

A Strawberry Mountain View of. . .

The Da Vinci Code



by
Frederick L. Pattison

"What is truth?' Pilate asked." – John 18:38a



Unless otherwise noted all biblical quotations appearing in this booklet are taken from the TNIV (Today's New International Version).

Introduction

I happen to be one of those people who spends little time reading fiction books. However, **The Da Vinci Code** by **Dan Brown** has been the exception for the simple reason that it has grabbed the attention of millions of people worldwide. I decided that I had better familiarize myself with its contents to know what all the ruckus is about over this novel. I have to admit that I have not spent a great deal of time pouring over its contents. However, I do have some concerns over this book and how it is affecting large numbers of people especially many nominal Christians. As I write this booklet we are told that **Dan Brown's book** has sold over 40 million copies and has been read by well over 100 million people. The movie released in May 2006 is undoubtedly generating increased interest in the contents of this book.

I have compiled this booklet, which is not an exhaustive commentary on **The Da Vinci Code**, simply to let those people who read the material published by **Strawberry Mountain Views** the position that I am taking in this matter. Those folk who know me and/or who are familiar with the literature of this ministry know that I am a biblical Christian, however I do not always buy into the commonly accepted evangelical "party line." In fact, the axiom of **Strawberry Mountain Views** is that the literature produced is: **"Unique – Challenging – Controversial"**. The material emanating from this ministry often tackles subjects that are avoided by some other evangelical ministries that tend to be geared to avoid rocking the boat of the status quo of traditional evangelicalism. However, what is discussed in this booklet falls in line with the position taken by the majority of orthodox Christians whether they be Protestant, Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. Most of what you will find in these pages is not necessarily original with me but has been gleaned from other sources. You will note that I use considerable Scripture. I accept the Bible as God's written Word. I also adhere to the Reformation tenet of *"Sola Scriptura"*; Scripture alone as our final authority.

My prayer is that whether you read **The Da Vinci Code** or see the movie your faith will not be shaken but you will quickly understand that it is **pure fiction** and nothing more than that. I believe that "the enemy" is in some way or another behind such attacks as found in **Brown's fictional work on the historic Christian Faith**.

*Frederick Pattison,
Strawberry - 2006*

The Attacks Increase

It never ceases to amaze me the older that I get to observe the mounting increase there seems to be of attacks upon the Christian Faith. In the name of pluralism, if one is to be viewed as politically correct, they must watch their "p's" and "q's" whenever addressing areas relating to "religion." One dare not say anything that could be considered to be negative or derogatory in any manner toward Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Ageism, the Occult, Judaism and I could go on-and-on. **But what about Christianity?** It almost seems to be "**the in-thing**" to lash out in some way or another at Christians, the Church, Christianity and Christ himself. **Why does this appear to be so?** I personally believe that there are a number of reasons for this. The following are just a couple of these reasons:

- **Satan** has been out to destroy faith and belief in God since the Fall. He will do all within his power to undermine faith in Christ both in subtle as well as blatant ways from both within as well as from outside of the Church. Satan knows that his fate is doomed but he will not give up his dastardly efforts of undermining with the intent of destroying authentic Christian Faith.
- I also believe that one of the signs of **End Times** will be an increase in unbelief, compromise and apostasy. There are a number of warnings of this condition given in Scripture. I am convinced that the followers of Christ should be **aware** of these warnings.

Remember when **Mel Gibson** produced and then brought forth his movie **The Passion of the Christ**? None of the major film industry firms would dare touch this film. They condemned it as being anti-Semitic. Nevertheless this film garnered millions of dollars that amazed Hollywood. To their shame the movie industry appears to take special delight in producing films that seek in some way or another **to undermine** the validity of the Christian Faith. Think of the many books and films in recent times that have sought to undermine biblical and orthodox Christianity such as: *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *The Passover Plot*, *The Secret Gospel*, and numerous others.

In my TV viewing I especially enjoy watching the *History Channels*, the *Discovery Channel*, *A&E*, *Public Television*, etc. However, I note that when these channels present some aspect of Christian Faith they always include so-called biblical "scholars" and "theologians" who chip away in some way or other at the Christian Faith. **But why? What does this accomplish?**

Fact or Fiction?

Dan Brown does state that his work is **fiction**. However, this does not lessen the affect that fiction can and does have on many gullible people. Someone has stated:

*"The art of successful fiction is to engender in the reader a sense of total reality, so that what the person is reading seems true, like something actually happening to real people in real situations . . . the result is that **fiction becomes fact** for too many readers."*¹

There is the problem which is very real. Upon reading **The Da Vinci Code** it appears that some people are transferring its fiction into fact in their minds when relating to Christ, the church and the Bible.

We are being told that **The Da Vinci Code** may well become the largest selling book of all time. **Why is it so popular?** **Mr. Brown** is a great storyteller. He understands that people love to read about murder and mystery, others love romance novels, there are the history buffs, the religious skeptics, the conspiracy theorists, the radical feminists as well as the hoards of people who will latch on anything that they view as an alternative to Christianity. We appear to be living in a day when it is open season on the Christian Faith.

Sex also sells books and movies and **The Da Vinci Code** has its own twist on sexual matters. It portrays Jesus engaged in a physical relationship. The book also calls for restoration of what it terms as the "**sacred feminine**" with sex rituals and worship of the goddess.

In addition to the appeal to those kinds of people mentioned above the Roman Catholic Church, which is by far the largest segment of Christendom, has been riddled in recent years by multitudes of scandals relating to the molestation of boys and girls by many, but certainly not all, supposedly celibate priests.

Anti-Catholicism

Those of you who know me know that I personally have some very real problems with the Roman Catholic Church. I do not accept the dogma of its hierarchy, nor do I accept many of its practices, stands and doctrines. Yet as a non-Roman Catholic Christian I resent the many aspersions and falsehoods presented by **Mr. Brown** in his novel toward this church. The Roman popes have often erred, at times they have committed acts that were indeed un-Christlike. Yet if

¹ Quote from "The Da Vinci Code" by Paul L. Maier, pgs. 8 & 9.

it had not been for the Roman Catholic Church, as well as Eastern Orthodoxy, the basic orthodox beliefs set forth in the Scriptures would not have been preserved. There would be no Protestantism and no evangelicalism if basic orthodox beliefs had not been preserved by the Roman and Eastern churches.

In this brief booklet I do not have the time or space to delve deeper into the many errors and accusations hurled at the Roman Church by **Mr. Brown** but be assured they are many. His book is filled with such falsehoods including his information about **the Opus Dei** which is a Catholic organization seeking to promote spirituality among its members not what he claims it to be.

Heresies

Since its earliest days the Church of God² has been plagued by heresies of all sort seeking to dilute the power of the Message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A heresy is a false teaching that creates doubt and/or change in the basic fundamental teachings held by Orthodox Christian belief. Heresy robs those holding it from the truth of the biblical faith. Heresies include:

- Denying the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- Eliminating the necessity of the blood atonement;
- Creating doubt in the validity of the authority of the Bible as the divinely inspired written Word of God;
- Denial of the tri-unity (Trinity) of the Godhead.

I could go on-and-on but I'm sure that you get the point. Heresy is now new. The tragic part of heresy is that it subtly infiltrates churches, often beginning in the educational institutions or with extremely charismatic leaders, then it spreads. The apostle Paul warned of those who create deception in the church,

*"For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. **They must be silenced**, because they are disrupting whole households, **by teaching things they ought not to teach** – and for the sake of dishonest gain. . .therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith, and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth." (Titus 1:10-11, 13b-14)*

² Note when I use the term "Church of God" I am referring to the entire Body of Christ not to any particular sect and/or denomination.

Paul also exhorted Timothy,

*"As I **urged you** when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain persons not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work – which is by faith." (1 Timothy 1:3-4)*

The Da Vinci Code presents views of our Lord, and of the historic biblical faith, that are not only heretical but are sheer apostasy³ in its ugliest form. **Mr. Brown's fictional writing** does contain many historical facts that are indeed factual. In his writing technique **Dan Brown** is able to make many outlandish claims that to the uninformed Bible student sound very plausible. Unfortunately because of the fact that few Christians carefully and prayerfully study their Bibles the conclusions presented by **Brown** sound credible to many gullible people. This has resulted in numbers of people, including some Christians, confused because of his assertions.

Contrary to what many people in churches have been led to believe in our day it is important that Christians know what they believe and why they believe as they do.

Quoting again from the apostle Paul we are exhorted,

"You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1)

Contrary to what many people believe teaching sound biblical doctrine **does not** create division. In fact, it is vital to the spiritual health and growth of believers that they be rooted and grounded firmly in the truths of Scripture. We are taught in God's written Word that one of the indications of End Times would be **a forsaking** of sound teaching. The false teachings found in **Mr. Brown's novel** unfortunately are being accepted by some people who are not grounded in the truths of Scripture. And our churches are partly to blame for not carefully and properly teaching and equipping believers. One cannot read the biblical warnings and exhortations without quickly coming to realize that we are living in such days. **See - 1 Timothy chapter 4; 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and 2 Peter 2:1-3.**

³ Apostasy is the abandonment of biblical belief.

A Capsule Look at The Da Vinci Code

If you have not read the book or seen the movie the following is a very brief capsule of what it is about. The story takes place largely in Paris, London and Scotland. A Harvard professor named **Robert Langdon** is supposed to be an expert in religious symbols. He is paired up with **Sophie Neven**, said to be a detective who specializes in analyzing codes and other cryptic messages. They work together to solve the mystery of the bizarre murder of **Jacques Sauniere** who is the curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris. There are five murders in the book.

The plot thickens when the account discovers that **Sauniere** was murdered because he was the grand master of the **Prior of Sion**. In the book it is stated that this is a secret organization that had been formed to protect the "truth" that **Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene** and that he had planned for her to lead the Church after his death.

According to this secret knowledge, **Mary was pregnant with Jesus' child when he was crucified**. The book goes on to outline how the royal line in France are the descendants of this union that has survived to modern times. The so-called "**Holy Grail**" was not a literal cup but was Mary Magdalene herself. She is said to be the "**vessel**" who held the blood of Jesus in her womb by carrying his baby. **The "Holy Grail" Dan Brown claims,**

"is symbolic of the lost goddess. When Christianity came along the old pagan religions did not die easily. Legends of chivalric quests for the Holy Grail were in fact stories of forbidden quests to find the lost sacred feminine. Knight who claimed to be searching for the chalice were speaking in code as a way to protect themselves from a Church that had subjugated women, banished the Goddess, burned non-believers, and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine."⁴

The Prior of Sion is said to have hidden the bones of Mary Magdalene together with documents "proving" this to be true. **Brown** claims that,

"the quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene."

⁴ This quote is from The Da Vinci Code.

Who is Jesus?

If we were to accept the premise of **Mr. Brown** we would conclude that Jesus, though unique and a great teacher of humankind was a mere man. According to **Brown** Jesus is not who he claimed to be. Our Lord's miraculous virgin birth, sinless life and bodily resurrection are denied.

It is interesting to note that our Lord posed the following question to his disciples,

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matt. 16:13b)

After the disciples share with him what people were saying about him, who they likened him to, he then asked the more important question,

"But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15)

I like impetuous Peter for he speaks immediately by speaking the truth of whom our Lord is,

"You are the Messiah [the Christ], the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

It really **does not** matter what the world or what religionists think of Christ but **it is vital** that we, believers, hold the proper view and understanding of who Jesus really was and is. **Jesus is deity – God in human flesh**. Our Lord was **both** human while in the flesh and he is also from eternity to eternity God. Note how the apostle Paul described our Lord's coming in human form,

"In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage: rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

To the Christians at Colosse the apostle wrote,

"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Colossians 1:15-20)

The apostle John clearly teaches the deity of our Lord,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but of God.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-5, 10-14)

As deity Jesus is **the one and only Savior and Lord**,

"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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

Some other passages you may want to look up include – **John 5:5-18; 8:48-59; 20:24-28.**

The Council of Nicea

According to **Dan Brown** it was not until the Council of Nicea was held in 325 AD that Christians considered Jesus to be divine (deity).

The passages quoted on the previous page clearly teach Christ's deity. The earliest church documents as well as the testimony of the ante-Nicene Fathers confirm that Christians have ***always*** believed **Jesus to be Lord, God and Savior**. Countless numbers of Christians became martyrs because of their unwillingness to cast this belief aside in favor of declaring Caesar as Lord. The earliest partial canon of Scripture dates from the late second century and had already rejected the Gnostic writings as heretical and not divinely inspired.

When **Emperor Constantine** convened this Council of church leaders the Church was at a crossroads. Because of the inroads of heresy, especially the heresy led by **Arius**, it was vital that the Church adopt its official position in relationship to Jesus Christ. **Arius taught that Jesus of Nazareth could not possibly share God the Father's unique divinity, i.e. that Jesus was not God in flesh.**

According to **Dan Brown**,

"Until that moment in history [the Council], Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal-prophet – a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless."

The Council of Nicea merely **affirmed** the historic basic beliefs of Christians. The historic **Nicene Creed** is the result of their compiling into one written form what the church had historically believed from its earliest days since the apostles.

Not Just Another Book

Quoting from what **Leigh Teabing** says in **The Da Vinci Code**:

"The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven."

And, of course, this is true. However, this does not take away from what the Bible is. One of the schemes of "the enemy"⁵ is to do all that he can to undermine the Bible. There are countless numbers of modern-day theologians, so-called biblical scholars, pastors and teachers within Christendom who are being used to undermine the

⁵ "The enemy" that I am referring to is "Satan" who is referred to in Scripture as "the deceiver."

authority and validity of the Bible. When the Bible is **undermined** the Christian Faith crumbles. However, though the Bible certainly did not come as a fax from heaven it was written by men who were moved upon by the Holy Spirit to write what they did write,

"All Scripture is God-breathed [given by inspiration] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The writers of Scripture wrote in their own words as they were moved upon and impressed to do so by the leading of the Spirit of God. **The chief purpose of the Bible** is to present **the Way** of salvation in and through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Note what John wrote,

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah [Christ], the Son of God, and that **by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)**

The apostle Paul in writing to young preacher Timothy said,

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

The Bible **is not** just another "religious" work. It is not in the same category as the Qu'ran, the Book of Mormon and countless other religious works. The Bible, and **the Bible alone**, is the uniquely and divinely inspired [God-breathed] written Word of God. It is **the final authority** for believers and for the church in all matters relating to faith, doctrine and practice.

The Da Vinci Code *"claims"* that it was the church that suppressed a number of books from being included in the Canon of Scripture for its own purposes. The books that were included in the Canon [rule of acceptance] had to meet important standards for the early Christian leaders to include them. The Gnostic gospels and other books did not meet the criteria for inclusion. We further believe that **the Holy Spirit guided** in this matter of which books would be accepted and which ones would not be accepted. The various books that we have in our Bible (66 books) were written in the midst of con-

siderable controversy and has remained controversial ever since. Yet, this in no way undermines the credibility of it. **God has safeguarded** that which is included in our Bibles. Shortly before our Lord left this earth he promised his disciples,

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:25-26)

The writers of both Testaments (Old and New) wrote as God's Spirit moved upon them.

Mary Magdalene

Was Mary Magdalene a sinner, a saint, or goddess?

There is absolutely no evidence in the Bible that our Lord married Mary Magdalene or for that matter married anyone. Consider the following:⁶

- If Jesus was married to a woman, surely it would be recorded in at least one of the four Gospels or mentioned somewhere in the many New Testament verses on marriage. Yet there is not so much as a hint of it.
- Jesus had to focus entirely on his mission. Knowing he would have to give his life as a sacrifice for all humanity, it would have been incomprehensible that he would marry someone when he would shortly leave a widow.
- Marriage to a woman would have created great confusion about the present and future role of his wife. Should she be adored and worshipped?

The idea that Jesus married Mary is totally unfounded, Jesus' only claim to marriage is as **the Bridegroom** who has taken **the Church as his Bride**. **See – Isaiah 62:1-5 also Revelation 19:7.**

It should be noted that in the New Testament Mary Magdalene is mentioned 12 times. These passages reveal that Jesus cast seven demons out of her (**Luke 8:1-3**) and then called her to be one of his followers. She was extremely grateful and dedicated and became a devoted disciple of the Messiah. **See – John 20:1-18.** In the Gospel

⁶ This listing is from a Good News Feature article in the May-June 2006 issue.

accounts of our Lord's life Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a disciple of Christ who faithfully testified to his life, death, and resurrection

Dan Brown's book ends his book thusly,

"With a sudden upwelling of reverence, Robert Langdon fell to his knees." And his thoughts were, "The quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one."

This is blasphemy at its worst. The first of the Ten Commandments forbids the worship of anyone but the one true God. **See – Exodus 20:3.**

Goddess Worship

Goddess religion is sheer paganism. I am aware of some modern church groups that have been "**flirting**" with the concept of the goddess. A few years ago a number of representatives from various mainline Protestant denominations gathered together at a conference in Minneapolis and came up with "**Sophia**" as the feminine god. **Goddess religion** is popular among **secular feminists** as well as the darling of many gays and lesbians including some within the UFMCC denomination.

According to **Brown's book** it was the Christian Church in its early days that suppressed goddess worship and proceeded to eliminate what he terms "**the divine feminine.**" He also claims, without any reliable evidence, that the Jews in Solomon's Temple adored **YahWeH** and his feminine counterpart, **the Shekinah**, via the services of sacred prostitutes. This is possibly a twisted version of the Temple's corruption after Solomon (**1 King 14:22-24 and 2 Kings 23:4-15**). **Brown** also says that the Tetragrammaton **YHWH** derives from "**Jehovah**, an androgynous physical union between the masculine **JAH** and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, Havah.

However, this is another of the numerous errors in **Brown's** writings. **The name Jehovah** is actually a 16th-century rendering of **Yahweh** using the vowels of **Adonai** ("**LORD**").

Brown uses for his proof that **Mary Magdalene** was our Lord's sexual partner **the Gnostic writings of "the Gospel of Philip" and "the Gospel of Mark."** Neither of these writings as with all of the Gnostic writings were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The Painting

The picture of the famous painting that appears on the front cover of this booklet is where much of the controversy centers. The original painting of the Last Supper by **Da Vinci** is considered by **Dan Brown** to be a **coded message** that reveals the truth about Jesus and the Grail. In the painting **Brown** points to the lack of a central chalice on the table as proof that the Grail isn't a material vessel. But this **painting by Da Vinci** specifically dramatizes the moment when Jesus warns, "**One of you will betray me**" (**John 13:2**). **Take a look at the painting.** The institution of the Lord's Supper **is not** recorded in the Gospel of John. The bread and wine **are not** shown in the painting. The person sitting next to Jesus **is not Mary Magdalene** as Brown claims, rather it is the apostle-disciple **John** who is portrayed as the typical effeminate youth that **Da Vinci** portrays, comparable to his portrayal of John the Baptist. It might be noted also that **Da Vinci** is said to have been a homosexual.

It's a ludicrous mistake to form opinions about Jesus and his followers based on the paintings of artists who never saw him. And just because **Leonardo da Vinci** in his painting **The Last Supper** portrayed one disciple as looking somewhat feminine is no evidence of anything – certainly not that one of the 12 disciples was Mary Magdalene or even that one of the immediate twelve was a woman. However, beyond the twelve there were numerous female disciples of our Lord.

The Church is God's Church

The Church of Jesus Christ has undergone attack after attack throughout its history. It will remain. It belongs to God. Its commission is to,

*"Therefore **go and make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to **obey** everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (**Matthew 28:19-20**)*

As our Lord continues to build the Body of Christ that we call the church we are to follow the example of the first ekklesia [church] in Jerusalem at Pentecost,

*"They [the new believers] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship [community], to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (**Acts 2:42**)*

God's gift and plan of salvation is extended to all who will believe and accept it.

*"If you declare with your mouth, '**Jesus is Lord,**' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you **believe and are justified**, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, '**Anyone who believes in him** will never be put to shame.' For there is **no difference** between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for '**Everyone** who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" (Romans 10:9-13)*

What about you? Who is Jesus to you? Do you really know him? Is he living in your heart and life as Savior and Lord?

We invite your inquiry if you are not sure that you have received God's free gift of grace by faith in Jesus Christ,

*"For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **through faith** – and this is not from yourselves, it is **the gift of God** – not by works, so that no one can boast."* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

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