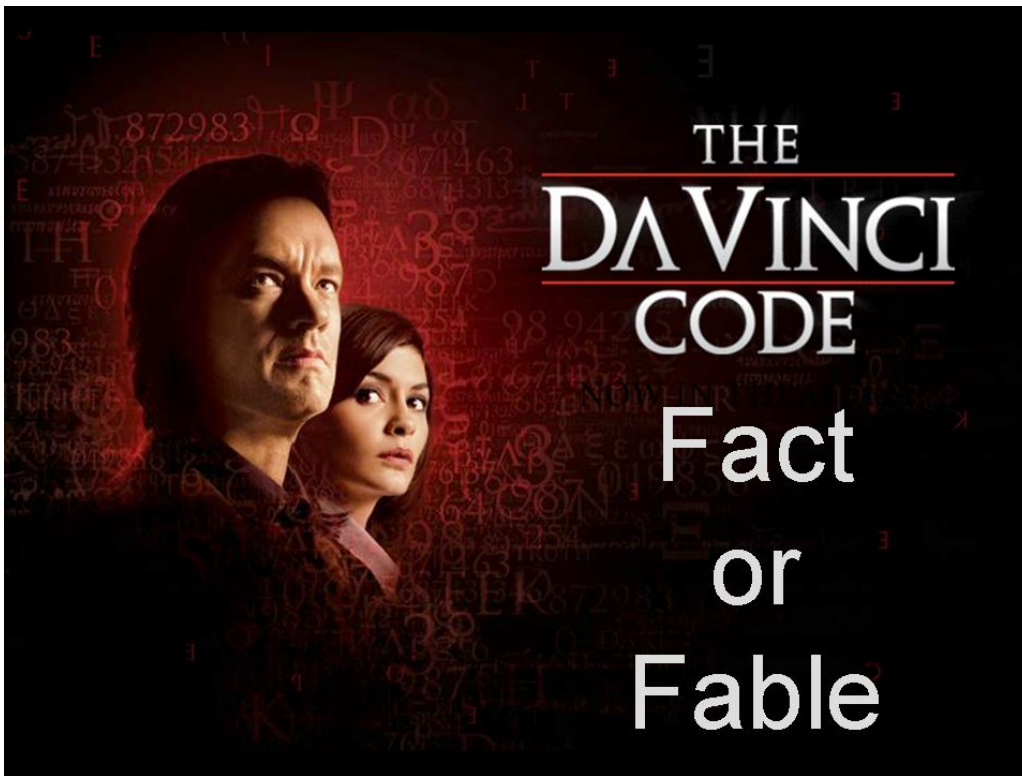




# Sentinel



receives a late night call and is informed of Saunière's murder. He decides to follow the clues left by the curator and in the process meets a cryptologist, Sophie Neveu, who joins him in the search that takes them through Europe and as far as Rosslyn Castle in the north of Scotland.

#### The Hidden Secrets:

The Church, ie., the Roman Catholic church, is central in having kept these secrets away from the masses, so as to maintain her power over the people. A Roman Catholic secret organization *Opus Dei*, is the protector of this secret, even if it means the murdering of people. A secret organization, the *Priory of Sion* of which Leonardo da

Vinci was a member, is the holder of the secret. This secret entails, as Dan Brown puts it: "...the greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father...Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage, and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang." (Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, Corgi Books, 2004:336)

- Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.
- Mary Magdalene was the head apostle on whom the church was founded. "According to these unaltered gospels, it was not Peter to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the Christian Church. It was Mary Magdalene... Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of a woman." (Brown:334)

(Continued on page 6)

#### Introduction:

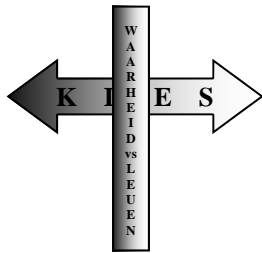
The release of this movie certainly resulted in a storm of criticism in the media and on the internet from various Christian sources, pastors and ministries. The book is a worldwide bestseller with, as at May 2006, more than 60.5 million copies in print. It has been translated into 44 languages and is listed as the 6<sup>th</sup> best selling book of all time. With the exception of a very few countries the release of the movie by Sony Columbia Pictures was worldwide and total viewers are expected to top the 40 million mark. These figures can easily be doubled if each of these persons share what they saw or read with another person, hence close to 200 million people will

take note of what Dan Brown presents as a novel based on fact.

The publication of this book of Dan Brown met with some reaction from people like, theologian Dr Erwin W Lutzer's *The Da Vinci Deception*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., in 2004. Dr Darrell Bock also responded with his, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*. What is this book and film about?

#### The Story Line:

It all begins in the Paris museum of art, The Louvre. The aged curator, Jacques Saunière is murdered because he knows the secrets hidden in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, and these secrets must be passed on. Robert Langdon, professor in religious symbology,



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# Redaksioneel/Editorial

## THIS ISSUE

This issue is slightly overdue for various reasons. The delay should be seen as a blessing as it would have taken so much longer for you to receive the article on *The Da Vinci Code*, for the simple reason that the release of the movie would have been after *Sentinel* was published if it was on time in April.

No doubt this is a hot subject at present and it is hoped that this article will be received well by each one of our readers. It will be translated into Afrikaans and placed on the website, or made available on request.

The other article also deals with a controversial subject as this is "hot" in the church today. Thank you Gary for having granted permission

to us to use your part 1 found on your website (<http://www.svchapel.org>) in this issue of *Sentinel*. Part 2 will appear in the next issue of *Sentinel*.

Parts 1 & 2 will be translated into Afrikaans and Dutch on Gary's request and placed on our website. They may also end up in Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho with the help of some black friends.

As a result of both articles being quite long we had to sacrifice the letters page (normally page 3) in this issue, for which we apologise.

## WEBSITE

For a long time we experienced problems with our website as we could not update it. This problem has now been overcome and the site has recently been updated. Regular updates will now follow. If you do not know where to find us on the web, here is the address:

<http://www.gksa.org.za/kies>

## BEWUSMAKING KAMP

Ons het die beste van intensies om 'n kulte en dwaalleer bewusmaking kamp gedurende September aan te bied. Datums en plek sal later op die web geadverteer word. Indien jy nie toegang tot die Internet het nie hou gereeld kontak met ons indien jy belangstel om dit by te woon.

\*\*\*\*\*

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# The Emerging Church - Part 1

**Pastor Gary Gilley:** (<http://www.svchapel.org>)

The emergent church is a rather slippery name for a rather slippery movement. By slippery, I mean that the movement is so new (originated in the late 1990s), so fragmented, so varied, that nailing it down is like nailing the proverbial Jell-O to the wall. There are no official leaders<sup>[1]</sup> or headquarters;<sup>[2]</sup> some have said that there are thousands of expressions yet only a few churches have sold out to the concept; and even those claiming the name can't agree on what is going on.

<sup>[3]</sup> Brian McLaren, the closest thing to a spokesperson for the movement so far states: Right now Emergent is a conversation, not a movement. We don't have a program. We don't have a model. I think we must begin as a conversation, then grow as a friendship, and see if a movement comes of it.<sup>[4]</sup>

Having said this, there is still much common ground that can be identified. The name "emerging church" speaks of a church which is, guess what, emerging from something. This means, it is coming out of the more traditional understanding of the church and emerging into a postmodern expression. What it will actually become is still a matter of speculation, but its adherents see it as a postmodern church for a postmodern culture. Of course, even this gets tricky because the prefix "post" has become all too trendy. We hear not only of post-modern, but also of post-Christian, post-Protestant, post-analytical, post-liberal, post-conservative, post-everything. The problem with "post" is that it describes what you **are not** much better than it describes what you **are**. If you are no longer modern or Christian or liberal or conservative, what are you? McLaren believes that defining postmodern is premature<sup>[5]</sup> – we don't yet know what form it will take, so defining the postmodern church is even more problematic. Emergent church leaders do not all agree on where the church goes from here but they all believe that it must go somewhere, for they believe the modern church cannot connect with the postmodern mind. How this fleshes out will be dealt with later in our study; for now we can say the emergent church is a movement chasing a culture.

Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church*, says this is necessary because "the basis of learning has shifted from logic and rational, systematic thought to the realm of experience. People

increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and facts-based faith of the modern soil."<sup>[6]</sup> Kimball suggests that the seeker-sensitive church, the church that chased the last generation's culture, is already out of date: "The things that seeker-sensitive churches removed from their churches are the very things [postmodern] nonbelievers want to experience if they attend a worship service."<sup>[7]</sup> The postmodern wants to reconnect to the past. They want traditions and religious symbols rather than slick excellence, polished performance and state-of-the-art structures found in modernity. That translates into a very different look and feel. For example it is not likely that you will find a sign along the highway pointing to the First Baptist Emergent Church. Names like Baptist and denominational ties are too modern. Popular emergent church names are Solomon's Porch, House of Mercy, The Rock, Jacob's Ladder, Circle of Hope, Ikon, Vintage Faith, New Beginnings and Mosaic. They sponsor websites like [vintagefaith.com](http://vintagefaith.com), [emergentvillage.org](http://emergentvillage.org), and [theooze.com](http://theooze.com). The emerging church appears to be the latest flavor of the day in a church age which allows itself to be defined by its culture rather than by Scripture. D. A. Carson reminds us: What drove the Reformation was the conviction, among all its leaders, that the Roman Catholic Church had departed from Scripture and had introduced theology and practices that were inimical to

genuine Christian faith. In other words, they wanted things to change, not because they perceived that new developments had taken place in the culture so that the church was called to adapt its approach to the new cultural profile, but because they perceived that new theology and practices had developed in the church that contravened Scripture, and therefore that things needed to be reformed by the Word of God. By contrast, although the emerging church movement challenges, on biblical grounds, some of the beliefs and practices of evangelicalism, by and large it insists it is preserving traditional confessionalism by changing the emphases because the culture has changed, and so inevitably those who are culturally sensitive see things in a fresh perspective. In other words, at the heart of the emerging reformation lies a perception of a major change in culture. <sup>[8]</sup>

How does the Christian community go about chasing down the culture? Either through methods or message. The emerging church does both. Beginning with methodology, the leaders of the movement view the under-thirty generation as profoundly spiritual. They are interested in religious experiences and feelings. They want a sense of the supernatural. They are not interested in systematic theology, tightly woven apologetic arguments or logical reasoning. But they are attracted to spiritual mystery. Kimball quotes Garrison Keillor, who makes no

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

claim of being a Christian, as saying, “If you can’t go to church and at least for a moment be given transcendence, if you can’t pass briefly from this life into the next, then I can’t see why anyone would go. Just a brief moment of transcendence causes you to come out of the church a changed person.”<sup>[9]</sup> Despite the fact that Keillor could not be more wrong if we are interested in true biblical transformation, the emergent leaders see this as the gateway to reaching the postmodern generations.

The Baby Busters (born between 1965 and 1983) and Mosaics (born between 1984 and 2002) are tired of “church-lite,” consumer spirituality, church buildings that look like warehouses or malls, CEO pastors, educational programs structured like community colleges and church services that are reminiscent of a Broadway musical. They want the transcendent, as Keillor says. So the emergent church loads up on such things. There is a return to what Kimball calls the “vintage church” which combines some excellent things such as singing of hymns, display of the cross and reading of Scripture with (questionable at best) medieval ritual, prayer stations, labyrinths, candles, incense, icons, stained glass, contemplative prayer, mantras, Benedictine chants, and darkness. Kimball makes the point that postmoderns want to experience God with all five senses – as the vintage church did. It should be pointed out, however, that the vintage church to which Kimball refers is not a return to the New Testament church. The vintage church has been waylaid by medieval Catholicism, which we must remember may have experienced the spiritual through the senses, but nevertheless was an apostate religion. Simply providing an unbeliever with a religious experience, which they might interpret as an encounter with God, may do them more harm than good. But just as the seeker-sensitive church saw felt-needs as the means of linking with unbelievers, so the emerging church sees spiritual experience as that means. The philosophy is basically the same, just the methods have changed.

Emergent leader Leonard Sweet describes the emergent church with the acronym EPIC. “E” stands for experiential because postmoderns desire more than listening and thinking. They want to enter into worship as an

experience of the senses. This is why medieval rituals appeal to them. “P” speaks of participants as opposed to observers. They want an active faith. Rather than a sermon they might hold a “conversation.” “I” relates to image-based. Projected images, artwork, film and video are all attractive to this generation. They are sight-oriented. “C” means communal. They desire a strong sense of community. They are “people” persons. Instead of going to church they want to be the church. <sup>[10]</sup> There are some good things here but there are problems in the details, as we will see.

If this was the end of the story we might even find comfort in what is basically a reaction to the stripped-down model of Christianity that the seeker-sensitive church has given us for the last few decades. But as Rob Bell is quick to inform us, “This is not just the same old message with new methods. We’re rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern religion, as a way of life.”<sup>[11]</sup> This is something new in the cultural-identifying churches. The seeker-sensitive church loudly proclaimed that they were fine-tuning the methodology but were not tampering with the message of the evangelical church (even though they were). The emergent church is concerned about methods but they are even more concerned about the message. They believe that conservative evangelical Christianity has it all wrong. From the Scriptures to essential doctrines to the gospel itself, the church so far just doesn’t get it. And the emergent people include themselves in the same camp. As Brian McLaren states, “I don’t think we’ve got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved?... None of us have arrived at orthodoxy.”<sup>[12]</sup>

### Emergent Philosophy

Before we jump into the doctrinal distinctives of the emerging church we must first detail the philosophy that undergirds the movement. What we see, read and perceive is filtered, at least to some degree, through our presuppositions and worldview. The worldview of the emerging church is decidedly postmodern. Attempting to combine postmodern philosophy with biblical theology is a tricky business, as one might imagine; we should not be surprised that unanimity in the understanding of this attempted

merger will not be found. Nevertheless, some common threads are evident throughout the movement.

### Truth Claims

Truth claims are held with suspicion within postmodernism and we find a precarious juggling act in emergent circles as they try to reach a wary culture with the claims of Christ. The emerging church is concerned about presenting genuine Christianity in a way the postmodern culture understands. Since the very heart of postmodernity is rejection of absolute authoritative truth, yet Christianity claims to be the proclamation of absolute authoritative truth, a head-on collision is almost unavoidable. What is to be done? Something has to give and that something seems to be truth. McLaren presents their view: Ask me if Christianity (my version of it, yours, the Pope’s, whoever’s) is orthodox, meaning true, and here’s my honest answer: a little, but not yet. Assuming by Christianity you mean the Christian understanding of the world and God, Christian opinions on soul, text, and culture...I’d have to say that we probably have a couple of things right, but a lot of things wrong, and even more spreads before us unseen and unimagined. But at least our eyes are open! To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed, and mounted on the wall.<sup>[13]</sup>

This is almost a complete capitulation to postmodernity’s concept of truth. After 2000 years of the study of the completed Canon, we Christians find ourselves in a position of having maybe a “couple” of things right – and I am sure that those couple of things would be up for grabs. This uncertainty about the truth carries over to the Scriptures themselves, of course. Rob Bell and his wife Kristen, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, reflect this view. They started questioning their assumptions about the Bible itself – “discovering the Bible as a human product.”<sup>[14]</sup> “I grew up thinking that we’ve figured out the Bible,” Kristen says, “that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means, and yet I feel like life is big again – like life used to be black and white, and now it’s in color.”<sup>[15]</sup> To the postmodern mind it is more important to, as Rob Bell says, “embrace mystery, rather than conquer it.”<sup>[16]</sup>

But how does a truly postmodern Christian live? How do they know what to believe? How do they deal with the issue of truth? How do they assimilate the realities of life? By creating their own reality. McLaren, if he could have his emergent dream come true, would “help students construct their own model of reality, their understanding of the universe and story we find ourselves in. And – this is SO important – we’d teach them that their model isn’t reality; it’s just a model. It must be open to correction, adjustment, improvement, even revolution” (emphasis his).[17] Experience, not Scripture, becomes the basis for truth. “People today,” Leonard Sweet writes, “are starved not for doctrines but for images and relationships and stories.”[18]

There is no absolute truth or ultimate reality in the emergent agenda. Even Scripture is appreciated for its mystery, not its presentation of truth. Yet one has to wonder what Jude had in mind when he wrote, “I find it necessary to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (verse 3). The emergent church leaders are asking us to embrace a faith without truth, a Bible which has value due to its mystery, and a reality that is individual, subjective and changeable. This is touted as a new and improved version of Christian living. I fail to see the attraction, not to mention that no such understanding of truth is supportable by the Scriptures.

### Deconstruction

The scholar would define deconstruction as Carson does: “It has to do with a literary approach, that hunts down tensions and inconsistencies in a text (those who deploy deconstruction insist that all texts have them) in order to set them at odds with each other and thus deconstruct the text, to generate new insights that might actually contradict what a text ostensibly says.[19] At the other end of the spectrum, Humpty Dumpty gave his version, “When I use a word, it means what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”[20] In everyday language deconstruction means that we can never be certain that we have the right interpretation of words. What matters then is not what the author or speaker said, because that doubtfully can be discerned; rather the important thing is what did the reader/

listener experience. Deconstruction guts words of their meaning and redefines them according to one’s own preference. This is obviously convoluted but it is a central piece in postmodern thought.

How does this work out in the postmodern church? In order to be consistent with absolute truth (or, better, lack of truth) the emergent thinkers must dispose of dogmatic truth claims (i.e. doctrines). They must purge the church of an exclusive gospel,[21] an authoritative Bible and irritating doctrines such as hell.[22] Also on the cutting floor is the doctrine of original sin. McLaren writes, “The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God’s big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin.”[23] Before the emergent church leaders are done all the essential teachings of the Bible have been deconstructed, redefined or dismissed. And what has been put in their place? Oddly, but consistent with postmodern thinking, nothing but mystery and questions. Even McLaren admits, “What will appear beyond the deconstruction remains to be seen. Perhaps something better will emerge – that is my hope and prayer, but the outcome is by no means certain even now that I have finished writing this book.”[24]

### Pluralistic Relativism

If nobody is right then everybody is right. This is the logical conclusion of the postmodern worldview. The emergent church thinkers are reluctantly willing to accept this concept, at least for a time. McLaren states: Because I and others, while we aren’t “for” pluralistic relativism, do see it as a kind of needed chemotherapy. We see modernity with its absolutisms and colonialisms and totalitarianisms as a kind of static dream.... In Christian theology, this anti-emergent thinking is expressed in systematic theologies that claim...to have final orthodoxy nailed down.... Emergent Christians see pluralistic relativism as a dangerous treatment for stage IV absolutist/colonial/totalitarian modernity (to use language from cancer diagnosis), something that saves a life by nearly killing it.[25]

Since truth and Scripture have been deconstructed all that is left is relativism. Until we figure out where to go from here we will have to be content with that. We may or may not arrive at a better place some day, but at least objective truth claims are being eradicated – and that is a good thing. So says the emergent church leaders. Part 2 will continue in next issue.

(Both articles were adapted from Gary’s new book *This Little Church Stayed Home*, available through his site. An excellent read is also his previous book, *This Little Church Went To Market.*, locally available from 011-425-2938)

### Notes:

- [1] Recognized, but not official leaders of the movement at this time include: Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Dan Kimball, Doug Pagitt, Leonard Sweet, the late Mike Yaconelli, Spencer Burke, Erwin McManus, Tommy Kyllonen (aka Urban D) and Donald Miller. Some see Richard Foster and Dallas Willard as key mentors for the movement.
- [2] Some of the promoters of the emerging church include Youth Specialties, The Ooze and The Emergent Village.
- [3] See Andy Crouch, “The Emergent Mystique”, *Christianity Today*, November, 2004, pp. 36-41. This article described the excitement and chaos at the 1994 Emergent Convention in Nashville.
- [4] *Ibid.*, p.39.
- [5] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, ( San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), pp.19-22. In many ways the emergent church can trace its birth to the publication of this book.
- [6] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p.60.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p.115.
- [8] D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p.42.
- [9] Kimball, p.143.
- [10] <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week846/interview.html>
- [11] *Christianity Today*, p.38.
- [12] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- [13] Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), p.293.
- [14] *Christianity Today*, p.38.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] *Ibid.*
- [17] McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, p.162.
- [18] Leonard Sweet, Andy Crouch, et al., *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives*, Leonard Sweet, ed., ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), p.35.
- [19] D. A. Carson, p.84.
- [20] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (<http://www.sabian.org/Alice/lqchap06.htm>).
- [21] Kimball, p.175.
- [22] McLaren’s book, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, is primarily a deconstruction of the doctrine of hell.
- [23] Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, ( San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), p.134.
- [24] *Ibid.*, p.XVIII.
- [25] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, pp.286-287.

(Continued from page 1)

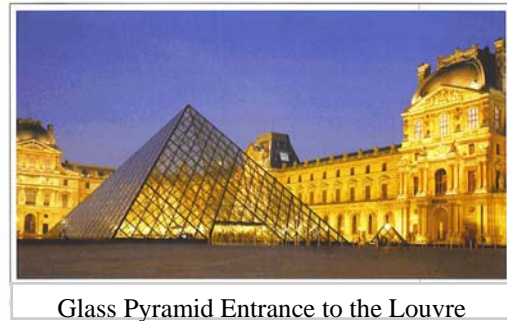
- The Holy Grail was not the cup used at the last supper, but the womb of Mary Magdalene as she was pregnant with Jesus' child at the time of the last supper.
- She was married to Jesus. "...one particular troubling earthly theme kept recurring in the gospels. Mary Magdalene...More specifically, her marriage to Jesus Christ." (Brown:329)
- She was cast out by the apostles, namely Peter, as they falsely accused her of being a prostitute.
- She flees to Gaul, now France, where her daughter Sarah is born. She marries French royalty, consequently Jesus' bloodline still exists today. "The Priory of Sion, to this day, still worships Mary Magdalene as the Goddess... the Divine Mother... [She] was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion. For the safety of Christ's unborn child, she had no choice but to flee the Holy Land... [She] secretly traveled to France, then known as Gaul... she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah... There exists a family tree of Jesus Christ." (Brown:342)



Botticelli, Victor Hugo and Leonardo da Vinci."

- "The Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei is a deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion and a dangerous practice known as 'corporal mortification'.
- Opus Dei has just completed construction of a \$47 million National Headquarters at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City."
- "A 11 descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."
- On page 40 of the Corgi-edition (2004) we read that the glass pyramid in the Louvre "had been constructed of exactly 666 panes of glass."

of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion and a dangerous practice known as 'corporal mortification'.



Glass Pyramid Entrance to the Louvre

Secrets (secret dossiers) which were made to look like ancient parchment documents. Experts set the date of these documents at not more than 40 years old!

Are there 666 panes of glass in the glass pyramid as Brown notes? The internet site of the Louvre gives this as 673! It does not take much to know that the Louvre would be right on a simple fact like this—what will it gain by distorting the facts?

The question now is: *If Brown is wrong on two simple things like these, how much value can we attach to his other claims of 'fact'?*

**What really happened at the Council of Nicea?**

- Did the Council compile the Bible as we have it today?
- Did the Council condone Constantine's order and saw to the burning of other holy writings/gospels?
- Did they decide and with "a narrow margin" rule on Jesus' Son— and Godship?

margin" rule on Jesus' Son— and Godship?

Historical documents confirm the following:

- The Council of Nicea, under Constantine, ruled on the books of the Bible as we have it today. In the process other holy writ is ordered to be burned by Constantine. Out of some 88 gospels only four are included in the Bible.
- This council also ruled on the very important subject of Jesus' divinity. Prior to Nicea Jesus was only viewed as a man, supported by the other writings which were destroyed. The decision to declare Jesus Son of God was by a narrow margin.

What we have here, according to Brown, is a classic example of a conspiracy by the Church to hide the truth from Christians. If true, then surely Christians have every right to know the truth and if Brown's book does contain the facts then we ought to take note of it and inform as many other Christians as possible. On the other hand if Brown is distorting the facts we have every right to expose him as a liar and as someone who distorts the facts, quite possibly for personal gain.

It, therefore, follows that it would only be logical to properly evaluate all these claims.

**How accurate is the Fact-page?**

The book states that *The Priory of Sion* was founded in 1099. The fact is that it was founded in 1956 by Pierre Plantard. He was found guilty of fraud and served time in gaol (jail). He confessed under oath that he, with the help of a friend, developed the idea of the Les Dossiers

- Constantine did call the Council together which began on 19 June 325. It is important to take note of the background as to why Constantine decided it was necessary to call the bishops to this council.

"The Roman Empire had been unsuccessful in its attempt to wipe out the Christian faith. Fourteen years had elapsed since the final persecutions under the Emperor Galerius had ended. Many of the men who made up the Council of Nicea bore in their bodies the scars of persecution. They had been willing to suffer for the name of Christ...Leading bishops in the church agreed to participate, so serious was the matter at hand. To understand why the first universal council was called, we must go back to around A.D. 318. In the populous Alexandria suburb of Baucalis, a well-liked presbyter by the name of Arius began teaching in opposition to the bishop of Alexandria, Alexander.

**Brown's claims:**

The Fact-page of the book states:

- "The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—a real organization. In 1975 Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale discovered parchments known as Les Dossiers Secrets, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton. Sandro

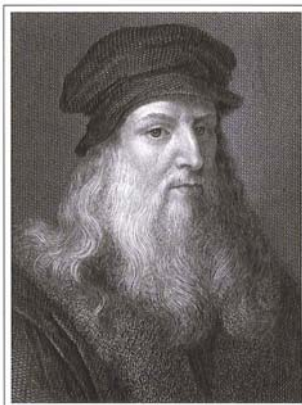
Specifically, he disagreed with Alexander's teaching that Jesus, the Son of God, had existed eternally, being "generated" eternally by the Father. Instead, Arius insisted that 'there was a time when the Son was not.' Christ must be numbered among the created beings — highly exalted, to be sure, but a creation, nonetheless. Alexander defended his position, and it was not long before Arius was declared a heretic in a local council in 321." (Christian Research Institute, CRI, *Statement DN206: What Really Happened At Nicea?*, James R White.)

The council's main concern was to decide on whether the Son was of the *same substance* (Greek = *homoousios*) as the Father or of a *similar substance* (Greek = *homoiousios*) as the Father. The latter group hoped that by using the word *homoiousios* "the perceived danger of Sabellianism found in the term [*homoousios*]" could be avoided and all parties would be satisfied. (CRI)

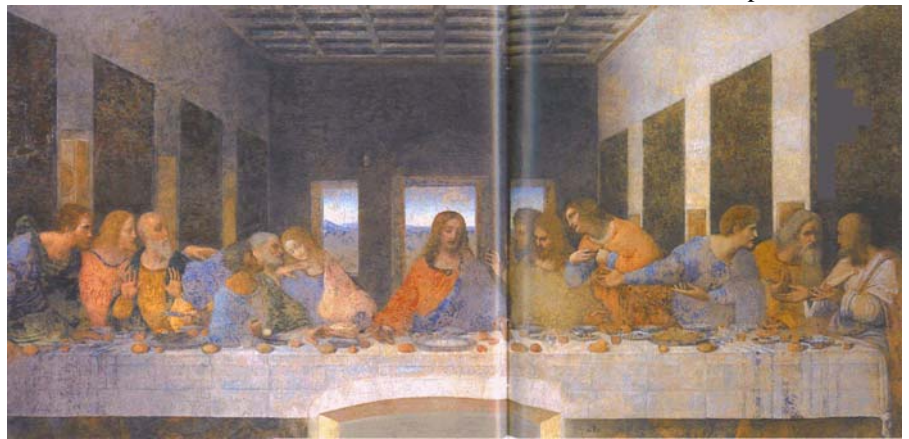
"The 'orthodox' party had to express clearly to the "middle group" that by the use of the term *homoousios* they were not in any way attempting to give aid and comfort to the modalists and Sabellians in the East who continued to teach their errors even in the days of Nicea. They were not compromising the existence of three *Persons*, but were instead safeguarding the full deity of the Persons, and in particular, the Son. The resulting creed, signed by all but Arius and two bishops, was quite clear in its position:

We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, through Whom all things were made...." (CRI)

According to church historian Eusibius, who was one of the bishops present at Nicea, there were 318 bishops present. Of these 318 only two did not accept this position. **Far from the narrow margin Brown states as fact!** Once again he is proven wrong.



Leonardo da Vinci



- Hence the above Nicene Creed resulted. The council did not decide on whether Jesus is Man or God or God/Man but confirmed what the Church believed since the days of the apostles—Jesus was fully Man and fully God. Listen to the church fathers long before Nicea:
- "... Jesus Christus is our God." (Ignatius of Antioch, 110 AD)
- "... the Father of all has a Son, who is both the first-born Word of God and is GOD." (Justin the Martyr, 100-165 AD)
- "Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Saviour and King." (Irenaeus of Lyons, 120-203 AD)
- The matter of the Canon did not feature at this Council.

### Brown is wrong again!

#### Secret codes in the paintings of Da Vinci:

According to *The Da Vinci Code* the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, especially *Mona Lisa* and more specifically *The Last Supper* contained all kinds of secret messages, hence *The Da Vinci Code*.

The important hidden, or coded message Leonardo painted into this piece of art is that the figure to the right of Jesus is not the beloved apostle John, but in *fact* a woman. And this woman is none other than Mary Magdalene.

A logical question: *If this is Mary Magdalene, then where is the twelfth apostle, i.e., John?*

Leonardo most certainly was **NOT** an

eye witness of this event. But Matthew was, and he writes: "*The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples.*" (Matt 26:19-20) Another eye witness, Mark: "*The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening He came with the twelve.*" (Mark 14:16-17) Also refer to Luke 22:13-14.

Matthew (an eye witness!) lists the twelve for us: "*Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.*" (Matt 10:2-4) So does Mark (3:14-19). And Luke (6:13-16). Luke also lists the eleven in Acts 1:13 when they had to choose a twelfth apostle in the place of Judas. The lot fell on Matthias. Read the account in Acts 1:13-26. Note verse 14, "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." We can assume that Mary Magdalene was among these women, yet she is not listed as one of the twelve.

### Once again Brown is wrong!

Let us deal with the fact that this figure looks very feminine. Lutzer has this to say on page 42 (*The Da Vinci Deception*): "If it has been a while since you have seen a reproduction of *The Last Supper*, find a copy and you will agree that John, sitting to the right of Jesus does look effeminate. But Bruce Boucher of Art Institute in Chicago

disputes Dan Brown's interpretation and called it 'quite a stretch... Leonardo's composition points, in fact, in another direction for it confirms the traditional Florentine depictions of the Last Supper, stressing the betrayal and sacrifice rather than the institution of the Eucharist and chalice.' He added that this depiction of John was consistent with other such portraits of him in Florence. Perhaps, we could add that the figure has no hint of breasts. Jack Wasserman, retired art history professor at Temple University, said simply, 'Just about everything [Dan Brown] says about Leonardo is wrong.'" ([brackets], ellipses (...) and italics in original.)

Furthermore, according to Brown there is the figure "V" seen in the space between Jesus and the figure to His right. This key indicates it is a woman because "V" was an ancient symbol used for women.

No wonder Jack Wasserman (above) said to Lutzer what he said.

We need to briefly deal with the following issues: (1) The *other gospels* Brown refers to—those that Constantine supposedly ordered to be burned and which supposedly contained the real truth. (2) The Gnostics and their view of God. And (3) Jesus as a radical feminist.

### **The Gnostics and their writings:**

We are told that Constantine instructed the bishops to burn the other gospels at the Council of Nicea. These are known as the Gnostic gospels. The recent announcement of the discovery of the Gospel of Jude brought these writings to the fore again. These gospels supposedly tell us much more about Jesus, that He was only a mere man who was married to Mary Magdalene.

The facts are that the apostles were aware of the teachings of the Gnostics. It becomes clear when John's letters, (1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 7) as well as his gospel (John 1:1 etc.), and Paul's letter to the Colossians (2:8ff) are studied. We will deal with Gnosticism later.

The Gospel of Thomas is probably the most well-known of these Gnostic writings. But there are others: The Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary, in addition to those of Thomas and Jude. All of these originated 100 years and longer after the time of the apostles! Therefore, it is only logical that neither, Philip, Thomas, Jude or Mary could have written them.

These writings give us a better understanding of Gnosticism. But seeing that Brown describes Jesus as the original feminist, let us consider what these gospels have to say about women.

The Gospel of Philip was written 250 years after Jesus and does not say that Jesus was married.

The Gospel of Thomas (saying 114) says this: "Simon Peter said, 'Let Mary [Magdalene] leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, '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.'" So much so for Jesus the original feminist. (Source, Internet: Jesus Institute, *Primary Sources*.)

These Gnostic gospels were translated into English and can be purchased by anyone from any good bookshop.

According to scholar F.F. Bruce (*The Canon of the New Testament*, Chapter 3 in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th edition; Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1959): "At a very early date it appears that the four Gospels were united in one collection. They must have been brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel according to John. This fourfold collection was known originally as 'The Gospel' in the singular, not 'The Gospels' in the plural; there was only one Gospel, narrated in four records, distinguished as 'according to Matthew', 'according to Mark', and so on.

"About AD 115 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to 'The Gospel' as an authoritative writing, and as he knew more than one of the four 'Gospels' it may well be that by 'The Gospel' he means the fourfold collection which went by that name.

"By the time of Irenaeus, who was bishop of Lyons in Gaul about AD 180, the idea of a fourfold Gospel had become so axiomatic in the Church at large that he refers to it as an established and recognised fact as obvious as the four cardinal points of the compass or the four winds.

"Then again, in 240AD, Origen, an influential teacher in Alexandria, Egypt confirmed the four Gospels, as recorded by historian, Eusebius for his Church

History. '*Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first written was that according to Matthew, who was once a tax collector but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, who published it for those who from Judaism came to believe, composed as it was in the Hebrew language. Secondly, that according to Mark, who composed it in accordance with the instructions of Peter, who in the catholic epistle acknowledges him as a son, saying, 'She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, salutes you, and so does Mark, my son.' And thirdly, that according to Luke, for those who from the Gentiles came to believe. After them all, that according to John.'*'

The writers of these four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were living at the time of Jesus, were taught intensively by Him over a period of three years, and were witnesses of Jesus' life. This is historical fact! Yet they make no mention of Jesus ever having been married. Should we then believe writers who came 100 and more years after Jesus' time, rather than eye witnesses?

It is clear from the above that Brown is guilty of distorting the facts of history. Whether this was done intentionally or not, we cannot know for sure.

### **Gnosticism:**

Brown makes much of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi documents. Nicky Gumbel, in his little booklet, *The Da Vinci Code-A Response* puts it as follows:

"Our knowledge of Gnosticism was greatly increased by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi documents. There is 'no secret' about what was found at Nag Hammadi (as implied by *The Da Vinci Code*)... a copy can be bought at any large bookshop.

"The Nag Hammadi documents are not really Gospels at all. The Gnostic 'gospels' are non-historical, and even anti-historical, with little narrative or sense of chronology. They were written generations after the facts whilst claiming direct, secret knowledge about them. Much of it is pseudepigrapha (spurious writings) which is at best a literary device, and at worst a fraud.

"The anti-Gnostic writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus emphasise the pagan features of Gnosticism and appeal to the plain sense

of Scripture—as interpreted by the church—which had been handed down by a chain of teachers reaching back to the apostles...”

In essence Gnosticism believes that “God is within, waiting to be revealed. Any external influence (matter) is evil. Finding the god within comes only via your mind or feelings. There are no external checks or balances, only those which your inner spirit appropriates as you progress in your revelation.” (The above quotation and the next have been taken from Travers & Jewel van der Merwe, *Strange Fire: The Rise of Gnosticism in the Church*, Conscience Press, 1995:13)

### Characteristics of Gnosticism:

#### 1. Man is co-substantial with God.

As soon as man by ‘gnosis’ (self knowledge) discovers and releases the imprisoned divine spark (spirit), he then starts on a mystic ascent to divine substance and on into the ‘realm of light’.

#### 2. Elitism

The mystic ‘gnosis’ (or knowledge) is only taught to the elite—those who have a special capacity beyond the force of reason and the flesh...The goal of the Gnostic is the release of the inner man by virtue of gnosis (inner knowledge) and his return to his native ‘realm of light’.

#### 3. Intuitive

The Gnostic concept of God is determined by the depth of illumination and revelation subjectively (by mind or feeling) experienced “about God”. The reference point for godhood is in self. Gnostic revelation...is not rooted in history and transmitted by Scripture. It is rather the intuition of the mystery self.

#### 4. Self-Knowledge

The Gnostic believes that gnosis (self-knowledge) is redemptive and as such needs to be discovered and known. As a result of gnosis, man subjectively discovers as a creature, the reality of his lasting unity with the transcendent God. He discovers that his life is immortal and that he is an ongoing manifestation of the light and the god that dwells in his inner self.

#### 5. Redefinition of the New Birth

Love and salvation are reckoned obvious consequences of “gnosis”... The only substantial evidence of Divine Salvation comes from within the self-consciousness of man. It is in the experience of the inner gnosis that the Gnostic is “born-

again”. The redemptive quality in man must not be sought in the incarnation of God in Christ through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ...but rather in the self-conscious seat of his own divinity.

#### 6. Divinity

To the Gnostic the mystery of God was already unveiled (at least in secret) long before the birth of Jesus Christ and even before the Scriptures were written. In fact, they say it was revealed and buried in man before the creation of the world. Therefore, the only way for man to know about God is through gnosis (self knowledge). As a result, he will experience and know the Divine Spark within himself and know he is a member of the Elite — a “Manifest Son of God”...

The Gnostic strives to find God in creation, i.e., in “self” rather than in the Person, Christ, who is the Creator! (van der Merwe: 13-15)

Lutzer very aptly sums it up this way: “Like the New Agers of today, Gnostics believed that each person can encounter God in his own way.” (:17)

“In *The Gospel of Philip*, we discover a more radical notion of our relationship to God. There we read: ‘God created humanity; [but now human beings] create God. That is the way it is in the world—human beings make gods, and worship their creation. It would be appropriate for the gods to worship human beings.’ (Lutzer: 100)

He continues on pages 23-24: “The Gnostics were a group of thinkers who were highly influenced by Plato. They differed among themselves about many issues, making it difficult to summarize in a few sentences what they exactly believed... most of them denied the idea of God becoming flesh, because matter was regarded as evil and hence God could not become man... Man must find his own way to salvation... his problem is not *sin* but rather *the need for self-knowledge*.”

“Some Gnostics clearly accepted a deity that was both feminine and masculine. They almost universally denied the physical resurrection of Jesus... Though they differed regarding how salvation was attained, they did agree that redemption is within our power, and that it can be achieved by encountering the divine directly without the mediation of Christ...”

### Christianity borrowed from other older religions:

Many are the accusations that Christianity borrowed concepts like, for instance, the virgin birth, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from figures like Mithras and others. Brown lets a character in the novel tell it as follows: “*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. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*” (:314)

However, what is forgotten by many Christians when confronted with these accusations is the power of prophecy. Prophecies prove the uniqueness of the Bible as the uniquely inspired Word of God. Many prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled exactly as prophesied in one Person only — Jesus Christ! The fulfillment of the prophecies are recorded by eye witnesses in the New Testament. Even Jesus drew this parallel: “*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself.*” (Luke 24:27) Read the whole report for yourself in Luke 24:13-31.

We need to very briefly deal with the Gnostic concept of the duality of God, i.e., masculine and feminine.

“A key concept embraced by many Gnostic followers is that the true God is androgynous (the perfect balance of feminine and masculine), the ‘great male-female power.’ Others stressed that He can be described in either masculine or feminine terms. In *The Gnostic Gospels*, the author writes, ‘Proponents of these diverse views agreed that the divine is to be understood in terms of a harmonious, dynamic relationship of opposites—a concept that may be akin to the Eastern view of *yin* and *yang*, but remains alien to orthodox Judaism and Christianity.’

“Since their deity is both god and goddess, the Gnostics came to despise Christianity for suppressing the ‘true’ nature of the Godhead. In *The Da Vinci Code*, one of the characters states, ‘...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.’ (p.124).” (Internet: The Real Truth, *The Da Vinci Code: Captivating the masses.*)

Hence, God can be truly experienced through the sexual act of a man with a woman.

The Gnostic Gospel of Thomas has this to say: “Jesus [Yeshua] said unto them, ‘When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make the male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be the male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in the place of an image, then you will enter the Kingdom.’” (As quoted in Lutzer:28, 29)

We read in Brown: “Historically, intercourse was the act through which male and female experienced God. The ancients believed that the male was spiritually incomplete until he had carnal knowledge of the sacred feminine. Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man achieved *gnosis* — knowledge of the divine. Since the days of Isis, sex rites had been considered man’s only bridge from earth to heaven. ‘By communing with woman,’ Langdon said, ‘man could achieve a climactic instant when his mind went totally blank and he could see God.’

“Sophie looked skeptical. ‘Orgasm as prayer?’

“...the early Jewish tradition involved ritualistic sex. *In the Temple, no less.* Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple housed not only God but also His powerful female equal, Shekinah. Men seeking wholeness came to the Temple to visit priestesses... with whom they made love and experienced the divine through physical union. The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH — the sacred name of God — in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous [male/female] physical union between the masculine *Jah* and the pre-Hebraic name of Eve, *Havah.*” (:410, 411)

**This Gnostic concept of prayer is so far removed from the truth and the way our Lord taught us to pray that it does not even warrant any comment!**

Furthermore, Brown’s idea of the sacred name of God is such rubbish and serves to drive the last nail home in his coffin. It not only exposes him as an enemy of God, His Word, the Bible, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit but as an outright enemy of the Cross. His book and the film are blasphemous and a direct attack against Christians and everything they hold dear.

The four Hebrew letters written in English as YHWH and generally known as the *tetragrammaton* (basically the Greek meaning for *four letters*) is ancient Hebrew for the Name of God as given to Moses in Exodus 3:14. “It is the covenanting name YHWH (most likely pronounced *Yahweh*, but most definitely not *Jehovah*) that is termed the Divine Name. (Doug Mason, *Jehovah In The New World Translation Of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, Bethel Ministries, 1985:2

When the ancient Jews came to this word they, for fear of taking God’s Name in vain, substituted the word Adonai (Lord) for it. Vowel points were added much later to the ancient Hebrew (consonants only) and hence it is believed the vowels of Adonai were added much later so that YHWH became *Yahweh*, and was much later **distorted** to *Jehovah*.

“The Masoretic Jews added the vowels found in the name *Adonay* (which is properly translated in the English Hebrew Scriptures as *Lord* to the consonants of the Tetragrammaton in order to obtain circumlocution [expressing of an unexpressionable word] for the divine name.” (Unnamed author, *The Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures*, Word Resources, Inc., Portland Oregon, 2nd Edition, 1998:7)

Despite all of these lies and distortions many people, among them even some



Christians, may come back from the movie or after having read the book, with questions and doubts racing through their minds. What is the real truth? What can we believe? They may then not have heeded the special warning in the yellow band over the poster of the movie. It says: **SPECIAL WARNING 13V: If not understood in fictional context, theme may offend religiously sensitive viewers.**

If the movie poster itself tells the public it is fiction, then why pay any attention to all the distortions of historical fact Brown and Sony concoct in the book and the filmed version thereof?

However, Christians need to be prepared for an intelligent discussion based on fact with those who present the information in the book and/or the movie as the exposure of so-called secrets *that the Church has kept hidden from the people for centuries.* At the same time they can find consolation in the fact *“that the hammers of dissent and rejection of God and His Son have hammered the anvil of the Bible for centuries, but they have not worn away truth.”*

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