used women's activities to illustrate the character of the kingdom of God, such as baking bread (Luke 13:20, 21), grinding corn (Luke 17:35), and sweeping the house to find a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). Some Jewish rabbis taught that a man should not speak to a woman in a public place, but Jesus not only spoke to a woman (who, incidentally, was a Samaritan) but also drank from her cup in a public place (John 4:1-30). The first person He appeared to after resurrecting from the dead was Mary and not the male disciples (John 20). Clearly, Jesus' high view of women is utterly at odds with that of the Gnostic Gospels.

Further, God created both men and women in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Christian men and women are positionally equal before God (Galatians 3:28).

It is interesting to observe that while God is referred to in the Bible as "Father" (and never "Mother"), some of His actions are occasionally described

zens who were watching. Other Christians were tied up on poles, drenched with fuel, and lit as streetlamps at night.

At the end of his life, Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome during Emperor Nero's persecution in A.D. 64. Previous to this, Peter had written two epistles to help other Christians being persecuted. Peter probably wrote from Rome at the outbreak of Nero's persecution. Having already endured beating at Herod's hands, Peter wrote his brethren in Asia probably to encourage and strengthen them in facing the Neronian persecution. It may well be that Peter recalled his Lord's injunctions: "Strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32), and "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Paul, too, suffered persecution and was beheaded during the Neronian persecution in A.D. 64. The fact that New Testament writers gave their lives in defense of their writings says something. No one chooses to die for something that was made up out of thin air!

One of the purposes of the book of Revelation was to comfort Christians suffering persecution. The author is the apostle John, who himself had been imprisoned on the isle of Patmos (in the Aegean Sea) for the crime of sharing Jesus Christ with everyone he came into contact with (Revelation 1:9). The recipients of the book of Revelation were undergoing such severe persecution that some of them were being killed (see Revelation 2:13). Things were about to get even worse. John wrote this book to give his readers a strong hope that would help them patiently endure in the midst of suffering.

Despite all this heavy persecution, the church survived and spread around the world. Christianity grew not because the Christians were "winners" and wrote a "winner's history," but rather Christianity grew despite being big losers under Roman persecution.

Aside from all this, I must emphasize that Christianity is a religion in and of history. We find powerful substantiation for the true history of Christianity in archeology. The Bible's accuracy and reliability have been proved and verified over and over again by archeological finds produced by both Christian and non-Christian scholars and scientists. This includes verification for numerous customs, places, names, and events mentioned in the Bible. To date, over 25,000 sites in biblical lands have been discovered, dating back to Old Testament

times, which have established the accuracy of innumerable details in the Bible.

In view of such discoveries, we can conclude that archeology is a true friend of the Bible. In no case has an archeological discovery controverted a biblical fact, but rather always serves to support the veracity of the Bible.

It is highly revealing that William Ramsey, a well-known historian and archeologist, set out to prove that Luke was not a reliable historian. He set out to show that both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (which Luke also wrote) were both unreliable in terms of chronology, places, names, and events. After a lifetime of study, he came to the conclusion that he had been utterly mistaken. He found Luke to be a first-rate historian whose work was flawless. (See his book, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, page 81.)

This is not surprising, since Luke—a medical doctor committed to accuracy—speaks of his methodology right at the start of his gospel: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

There is so much more that could be said. The above is sufficient, however, to demonstrate that while Dan Brown's theory is based on bogus evidence, Christianity and the Bible are backed by true historical evidence.

Is All Religion Based On Fabrication?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "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." (Page 341)
- "Those who truly understand their faiths understand the stories are metaphorical.... Religious allegory has become a part of the fabric of reality. And

Sex was a part of God's "good" creation. Indeed, God created sex and "everything created by God is good" (1 Timothy 4:4). But it is good only within the confines of the marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 7:2), which He Himself ordained (see Hebrews 13:4). The Song of Solomon indicates that God desires married people to have truly fulfilling sex.

Christians, however, are to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:20). Paul said that the body is not for fornication and that a man should flee it (1 Corinthians 6:13,18). Certainly the sex ritual depicted in *The Da Vinci Code* (a copulating couple surrounded by chanting people) constitutes a form of fornication and is thus condemned by God.

Scripture is quite clear: "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (Eph. 5:5-6).

(2) Sex was never intended as a means of achieving "gnosis." Man is not to seek revelation or knowledge in altered states of consciousness related to the sex act, but rather from God's Word. Scripture alone is the supreme and infallible authority for the church and the individual believer. Jesus always used Scripture as the final court of appeal in every matter under dispute. We must do the same.

Instead of a view that says individuals can receive individual insights from God during sexual ecstasy, Scripture indicates that a definitive body of truth was objectively communicated to man. This is why Jude 3 admonishes us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In the Greek text, the definite article "the" preceding "faith" points to the one and only faith; there is no other. "The faith" refers to the apostolic teaching and preaching which was regulative upon the church (see Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1).

This body of truth is referred to in Jude 3 as that which was "once for all delivered to the saints." The word translated "once for all" (Greek: *apax*) refers to something that has been done for all time, something that never needs repeat-

church; (2) the only one who was given a place of uniqueness or prominence was Christ, the capstone. Indeed, Peter himself referred to Christ as "the cornerstone" of the church (1 Peter 2:7) and the rest of believers as "living stones" (verse 4) in the superstructure of the church. There can only be one head of the church, and that is Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:23 tells us that "Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour" (see also Col. 1:18).

Was Sex a Means of Knowing and Experiencing God in Biblical Times? Did the Church Demonize Sex in Order to Stay in Power?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "For the early church, mankind's use of sex to commune directly with God posed a serious threat to the Catholic power base. It left the Church out of the loop, undermining their self-proclaimed status as the sole conduit to God. For obvious reasons, they worked hard to demonize sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act. Other major religions did the same." (Page 309)
- The sex act enables one to "achieve gnosis—knowledge of the divine." (Page 308)
- Sex is "a mystical, spiritual act... [in which one can] find that spark of divinity that man can only achieve through union with the sacred feminine." (Page 310)
- The male "could achieve a climactic instant when his mind went totally blank and he ful act." (Page 125)
- "Holy men... now feared natural sexual urges as the work of the devil." (Page 125)

The Truth of the Matter:

There are two primary responses to this claim: (1) The church has not recast sex as a shameful act; and (2) Sex was never intended as a means of achieving "gnosis."

(1) The church has not recast sex as a shameful act. Sex within marriage is good (see Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31).

living in that reality helps millions of people cope and be better people." (Page 342)

The Truth of the Matter:

While it may be true that some world religions and cults are based on man-made fabrications, Christianity is based on historical God-sent revelation—both general revelation and special revelation. "General revelation" refers to revelation that is available to all persons of all times. An example of this would be God's revelation of Himself in the world of nature (Psalm 19). By observing the world of nature around us, we can detect something of God's existence, and discern something of His divine power and glory. We might say that the whole world is God's "kindergarten" to teach us the ABC's of the reality of God. Human beings cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see God. Indeed, God has engraved unmistakable marks of His glory on His creation.

There are, of course, limitations to how much we can learn from general revelation, for it tells us nothing about God's cure for man's sin problem. It tells us nothing of the "gospel message." These kinds of things require special revelation. But general revelation does give us enough information about God's existence that if we reject it, and refuse to turn to God, God is justified in bringing condemnation against us (Romans 1:20).

"Special revelation" refers to God's very specific and clear revelation in such things as His mighty acts in history, the person of Jesus Christ, and His message spoken through Old Testament prophets (like Isaiah and Daniel) and New Testament apostles (like Paul and Peter).

God's Revelation in History

God is the living God, and He has communicated knowledge of Himself through the ebb and flow of historical experience. The Bible is first and foremost a record of the history of God's interactions among Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, the apostle Paul, Peter, John, and all the other people of God in biblical times.

The greatest revelatory act of God in Old Testament history was the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. God, through Moses, inflicted ten plagues on the Egyptians that thoroughly demonstrated His awesome power (Exodus 7-12). God's demonstration of power was all the more impressive since the Egyptians believed their many false gods had the power to protect them from such plagues.

Note that the historical miracles and events wrought by God were always accompanied by spoken words. The miracle or event was never left to speak for itself. Nor were human beings left to infer whatever conclusions they wanted to draw from the event (fabrications). God made sure that when a significant event occurred there was a prophet at hand to interpret it. For example, Moses was there to record everything related to the Exodus. The apostles were there to record everything related to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God has revealed Himself in history, and He always made sure that His historical actions were adequately recorded!

God's Ultimate Revelation in Jesus Christ

The only way for God to be able to fully do and say all that He wanted was to actually leave His eternal residence and enter the arena of humanity. This He did in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God's ultimate "special" revelation.

Scripture indicates that God is a Spirit (John 4:24). And because He is a Spirit, He is invisible (Colossians 1:15). With our normal senses, we cannot perceive Him, other than what we can detect in general revelation. Further, man is spiritually blind and deaf (1 Corinthians 2:14). Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, man has lacked true spiritual perception. So humankind was in need of special revelation from God in the worst sort of way.

Jesus—as eternal God—took on human flesh so He could be God's fullest revelation to man (Hebrews 1:2,3). Jesus was a revelation of God not just in His person (as God) but in His life and teachings as well. By observing the things Jesus did and the things Jesus said, we learn a great deal about God. For example, God's awesome power was revealed in Jesus (John 3:2). God's incredible wisdom was revealed in Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:24). God's boundless love was revealed and demonstrated by Jesus (1 John 3:16). And God's unfa-

Yet another evidence Dan Brown sets forth for Jesus' alleged marriage is Leonardo Da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper. To Jesus' right, we are told, is Mary Magdalene, not John. While it is true that John looks effeminate in The Last Supper, this is quite in keeping with other paintings by this homosexual artist. Indeed, even John the Baptist was portrayed in a feminine way by Da Vinci. Note that neither John nor John the Baptist have womanly bodies in these paintings.

Did Jesus Intend Mary Magdalene to Be the Head of the Church?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "The rock on which Jesus built His Church ... was not Peter ... It was Mary Magdalene." (Page 248)
- Jesus "intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene." (Page 248)

The Truth of the Matter:

This is wishful thinking. Dan Brown's statement alludes to Matthew 16:18. In this passage Jesus was not even saying that Peter was the rock upon whom the church would be built. Rather, He was saying that Peter's previous confession that Jesus was the Christ would be the rock upon which the church would be built. There are a number of factors in the Greek text that argue against the interpretation that Peter was the rock. First, whenever Peter is referred to in this passage (Matthew 16), it is in the second person ("you"), but "this rock" is in the third person (verse 18). Moreover, "Peter" (petros) is a masculine singular term and rock" (petra) is a feminine singular term. Hence, they do not have the same referent. What is more, the same authority Jesus gave to Peter (Matthew 16:18) is later given to all the apostles (Matthew 18:18). So Peter is not unique.

Ephesians 2:20 affirms that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone." Two things are clear from this: (1) all the apostles, not just Peter, are the foundation of the

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

- Clearly, the evidence is against Jesus having gotten married in New Testament times.

Now, Brown's novel claims that a key evidence for Jesus getting married is found in the Gnostic Gospel of Philip. This document, Brown claims, indicates that Mary Magdalene was the companion of Jesus, and Brown says that in the Aramaic, "companion" means "spouse." Hence, Jesus must have been married. Further, Brown notes that this document indicates that Jesus often kissed Mary Magdalene on the mouth.

There are several points to make in response to this. First, the Gospel of Philip nowhere states could see God." (Page 309)

"The natural sexual union between man and woman through which each became spiritually whole ... had been recast as a sham that Jesus was married. Further, the document dates to about A.D. 275, several hundred years after the canonical gospels. Therefore, it can hardly be considered a reliable source for information about Jesus. Moreover, this gospel was written not in Aramaic, as Brown claims, but in Greek. Still further, the manuscript for the Gospel of Philip is not whole. In fact, the document says that "Jesus kissed her often on the ..." and then the manuscript is broken at that point. Brown and others have assumed the missing word must be "mouth," but it could just as easily be "head" or "cheek" or even "hand." There is nothing in the context that demands that Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth. Finally, the Gospel of Philip portrays the disciples of Jesus criticizing Mary because Jesus is said to love her more than all the disciples. However, one must assume that if Jesus was really married, no disciple would criticize Mary. The Gospel of Philip thus provides no hard proof that Jesus was married. Nor do any other "gospels" discovered from the second century and after add support to the claim.

thomable grace was revealed in Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:12).

These verses serve as the backdrop as to why Jesus told a group of Pharisees, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me" (John 12:44). Jesus likewise told Philip that "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus was the ultimate historical revelation of God!

God's Revelation in the Bible

Another key means of "special" revelation is the Bible. In this one book, God has provided everything He wants us to know about Him and how we can have a relationship with Him.

God is the one who caused the Bible to be written (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). And through it He speaks to us today just as He spoke to people in ancient times when those words were first given. The Bible is to be received as God's words to us and revered and obeyed as such. As we submit to the Bible's authority, we place ourselves under the authority of the living God.

(Dan Brown tries to argue against the reliability of the Bible. I shall address this claim later in this paper.)

Is Christianity Rooted In Paganism?

Dan Brown's Position:

"Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras—called the Son of God and the Light of the World—was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus." (Page 232)

The Truth of the Matter:

A common apologetic against Christianity is the idea that it borrowed from Greek pagan religions. The virgin birth is often cited as an example. The reality, if you look at Greek mythology and paganism, is that their male gods would come down and have sex with human women and give birth to hybrid

beings. This is not what happened in terms of the virgin birth. Jesus is eternal deity. When the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, it was specifically to produce a human nature within her womb for the eternal Son of God to step into, after which he was born as the God-Man (100-percent God and 100-percent man) nine months later. This is entirely different from Greek paganism. One should also note that the virgin birth of Jesus was prophesied (e.g., Isaiah 7:14) hundreds of years before these pagan religions were setting forth their versions of a virgin birth.

It is sometimes argued that Christianity borrowed its "miracles"—such as turning water into wine, walking on water, and the resurrection itself—from Greek pagan mythology. Dr. Ronald Nash has responded convincingly to such absurd claims. Below is a summary of key points based on an article Nash wrote.³ He has also written the book, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, which you may wish to purchase and read for more thorough documentation. Nash argues:

* Many alleged similarities between Christianity and the Greek pagan religions are either greatly exaggerated or fabricated. Liberal scholars (such as those in the Jesus Seminar) often describe pagan rituals in language that they borrowed from Christianity, thereby making them appear to be "parallel" doctrines.

* The chronology for such claims is all wrong. Nash writes: "Almost all of our sources of information about the pagan religions alleged to have influenced early Christianity are dated very late. We frequently find writers quoting from documents written 300 years [later]... We must reject the assumption that just because a cult had a certain belief or practice in the third or fourth century after Christ, it therefore had the same belief or practice in the first century."

* New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger is quoted by Nash: "It must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries [i.e., pagan religions] always influenced Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases, the influence moved in the opposite direction." Nash notes that it should not be surprising that leaders of cults that were being successfully challenged by Christianity should do something to counter the challenge. What better way to do this than by offering a pagan substitute? Pagan attempts to counter the

to kiss her 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?'" (Page 246)

The Truth of the Matter:

There is no mention of Jesus being married prior to the beginning of His three-year ministry. There is no mention of Jesus being married during His three-year ministry. There is no mention of Jesus being married at the crucifixion. There is no mention of Jesus being married at His burial. There is no mention of Jesus being married at His resurrection. In other words, there is no mention of a wife anywhere!

Aside from this deafening silence regarding a wife are theological arguments against Jesus having been married. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:5 the apostle Paul defends his right to get married if he so chose to do so: "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?" Now, if Jesus had been married, surely the apostle Paul would have cited Jesus' marriage as the number one precedent. The fact that he did not mention a wife of Jesus indicates that Jesus was not married.

Some try to argue that since it was expected of every Jewish man to get married, then surely Jesus must have followed custom and gotten married. Such an argument is unconvincing. First, note that a number of major prophets were never married—including the likes of Jeremiah and John the Baptist. Second, note that there were whole communities of Jews which included unmarried men—such as the Essene community at Qumran. Third, note that Jewish leaders often granted exceptions to the general rule of marriage. It was certainly not an unbending requirement, and hence this general requirement does not constitute proof that Jesus must have been married.

Further, we must note that Jesus' marriage is yet future. He will one day marry the "bride of Christ," which is the church. Revelation 19:7-9 tells us:

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

Jesus was God manifested "in human form." Clement, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Novatian, and Cyprian all believed Jesus was God.³²

I could go on and on providing evidences for the fact that Jesus was recognized as absolute deity in the first century and later, but I think the above is sufficient to make the point. Allow me now to briefly shift attention to the Council of Nicea.

The Council of Nicea convened in A.D. 325 to settle a dispute regarding the nature of Christ. Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria who was the founder of Arianism, argued that the Son was created from the non-existent, and was of a different substance than the Father. There was a time, Arius argued, when the Son was not. But Christ was the highest of all created beings. Arius heavily promoted his views, sending letters to numerous churches. The effect was that Constantine's empire was suffering religious disharmony and division. To deal with this, Constantine called the Council of Nicea so the bishops could settle the controversy.

Athanasius of Alexandria, the champion of orthodoxy, set forth the correct orthodox (and long-held) view that the Son was the same divine substance as the Father (and hence, was fully divine). Athanasius argued for the eternally personal existence of the Son. The bishops sided with Athanasius because they had long recognized that this was, in fact, the biblical teaching. Seen in this light, Dan Brown is flat wrong in his assertion that Jesus was not recognized as God until the Council of Nicea voted him as God by a "close vote." (By the way, the vote in the council was 300 to 2, hardly a close vote.)

Was Jesus Married To Mary Magdalene?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "The marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record." (Page 245)
- The Last Supper practically shouts at the viewer that Jesus and Magdalene were a pair." (Page 244)
- Based on the Gospel of Philip, Brown asserts that "the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used

growing influence of Christianity by imitating it are clearly apparent in measures instituted by Julian the Apostate.

* As for claims of resurrection among pagan gods, Nash comments: "Which mystery gods actually experienced a resurrection from the dead? Certainly no early texts refer to any resurrection of Attis. Nor is the case for a resurrection of Osiris any stronger. One can speak of a 'resurrection' in the stories of Osiris, Attis, and Adonis only in the most extended of senses. For example, after Isis gathered together the pieces of Osiris's dismembered body, Osiris became 'Lord of the Underworld.' This is a poor substitute for a resurrection like that of Jesus Christ. And, no claim can be made that Mithras was a dying and rising god. The tide of scholarly opinion has turned dramatically against attempts to make early Christianity dependent on the so-called dying and rising gods of Hellenistic paganism. Any unbiased examination of the evidence shows that such claims must be rejected."

* The mysticism of the mystery religions was essentially nonhistorical. The religion of Christianity is grounded in history (see my earlier discussion).

Is The Bible An Unreliable Document?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "The Bible is a product of man...not of God." (Page 231)
- "The New Testament is false testimony." (Page 345)
- "The New Testament is based on fabrications." (Page 341)
- "The Bible... has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book." (Page 231)

The Truth of the Matter:

The Bible is not the product of man but is rather God-inspired. Inspiration does not mean the biblical writer just felt enthusiastic, like the composer of the "Star Spangled Banner." Nor does it mean the writings are necessarily inspiring to read, like an uplifting poem. The biblical Greek word for inspiration literally means "God-breathed." Because Scripture is breathed out by God—

because it originates from Him—it is true and inerrant.

Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities—and even their writing styles—they composed and recorded without error His revelation to humankind in the words of the original autographs. In other words, the original documents of the Bible were written by men, who, though permitted to exercise their own personalities and literary talents, wrote under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the result being a perfect and errorless recording of the exact message God desired to give to man. Hence, the writers of Scripture were not mere writing machines. God did not use them like keys on a typewriter to mechanically reproduce His message. Nor did He dictate the words, page by page. The biblical evidence makes it clear that each writer had a style of his own. (Isaiah had a powerful literary style; Jeremiah had a mournful tone; Luke's style had medical overtones; and John was very simple in his approach.) The Holy Spirit infallibly worked through each of these writers, through their individual styles, to inerrantly communicate His message to humankind.

Second Peter 1:21 provides a key insight regarding the human–divine interchange in the process of inspiration. This verse informs us that "prophecy [or Scripture] never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The phrase carried along in this verse literally means "forcefully borne along." Even though human beings were used in the process of writing down God's Word, they were all literally "borne along" by the Holy Spirit. The human wills of the authors were not the originators of God's message. God did not permit the will of sinful human beings to misdirect or erroneously record His message. Rather, "God moved and the prophet mouthed these truths; God revealed and man recorded His word."⁴

Interestingly, the Greek word for "carried along" in 2 Peter 1:21 is the same as that found in Acts 27:15-17. In this passage the experienced sailors could not navigate the ship because the wind was so strong. The ship was being driven, directed, and carried along by the wind. This is similar to the Spirit's driving, directing, and carrying the human authors of the Bible as He wished. The word is a strong one, indicating the Spirit's complete superintendence of the human

Certainly Jesus was worshipped (Greek: *proskuneo*) as God many times according to the Gospel accounts, and He always accepted such worship as perfectly appropriate. (As God, such worship would be appropriate.) Jesus accepted worship from Thomas (John 20:28), the angels (Hebrews 1:6), some wise men (Matthew 2:11), a leper (Matthew 8:2), a ruler (Matthew 9:18), a blind man (John 9:38), an anonymous woman (Matthew 15:25), Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:9), and the disciples (Matthew 28:17). All these verses contain the word *proskuneo*, the same word used of worshipping the Father in the New Testament.

Now, to draw a contrast, consider that when Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra and miraculously healed a man by God's mighty power, those in the crowd shouted, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" (Acts 14:11). When Paul and Barnabas perceived that the people were preparing to worship them, "they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 'Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them'" (verses 14-15). As soon as they perceived what was happening, they immediately corrected the gross misconception that they were gods.

Unlike Paul and Barnabas, Jesus never sought to correct His followers when they bowed down and worshipped Him. Indeed, Jesus considered such worship as perfectly appropriate. Of course, we would not expect Jesus to try to correct people in worshipping Him if He truly was God in the flesh, as He claimed to be.

The fact that Jesus willingly received (and condoned) worship on various occasions says a lot about His true identity, for it is the consistent testimony of Scripture that only God can be worshipped. Exodus 34:14 tells us: "Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (cf. Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 4:10). In view of this, the fact that Jesus was worshipped on numerous occasions shows that He is in fact God. All this took place centuries before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

Certainly the early church leaders believed Jesus was divine. Ignatius believed

It is also significant that in the Old Testament, Yahweh is described as "an everlasting light," one that would make the sun, moon, and stars obsolete: "The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end" (Isa. 60:19-20). Jesus will do the same for the future eternal city in which the saints will dwell forever: "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Rev. 21:23).

David F. Wells, in his book *The Person of Christ*, points us to even further parallels between Christ and Yahweh:

If Yahweh is our sanctifier (Exod. 31:13), is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-10), is our peace (Judg. 6:24), is our righteousness (Jer. 23:6), is our victory (Exod. 17:8-16), and is our healer (Exod. 15:26), then so is Christ all of these things (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; Eph. 2:14). If the gospel is God's (1 Thess. 2:2, 6-9; Gal. 3:8), then that same gospel is also Christ's (1 Thess. 3:2; Gal. 1:7). If the church is God's (Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9), then that same church is also Christ's (Rom. 16:16). God's Kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12) is Christ's (Eph. 5:5); God's love (Eph. 1:3-5) is Christ's (Rom. 8:35); God's Word (Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:13) is Christ's (1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15); God's Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8) is Christ's (Phil. 1:19); God's peace (Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:9) is Christ's (Col. 3:15; cf. Col. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 4:7); God's "Day" of judgment (Isa. 13:6) is Christ's "Day" of judgment (Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:8); God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9; Col. 1:6; Gal. 1:15) is Christ's grace (1 Thess. 5:28; Gal. 1:6; 6:18); God's salvation (Col. 1:13) is Christ's salvation (1 Thess. 1:10); and God's will (Eph. 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:3; Gal. 1:4) is Christ's will (Eph. 5:17; cf. 1 Thess. 5:18). So it is no surprise to hear Paul say that he is both God's slave (Rom. 1:9) and Christ's (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10), that he lives for that glory which is both God's (Rom. 5:2; Gal. 1:24) and Christ's (2 Cor. 8:19, 23; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6), that his faith is in God (1 Thess. 1:8, 9; Rom. 4:1-5) and in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:22), and that to know God, which is salvation (Gal. 4:8; 1 Thess. 4:5), is to know Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).³¹

authors. Yet, just as the sailors were active on the ship (though the wind, not the sailors, ultimately controlled the ship's movement), so the human authors were active in writing as the Spirit directed.

I believe the New Testament writers were aware that their writings were inspired by God. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 the apostle Paul said he spoke "not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." In this passage Paul (who wrote over half the New Testament) affirmed that his words were authoritative because they were rooted not in fallible men but infallible God (the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who was promised to the apostles to teach and guide them into all the truth (see John 16:13). Later, in 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul said, "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command." In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul likewise said, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." Again, the reason why Paul's words were authoritative is that they were rooted in God, not in man. God used Paul as His instrument to communicate His word to man.

What about Dan Brown's claim that the New Testament is based on fabrications? The statement is patently false. The New Testament is not made up of fairytales but is rather based on eyewitness testimony. In 2 Peter 1:16 we read, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." First John 1:1 affirms, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." So convinced were these and other eyewitnesses that they ended up giving their lives in defense of what they knew to be true.

While Dan Brown claims the Bible has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions, he can only argue this way by ignoring well-established facts. First, while there have been numerous translations of the Bible into a variety of languages, each such translation utilizes the same basic set

of Hebrew and Greek manuscript copies of the original writings of the Bible. There are more than 5,000 partial and complete manuscript copies of the New Testament. These manuscript copies are very ancient and they are available for inspection now. Following are some highlights:

- * The Chester Beatty papyrus (P45) dates to the 3rd century A.D., and contains the four Gospels and the Book of Acts (chapters 4-17). (P = papyrus.)
- * The Chester Beatty papyrus (P46) dates to about A.D. 200, and contains ten Pauline epistles (all but the Pastorals) and the Book of Hebrews.
- * The Chester Beatty papyrus (P47) dates to the 3rd century A.D., and contains Revelation 9:10-17:2.
- * The Bodmer Papyrus (P66) dates to about A.D. 200, and contains the Gospel of John.
- * The Bodmer Papyrus (P75) dates to the early 3rd century, and contains Luke and John.
- * The Sinaiticus uncial manuscript dates to the 4th century, and contains the entire New Testament.
- * The Vaticanus uncial manuscript dates to the 4th century, and contains most of the New Testament except Hebrews 9:14ff the Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, and Revelation.
- * The Washingtonianus uncial manuscript dates to the early 5th century, and contains the Gospels.
- * The Alexandrinus uncial manuscript dates to the 5th century, and contains most of the New Testament.
- * The Ephraemi Rescriptus uncial manuscript dates to the 5th century, and contains portions of every book except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John.

quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 as being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews fully recognized the absolute deity of Jesus.

The same is true in regard to Jesus' role as Savior. In the Old Testament we read Yahweh's own words: "I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Savior" (Isaiah 43:11). So, there is no Savior but Yahweh. In the New Testament, however, Jesus is repeatedly seen to be the Savior of God's people. Indeed, in Titus 2:13 we read of "the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." There can be no doubt that Jesus is recognized here as absolute deity, centuries before Constantine and the Council of Nicea.

Still further, we see this to be true in terms of Jesus being the God of glory. In Isaiah 6:1-5, the prophet recounts his vision of Yahweh "seated on a throne high and exalted" (verse 1). He said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord [Yahweh] Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (verse 3). Isaiah also quotes Yahweh as saying: "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another" (42:8). Later, the apostle John—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—wrote that Isaiah "saw Jesus' glory" (John 12:41). Yahweh's glory and Jesus' glory are equated. Jesus is the God of glory.

Christ's deity is further confirmed for us in that many of the actions of Yahweh in the Old Testament are performed by Christ in the New Testament. For example, in Psalm 119 we are told about a dozen times that it is Yahweh alone who gives and preserves life. But in the New Testament, Jesus claims this power for Himself: "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (John 5:21). Later in John's Gospel, when speaking to Lazarus's sister Martha, Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11: 25).

In the Old Testament the voice of Yahweh was said to be "like the roar of rushing waters" (Ezek. 43:2). Likewise, we read of the glorified Jesus in heaven: "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev. 1:15). What is true of Yahweh is just as true of Jesus.

- Jesus was a "mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal." (Page 233)
- "Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries after Jesus' death." (Page 234)
- "Thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man." (Page 234)
- "Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea.... [and it was] "a relatively close vote at that." (Page 233)
- "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." (Page 233)

The Truth of the Matter:

Dan Brown's view is flatly false. The New Testament writers themselves fully recognized that Jesus was absolute deity. One point of evidence is the Apostle Paul's assertion in Colossians 1: 16: "For by him [Jesus Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, an Old Testament scholar par excellence. And Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote Colossians 1:16 against the Old Testament backdrop that only Yahweh is the Creator. Indeed, in Isaiah 44: 24 Yahweh Himself asserts: "I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself." There can be no doubt that Paul in Colossians 1:16 was affirming Jesus as absolute deity. The same is true of the apostle John, who wrote: "Through him [Jesus Christ] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3).

Along these same lines, in Psalm 102:25-27 we read of Yahweh: "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." Significantly, these words are

- * The Bezae/Cantabrigiensis uncial manuscript dates to the 5th century, and contains the Gospels and Acts.
- * The Claromontanus uncial manuscript dates to the 6th century and contains the Pauline epistles and Hebrews.
- * The Itala version (versions were prepared for missionary purposes) dates to the 3rd century.
- * The Vulgate version dates to the 4th century and later.
- * The Syriac version dates to the 2nd to 6th centuries.
- * The Coptic version dates to the 3rd and 4th centuries.
- * The Armenian version dates to the 5th century.
- * The Georgian version dates to the 5th century.

There are also some 86,000 quotations of the New Testament from the early church fathers and several thousand Lectionaries (church—service books containing Scripture quotations used in the early centuries of Christianity). In fact, there are enough quotations from the early church fathers that even if we did not have a single manuscript copy of the Bible, scholars could still reconstruct all but 11 verses of the entire New Testament from material written within 150 to 200 years from the time of Christ.

What about the variants that exist among the biblical manuscripts? It is true to say that in the thousands of manuscript copies we possess of the New Testament, scholars have discovered that there are some 200,000 "variants." This may seem like a staggering figure to the uninformed mind, but to people who study the issue, the numbers of variants are not so damning as it may initially appear. Indeed, a look at the hard evidence shows that the New Testament manuscripts are amazingly accurate and trustworthy.

To begin, I must emphasize that out of these 200,000 variants, over 99 percent

hold virtually no significance whatsoever. Many of these variants simply involve a missing letter in a word; some involve reversing the order of two words (such as "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ"); some may involve the absence of one or more insignificant words. When all the facts are put on the table, only about 40 of the variants have any real significance—and even then, no doctrine of the Christian faith or any moral commandment is affected by them. For more than 99 percent of the cases the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty.

By practicing the science of textual criticism—comparing all the available manuscripts with each other—we can come to an assurance regarding what the original document must have said. Perhaps an illustration might be helpful.

Let us suppose we have five manuscript copies of an original document that no longer exists. Each of the manuscript copies is different. Our goal is to compare the manuscript copies and ascertain what the original must have said. Here are the five copies:

Manuscript #1: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #2: Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #3: Jesus Christ the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #4: Jesus is Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #5: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

Could you, by comparing the manuscript copies, ascertain what the original document said with a high degree of certainty that you are correct? Of course you could.

This illustration may be extremely simplistic, but a great majority of the 200,000 variants are solved by the above methodology. By comparing the various manuscripts, most of which contain relatively minor differences like the above, it becomes fairly clear what the original must have said. Further, I must

rise to the later theological term Shekinah sometimes called the 'Shek(h)inah Glory.'" The term refers to the visible majesty or glory of the divine presence, especially when resting between the cherubim on the mercy seat, in the Tabernacle, or in the Temple of Solomon. Moses beheld God's Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38) just as the priest saw it in the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). In view of this, Dan Brown's assertion that the Shekinah refers to a "powerful female equal" is mind-boggling.

Does God's Name "Yhwh" Derive From the Term "Jehovah"?

Dan Brown's Position:

"The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH—the sacred name of God—in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, Havah." (Page 309)

The Truth of the Matter:

Dan Brown's view is flatly false. The term "YHWH" was not derived from "Jehovah"; rather, "Jehovah" was derived from "YHWH." Brown gets it backward! The Old Testament contains the name YHWH (the original Hebrew had only consonants). However, the ancient Jews had a superstitious dread of pronouncing the name YHWH. They felt that if they uttered this name, they might violate the Third Commandment, which deals with taking God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7). So, to avoid the possibility of breaking this commandment, the Jews for centuries substituted the name Adonai (Lord) or some other name in its place whenever they came across it in public readings of Scripture. Eventually, the fearful Hebrew scribes decided to form a new word (Jehovah) by inserting the vowels from Adonai (a-o-a) into the consonants, YHWH. The result was Yahowah, or Jehovah.

Is it True that Jesus Was Not Considered to be God Until the Fourth Century When Constantine "Upgraded" His Status for Political Purposes?

Dan Brown's Position:

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

of Moses, which Moses recited to the whole assembly of Israel following the "Exodus" from Egypt, we find God's own words worshipfully repeated: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deuteronomy 32:39). The God of the Bible is without rival.

After God had made some astonishing promises to David (see the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:12-16), David responded by offering praise to God: "Wherefore thou art great, O lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (2 Samuel 7:22). Later, in the form of a psalm, David again praised God with the words, "For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone" (Psalm 86:10).

God Himself positively affirmed through Isaiah the prophet, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6; see also 37:20; 43:10; 45:5, 14, 21-22). God later said, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (46:9). The Book of Isaiah shows us that God often demonstrated that He alone is God by foretelling the future—something that false pagan gods could never do (46:8-10).

The oneness of God is also often emphasized in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 8:4, for example, the apostle Paul asserted that "an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one." James 2:19 likewise says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." These and a multitude of other verses (for example, John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:29-30; 16:27; Galatians 3: 20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2:5; 1 John 5:20-21; Jude 25) make it absolutely clear that there is one and only one God.

(2) The "Shekinah" refers to the glory of God (Exodus 25: 22; Leviticus 16:2; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:14, 15; Psalm 80: 1; Isaiah 37:16; Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18; Hebrews 9:5), not to some "powerful female equal." "Shekinah" comes from a Hebrew word literally meaning "to inhabit." The Evangelical Bible Commentary notes: "The term 'glory' represents the Presence of God dwelling—shkn—in the tabernacle (Ps 26:8; cf. also Exod 25:8; 29:44-46), giving

emphasize that the sheer volume of manuscripts we possess greatly narrows the margin of doubt regarding what the original biblical document said.

I want to make mention of the Dead Sea Scrolls in this regard. (This is important, for Dan Brown seems to think the Dead Sea Scrolls support his position.) In these scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1947, we have Old Testament manuscripts that date about a thousand years earlier (150 B.C.) than the other Old Testament manuscripts previously in our possession (which dated to A.D. 980). The significant thing is that when one compares the two sets of manuscripts, it is clear that they are essentially the same, with very few changes. The fact that manuscripts separated by a thousand years are essentially the same indicates the incredible accuracy of the Old Testament's manuscript transmission.

The copy of the Book of Isaiah discovered at Qumran illustrates this accuracy. Dr. Gleason Archer, who personally examined both the A.D. 980 and 150 B.C. copies of Isaiah, comments:

Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.⁵

The Dead Sea Scrolls prove that the copyists of biblical manuscripts took great care in going about their work. These copyists knew they were duplicating God's Word. Hence they went to incredible lengths to insure that no error crept into their work. The scribes carefully counted every line, word, syllable, and letter to guarantee accuracy. Scholar L. Bevan Jones writes:

The Massoretes...numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we might rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text;

and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massorettes were indeed anxious that not one jot or tittle—not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter—of the Law should pass away or be lost.⁶

I want to also make a few comments regarding Brown's claim that the New Testament has gone through numerous revisions, as if changes have been made century by century:

* Within the first few centuries of Christianity, there were thousands of copies of the Bible dispersed over a large part of the world. To successfully revise or make a change in the Bible, all these copies would have to be meticulously gathered (assuming people around the world would be willing to surrender them, an impossible-to-believe scenario), and then the changes made.

* Another scenario is that thousands of Bible-owning people from around the world met together and colluded to make the changes. But since most of these people were true believers, is it likely they would tamper with a book upon which they were basing their eternal salvation? Would such collusion even be physically possible?

* Within the first few centuries of Christianity, the Bible was translated into a number of languages. Are we to believe these various translations were identically altered all over the world so they would have a uniform revision?

* Scholar William J. Saal raises the point that if Christians corrupted the New Testament, wouldn't unflattering episodes about Christians have been removed from the New Testament (like Peter denying Christ three times, and the disciples scattering like a bunch of faithless cowards when Christ was arrested)? One would think so.

In my view, the almighty God who had the power and sovereign control to inspire the Scriptures in the first place is surely going to continue to exercise His power and sovereign control in the preservation of Scripture. Further, God's preservational work is illustrated in the very text of the Bible. By examining how Christ viewed the Old Testament (keeping in mind that Jesus did

pels.

The Gospel of Thomas is another case example. F. F Bruce notes: "No collection of sayings of Jesus can properly be called a Gospel because by its nature it has no passion narrative, and the passion narrative is the core of the essential gospel. But least of all can this collection be called a Gospel because not only does it lack a passion narrative but it includes only one saying (55) remotely hinting at the passion."²⁹ Moreover, unlike the New Testament Gospels, the content of The Gospel of Thomas is "anti-Judaistic, anti-Old Testament, anti-ritualistic and almost antimoralistic."³⁰

By contrast, the four New Testament Gospels all contain orderly accounts of the birth, life, deeds, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They also point to the glorious "good news" of redemption in Jesus Christ, and are therefore "gospels" in the truest sense of the word.

Did The God of the Bible Have A Female Goddess Companion?

Dan Brown's Position:

"Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah." (Page 309)

The Truth of the Matter:

Such a position is absurd, and can be easily answered with two primary points: (1) The Bible steadfastly argues for monotheism (belief in one God); and (2) the "Shekinah" refers only to the glory of God, not to some "powerful female equal."

(1) The Bible steadfastly argues for monotheism (belief in one God). The fact that there is only one true God is the consistent testimony of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It is like a thread that runs through every page of the Bible. An early Hebrew confession of faith—the Shema—is an example of this consistent emphasis: "Hear, O Israel: The lord our God is one lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). In a culture saturated with false gods and idols, the Shema would have been particularly meaningful for the Israelites. In the Song

"Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15), Peter rightly responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). In The Gospel of Thomas, however, Jesus and the disciples are portrayed in a much different light:

Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell Me whom I am like." Simon Peter said to Him, "You are like a righteous angel." Matthew said to Him, "You are like a wise philosopher." Thomas said to Him, "Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom You are like." Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out." And He took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."²⁵

F. F. Bruce, a noted Bible scholar who has done significant research on the Nag Hammadi documents, detects Gnostic elements in this encounter: "Here the answers [to Jesus' question] are attempts to depict Jesus as the Gnostic Revealer. Those who have imbibed the gnosis which he imparts (the 'bubbling spring' which he has spread abroad) are not his servants but his friends, and therefore 'Master' is an unsuitable title for them to give him."²⁶

As for the three words Jesus secretly uttered to Thomas, Bruce says these words conveyed to Thomas Jesus' hidden identity and "are probably the three secret words on which, according to the Naassenes, the existence of the world depended: Kaulakau, Saulasau, Zeesar."²⁷ Jesus as a Gnostic Revealer is often portrayed as communicating secret things to one or more disciples in the Gnostic Gospels. How unlike this is to the New Testament Jesus who openly communicated His teachings to all who would listen.

5. The Gnostic Gospels cannot properly be called gospels. Neither The Gospel of Truth nor The Gospel of Philip, as case examples, contain an orderly account of the birth, life, deeds, death, and resurrection of Christ. Both lack Old Testament background, ethical exhortations, and end-time eschatology. Ignorance is said to be the primary culprit of man's condition, not sin.²⁸ Therefore, in no sense of the word can these documents be properly referred to as gos-

not have in His possession the original books penned by the Old Testament writers, but possessed only copies), we see that He had full confidence that the Scriptures He used had been faithfully preserved through the centuries.

Bible scholar Greg Bahnsen writes: "Because Christ raised no doubts about the adequacy of the Scripture as His contemporaries knew them, we can safely assume that the first-century text of the Old Testament was a wholly adequate representation of the divine word originally given. Jesus regarded the extant copies of His day as so approximate to the originals in their message that He appealed to those copies as authoritative."⁷ The respect Jesus and His apostles held for the extant Old Testament text is an expression of their confidence that God providentially preserved these copies and translations so that they were substantially identical with the inspired originals. We can deduce that the same is true regarding the New Testament and God's preservation of the entire Bible through history.

Another related factor to note is that in Revelation 22:18-19 we read, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." The Jews were also given similar commands in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." Deuteronomy 12:32 says, "See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it." Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar." In view of such verses, one must ask how feasible it is to suggest that Bible-believing Christians would choose to corrupt and change God's Word? Such individuals would not only be damning themselves before God, but also misleading all their descendants (their children and their children's children) who would read the very Scriptures they corrupted. How likely is that?

Were There Eighty Gospels Competing For Inclusion In The New Testament?

Dan Brown's Position:

"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." (Page 231)

The Truth of the Matter:

Such a view is absolute nonsense. Aside from the four canonical gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), history reveals there were only twelve other gospels in circulation during this general time, and these were clearly not "inspired Scripture." There were also Gnostic gospels that emerged later, but these are too late to be counted.

The four gospels in our present Bible were chosen for good reason. First, early in church history, four centers of Christianity emerged: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexander, and Rome. These centers of Christianity used the four gospels in our present Bible.

Christian leaders who lived between A.D. 95 and 170 consistently point to the reliability of the New Testament Gospels. Following is a sampling.

1. **Clement.** Clement was a leading elder in the church at Rome. In his epistle to the Corinthians (c. A.D. 95), he cites portions of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and introduces them as the actual words of Jesus.⁸
2. **Papias.** Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia and author of *Exposition of Oracles of the Lord* (c. A.D. 130), cites the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, presumably as canonical. He specifically refers to John's Gospel as containing the words of Jesus.⁹
3. **Justin Martyr.** Justin Martyr, foremost apologist of the second century (A.D. 140), considered all four Gospels to be Scripture.¹⁰

strued to teach any form of Gnosticism. Among other things, the Gnostics taught (1) the existence of both a transcendent God and a lower God (the Creator–Demiurge), whom Gnostics equated with Yahweh of the Old Testament; (2) spirit is good but matter is evil; (3) man's spirit is imprisoned in the material body but will escape this imprisonment at death; and (4) there is no physical resurrection of the body.

The New Testament Jesus taught none of these ideas. Contrary to Gnostic teachings, scholar Gary Habermas tells us that "Jesus does not refer to Yahweh as less than the supreme Creator and God of the universe. Neither does he speak of the physical body as a necessary evil which imprisons the soul. With regard to eternal life, Jesus taught the [physical] resurrection of the body, not the [mere] immortality of the soul."²¹

3. The Gnostic Gospels offer us a redemption through gnosis, whereas New Testament redemption is based wholly on faith in Christ. The truth of The Gospel of Truth (for the Gnostic) is the knowledge that he is "a being from above."²² This "gospel" assures us that "whosoever has knowledge understands from whence he has come and whither he goes."²³ The Teachings of Silvanus, another Gnostic document, portrays Jesus as teaching salvation by enlightenment: "Bring in your guide and your teacher. The mind is the guide, but reason is the teacher. They will bring you out of destruction and dangers Enlighten your mind.... Light the lamp within you."²⁴

Contrary to this, redemption in the New Testament is a free gift for those who believe in Jesus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16); "Whoever believes in him [God's Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18); "Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40b); "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life" (John 6:47); "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).

4. The Gnostic Gospels portray Jesus as a "Gnostic Revealer" and not as Christ the Savior and Redeemer. In the New Testament, when Jesus asked Peter,

ment Gospels (as I have argued above), the Gnostic Gospels are thereby proven to be false and doctrinally unreliable. Consider the following:

1. The Gnostic Gospels portray Jesus as commanding the disciples to keep his teaching secret, but the New Testament Jesus commissioned the disciples to share the good news with the whole world. The Gospel of Thomas begins with these words: "These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke...."¹⁸ The Apocryphon of John, another Gnostic document, contains a sober warning by Jesus of a curse that would fall on any who share his secret teaching with outsiders: "Cursed be everyone who will exchange these things for a gift, or for food, or for drink, or for clothing, or for any other such things."¹⁹ Jesus also allegedly commanded John to put written records of his secret teachings in "a safe place." Does this sound like the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount?

It was quite common among Gnostics to be protective of the gnosis, or secret teaching. Nag Hammadi analyst John Dart comments: "The 'curse' of Jesus in The Apocryphon of John, put into Jesus' mouth by Gnostic authors, followed a time-honored practice of mystic groups warning their members that such sacred scriptures should not fall into the wrong hands. For historians, much more interesting was the advice to put the writings in a safe place. In the case of the Gnostic papyri, the place, wherever it was, had been 'safe' for centuries [until 1947]."²⁰

Such a secretive attitude, however, is completely unlike the Jesus of the New Testament Gospels. In what is traditionally called "The Great Commission," Jesus commanded the disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...." (Matt. 28: 19). Before He ascended into heaven following His resurrection, Jesus said to the disciples: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Clearly, the New Testament Jesus wanted people everywhere to hear the good news of salvation.

2. The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament Gospels are utterly incompatible with Gnosticism. Some of Jesus' teachings in the Gospels may be open to a variety of interpretations, but this is a far cry from saying that they can be con-

4. **The Didache.** The Didache, an ancient manual of Christianity that dates between the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century, cites portions of the three synoptic Gospels and refers to them as the words of Jesus. This manual quotes extensively from Matthew's gospel.¹¹

5. **Polycarp.** Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, quotes portions of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and refers to them as the words of Jesus (c. A.D. 150).¹²

6. **Irenaeus.** Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp (c. A.D. 170), quoted from twenty-three of the twenty-seven New Testament books, omitting only Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John.¹³

7. **The Muratorian Fragment** dates to about A.D. 175, and lists the four canonical gospels. Indeed, it lists 23 of the 27 books in the New Testament.

8. **Papyrus 45**, dated around A.D. 200, has all four canonical gospels together.

Clearly, there are many early sources dating between A.D. 95 and 150 that refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as containing the actual words of Christ. History is therefore on the side of the New Testament Gospels.

Did Constantine Choose Which Books Belong in the Bible for Political Purposes?

Dan Brown's Position:

- "The modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda ... to solidify their own power base." (Page 234)
- "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." (Page 234)
- "The early Church needed to convince the world that the mortal prophet Jesus was a divine being. Therefore, any gospels that described earthly aspects of Jesus' life had to be omitted from the Bible." (Page 244)

The Truth of the Matter:

Such a view is nonsense! History is quite clear regarding the activities of Constantine, and one thing he had virtually nothing to do with was the canon of Scripture.

I find it highly revealing that a number of the New Testament books were recognized as belonging in the canon right there in New Testament times, far before Constantine was even born. For example, in 1 Timothy 5:18, the apostle Paul joined an Old Testament reference and a New Testament reference and called them both (collectively) "Scripture" (Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7). It would not have been unusual in the context of first-century Judaism for an Old Testament passage to be called "Scripture." But for a New Testament book to be called "Scripture" so soon after it was written says volumes about Paul's view of the authority of contemporary New Testament books.

More specifically, only three years had elapsed between the writing of Luke's Gospel and the writing of 1 Timothy (Luke was written around A.D. 60; 1 Timothy was written around A.D. 63). Yet, despite this, Paul (himself a Jew—a "Hebrew of Hebrews") does not hesitate to place Luke on the same level of authority as the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.

Further, the writings of the apostle Paul were recognized as Scripture by the apostle Peter (2 Peter 3:16). Paul, too, understood that his own writings were inspired by God and therefore authoritative (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Paul, of course, wrote over half the New Testament. This means that hundreds of years before the time of Constantine, many of the New Testament books were already considered canonical.

Later, when the heretic Marcion emerged on the scene (who came up with his own false canon), it became necessary for the church to formally put in concrete a list of canonical books. When the church made this formal pronouncement, it simply affirmed the books that had already been accepted as canonical by the church at large. It was like a final "stamp of approval."

The basic rules that guided recognition of the canon are as follows, listed in

elements in these "gospels" that can be objectively verified, as is true in the canonical gospels. There are certainly no genuine eyewitness accounts in these late gospels. Moreover, no one—not even liberal theologians—believes The Gospel of Thomas was written by the biblical Thomas, and that The Gospel of Philip was written by the biblical Philip.

The canonical gospels have been thoroughly tested in regard to history, and have been found to be exceedingly accurate. Earlier I noted that scholar William Ramsey set out to prove, through many years of research, that Luke was not a reliable historian, either in his Gospel or in the book of Acts (which he also authored). Following his exhaustive study, Ramsey concluded that Luke was a first-rate historian in terms of geography, people, place names, and the like. And, as noted earlier, Luke's Gospel is dated at A.D. 60. Recall that Luke's Gospel is mentioned as Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, and 1 Timothy is dated at A.D. 63. Hence, Luke's gospel was recognized as Scripture within three years of its writing—hundreds of years before most of the Gnostic gospels.

Related to this, I need to point out that the apostle Paul died during the Neroian persecution, which took place in A.D. 64. Paul was certainly still alive at the end of the book of Acts. This means Acts was written prior to A.D. 64. We further know that Luke wrote his Gospel ("Luke") before he wrote the book of Acts, which means that Luke was written around A.D. 60, which places him notably earlier than the Gnostic Gospels.

Scholars have often pointed out that all four canonical gospels must date prior to A.D. 70 for one simple fact: All four of them fail to mention anything at all about the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70 at the hands of Titus and his Roman warriors. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would be on a par with the Holocaust in modern times. For this horrific event not to be mentioned can mean only one thing: the four canonical gospels must have been written prior to this time.

As far as the Gnostic Gospels go, one does not have to read them for long to discover that they are irreconcilable with the New Testament Gospels. This is an important point, because if the historical evidence supports the New Testa-

tions ... [in] the modern Bible." (Page 234)

- The Nag Hammadi scrolls are "the earliest Christian records." (Page 245)
- "Fortunately for historians... some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert." (Page 234)

The Truth of the Matter:

Christians have been concerned about false gospels since the early years of Christianity. In his classic *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies), Irenaeus (A.D. 130–200) refers to "an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they themselves [heretics] had forged, to bewilder the minds of the foolish."¹⁵ One of the Gnostic gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945 is The Gospel of Truth, about which Irenaeus says: "It agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the Apostles, so that they have really no Gospel which is not full of blasphemy. For if what they have published is the Gospel of Truth, and yet is totally unlike those which have been handed down to us by the Apostles... [then] that which has been handed down from the Apostles can no longer be reckoned the Gospel of Truth."¹⁶ Origen (A.D. 185–253) noted that "the Church possesses four Gospels, heresy a great many."¹⁷

Presently there are three theories about the formation of the Nag Hammadi collection. One theory is that the library belonged to a Sethian Gnostic sect who lived in the Nag Hammadi area. Seth, a son of Adam, was highly regarded as the ancestor of the race of enlightened Gnostics and is mentioned prominently in some Nag Hammadi texts. A second theory is that the library was collected by Christian Gnostic monks before the time when such monks were considered heretics and consequently expelled. Such monks may have hidden their gospels for safekeeping. A third theory is that the library was collected by orthodox monks for use in refuting Gnostic heretics. Regardless of which theory is correct, *Da Vinci Code* enthusiasts believe the Gnostic Gospels are authentic. But are they?

Most scholars agree that the Gnostic Gospels date far too late to be reliable. The earliest Gnostic Gospels may date as early as A.D. 150, but most date in the third and fourth centuries. Further, there are no historical or geographical

question format:

1. Was the book written or backed by a prophet or apostle of God? This is the single most important test. The reasoning here is that the Word of God which is inspired by the Spirit of God for the people of God must be communicated through a man of God.¹⁴ Deuteronomy 18:18 informs us that only a prophet of God will speak the Word of God. Second Peter 1:20-21 assures us that Scripture is only written by men of God. In Galatians 1:1-24 the apostle Paul argued support for the Book of Galatians by appealing to the fact that he was an authorized messenger of God, an apostle.

2. Is the book authoritative? In other words, can it be said of this book as it was said of Jesus, "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law" (Mark 1:22). Put another way, does this book ring with the sense of, "Thus saith the Lord"?

3. Does the book tell the truth about God and doctrine as it is already known by previous revelation? The Bereans searched the OT Scriptures to see whether Paul's teaching was true (Acts 17:11). They knew that if Paul's teaching did not accord with the Old Testament canon, it could not be of God. Agreement with all earlier revelation is essential (Gal. 1:8).

4. Does the book give evidence of having the power of God? The reasoning here is that any writing that does not exhibit the transforming power of God in the lives of its readers could not have come from God. Scripture says that the Word of God is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). Second Timothy 3:16-17 indicates that God's Word has a transforming effect. If the book in question did not have the power to change a life, then, it was reasoned, the book could not have come from God.

5. Was the book accepted by the people of God? In Old Testament times, Moses's scrolls were placed immediately into the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). Joshua's writings were added in the same fashion (Joshua 24:26). In the New Testament, Paul thanked the Thessalonians for receiving the apostle's message as the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Paul's letters were circulated among the churches (Colossians 4: 16; 1 Thessa-

Ionians 5:27). It is the norm that God's people—that is, the majority of them and not simply a faction—will initially receive God's Word as such.

In the interest of accuracy, I will note that there were some books that were doubted for a time, but not for long. The books that were doubted for a time were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

Hebrews was doubted because the author of the book was unknown. However, the book eventually came to be viewed as having apostolic authority, if not apostolic authorship.

James was doubted because of its apparent conflict with Paul's teaching about salvation by faith alone. The conflict was resolved by seeing the works James speaks of as an outgrowth of real faith.

Second Peter was doubted because the style of this book differs from that of 1 Peter. It seems clear, however, that Peter used a scribe to write 1 Peter (see 1 Peter 5:12). So a style conflict is not really a problem.

Second and 3 John were doubted because the author of these books is called "elder," not "apostle." However, Peter (an apostle) is also called "elder" in 1 Peter 5:1. So it seems clear that the same person can be both an elder and an apostle.

Jude was doubted because it refers to two noncanonical books—the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. This objection was eventually overcome because even Paul quoted from pagan poets (see Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12). Moreover, Jude enjoyed early acceptance by most of the early believers.

The Book of Revelation was doubted because it teaches a thousand-year reign of Christ. Since there was a local contemporary cult that taught the same, it was reasoned that Revelation must not be true Scripture. However, because many of the earliest church fathers believed in a thousand-year reign of Christ too, this objection was eventually seen as being without merit.

One thing is certain. The biblical canon was firmly established long before

Constantine's time. Hence, Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* is woefully inaccurate on this issue.

Did Constantine Convert the World From Matriarchal Paganism to Patriarchal Christianity?

Dan Brown's Position:

"Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever." (Page 124)

The Truth of the Matter:

Constantine did not convert the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity. Again, history is quite clear about what Constantine did and did not do, and matriarchal paganism was not something that even concerned him.

Historical studies have proven that in almost all societies around the world, rule has been patriarchal in nature. This is not to deny the reigns of various queens in some cultures, but by and large, patriarchal rule has been the normal pattern throughout recorded history. This was certainly the case during New Testament times.

It is therefore false to say that the early orthodox Christians overcame "early" matriarchal pagans so that their own "later" version of Christianity would prevail. Such a view involves the worst kind of revisionism, pure and simple. To say there was a campaign to demonize the "sacred feminine"—a view with ZERO historical support—is on a level of those who continue to claim Elvis sightings today.

Are the Gnostic Gospels Reliable Documents?

Dan Brown's Position:

- The Nag Hammadi gospels "highlight glaring discrepancies and fabrica-