

The Da Vinci Code:
Seeking the Truth behind the Fiction

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

After examining Dan Brown's evidence, was anyone else left wondering why someone would make such startling claims based on such weak evidence? If evidence is not really the truth behind this fiction, what is? Every author puts a little bit of themselves in their work. Dan Brown said of **The Da Vinci Code**, "I wrote this novel as part of my own spiritual quest" (NHWP¹) Without too much work, I believe we can learn the truths in Brown's life that led to this fiction. To do so, we will look not only at **The Da Vinci Code**, but also Brown's earlier Robert Langdon book, **Angels & Demons**.

Discussion:

I. Fumbling Faith

- A. Brown has said, "I really wish I had the luxury of absolute unquestioning faith. I do not and I am still searching" (NHWP). Don't we all have that same wish? But Brown's struggle is not about which faith or how strong a faith but about the nature of faith itself.
- B. Brown's statements:
 1. "Langdon smiled. 'Sophie, every faith in the world is based on fabrications. That is the definition of *faith*—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove. Every religion describes God through metaphor, allegory, and exaggeration, from the early Egyptians through modern Sunday school. Metaphors are a way to help our minds process the unprocessable. The problems arise when we begin to believe literally in our own metaphors...Those who truly understand their faiths understand the stories are metaphorical" (DVC², pp 341-342).
 2. When Langdon is asked if he believes in God, the following is stated:
"A *spiritual conundrum*, Langdon thought. *That's what my friends call me*. Although he studied religion for years, Langdon was not a religious man. He respected the power of faith, the benevolence of churches, the strength religion gave so many people...and yet, for him, the intellectual suspension of disbelief that was imperative if one were truly going to 'believe' had always proved too big an obstacle for his academic mind. 'I want to believe,' he heard himself say.
"Vittoria's reply carried no judgment or challenge. 'So why *don't* you?'
"Well, it's not that easy. *Having* faith requires *leaps* of faith, cerebral acceptance of miracles—immaculate conceptions and divine interventions" (A&D³, p 108).
 3. "Mr. Langdon, all questions were once spiritual. Since the beginning of time, spirituality and religion have been called on to fill in the gaps that science did not understand. The rising and setting of the sun was once attributed to *Helios* and a flaming chariot. Earthquakes and tidal waves were the wrath of Poseidon. Science has now proven those gods to be false gods" (A&D, p 25).
- C. Brown makes a classic mistake. Many think faith means believing something without evidence or despite contradictory evidence. Faith, to these people, is what men fabricate to fill in the gaps of their scientific understanding. This, however, is not the Biblical definition of faith.
- D. **Hebrews 11:1** says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is not belief in something without any evidence. It is believing something without having seen it. **II Corinthians 5:7** contrasts "We walk by faith, not by sight." Within **The Da Vinci Code**, Langdon and Teabing assert Mary Magdalene is the Holy Grail. They think her bones are hidden by the Priory of Sion along with documents providing evidence for their claims. They have neither seen the bones of Mary nor the documents. They have faith. Evolutionists assert the world came into existence by mere happenstance and through a series of fortunate accidents man came into being. They saw none of this. They have faith.

¹ NHWP refers to a 2004 speech presented by Dan Brown to the New Hampshire Writers Project; the speech can be heard at http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html ("Live Audio" link).

² DVC refers to the hardback version of **The Da Vinci Code** and does so throughout this outline.

³ A&D refers to the Pocket Books first paperback printing of **Angels and Demons** and does so throughout this outline.

- E. However, having examined the evidence presented in *The Da Vinci Code*, we find their faith has no good basis. The evidence is pitiful. Having examined the evidence presented by evolutionists, I find its faith has no good basis. The evidence is lacking.
- F. What evidence do we have to produce our faith? **Romans 10:17** says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." **John 20:30-31** says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life in His name." We have the Word. But it is not just any word. It is the testimony of those who experienced God's work. As in a courtroom drama, we have the testimonies of those who walked with the Lord. **I John 1:1** says, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life." **II Peter 1:16** says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." We have the great evidence of Saul's amazing conversion to the apostle Paul. However men may try to twist the story of Paul, something happened on the road to Damascus—something so powerful it took the most vicious enemy and turned him into the most ardent follower overnight. Not to mention the historical testimony of the disciples' devotion. However the skeptics may try to twist the history, something happened during that Passover week nearly 2000 years ago to cause 12 men to be willing to give up their lives to defend a faith that challenged their culture. What those 12 men did following that event was so powerful many others believed and were equally willing to give up their lives.
- G. Our evidence, despite what the critics say is pretty astounding. The New Testament is the most archaeologically attested and reliable writing of all ancient history. In every case where history or archaeology has shed light on biblical subjects, it has always proven the Bible to be true. Though written by more than 30 authors over more than 1500 years, it is amazingly unified in message and purpose. It is an amazingly honest document showing its characters, warts and all. There is, no doubt, the evidence regarding how accurately the Bible portrays life even now 1900 years after its completion. But most importantly there is the testimony of biblical prophecy. Old Testament prophecies that record centuries before what would happen in the first century are in the words of Sir Leigh Teabing, "A bit too perfect for coincidence, wouldn't you say?"
- H. Don't fumble faith. Do we still have questions? I am sure we do. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Don't discard the evidence just because you didn't actually see the face of God. If there were no room for doubt, there would be no faith, but faith saves (**Ephesians 2:8**).

II. Different Routes, Same Goal

- A. Though Brown claims to be a Christian, his spiritual quest has left him bereft of any real path to God or at least left him bereft of faith in any real path to God. He seems to have become the greatest of ecumenicalists. That is, he sees any path claiming to lead to God as a valid one. This is one reason his book is so popular; it claims it does not matter how a person gets to God.
- B. Consider some of Brown's statements.
 1. "Faith is a continuum. We all fall on that line wherever we may fall and by attempting to classify and rigidly classify ethereal concepts like faith we end up debating the semantics to the point where we entirely miss the obvious. That is, that we are all trying to decipher life's big mysteries. Where did we come from? What happens when we die? Where are we going? What does all of this mean? And each of us must follow our own path to enlightenment" (NHWP).
 2. "I don't claim to know where we all came from. But I do know that there are multiple versions of that story and I also know that that's ok. Everyone is entitled to believe what they believe. If you find someone's ideas absurd or offensive just listen to someone else" (NHWP).
 3. "The Bible represents a fundamental guidepost for millions of people on the planet, in much the same way the Koran, Torah, and Pali Canon offer guidance to people of other religions. If you and I could dig up documentation that contradicted the holy stories of Islamic belief, Judaic belief, Buddhist belief, pagan belief, should we do that? Should we wave a flag and tell the Buddhists that we have proof the Buddha did not come from a lotus blossom? Or that Jesus was not born of a *literal* virgin birth?" (DVC, p. 342).

4. In ***Angels & Demons***, when one character says, “The day science substantiates God in a lab is the day people stop needing faith!” the supporting protagonist in the book, Vittoria Vetra, responds: “You mean the day they stop needing the *church*...But the church is not the only enlightened soul on the planet! We all seek God in different ways. What are you afraid of? That God will show himself somewhere *other* than inside these walls? That people will find him in their own lives and leave your antiquated rituals behind? Religions evolve!” (A&D, p. 534).
- C. Do you see the point? One path to God is as good as another. We are all going to the same goal, we are just taking different routes to get there. This, however, just cannot be. Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity, though they may have some similar tenets, cannot all be right. It is not enough to believe God exists. It is not enough to do some things in His name. We actually have to do what He wants us.
- D. In **Joshua 24:15**, Joshua said, “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua understood all the gods of the pagans were not the same as his God. The Psalmists also recognized this (**Psalm 86:8; 89:8; 113:5**).
- E. While Brown seems to equate Christianity with the Roman Catholic Church and the antagonist of ***Angels & Demons*** is certainly criticized for believing that organization is the only way to God, Bible-believing Christians do not believe the same. We do recognize, however, there is only one way to God. It is not through Buddha, Vishnu, Gaea or Mary Magdalene, but through Jesus Christ. **John 14:6** says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” In **Acts 4:10-12**, Peter said there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved. We also know when someone comes to God through Jesus Christ they are added to His church (**Acts 2:47**). Are you allowed to follow your own path? In a sense, yes. God will not force you to follow His path and neither will we. However, there is only one path to enlightenment and it is through Jesus Christ and His word.
- F. Do we fear people might find God through some other means than Christ and His church? Absolutely not. Rather, we fear people are looking for God in the wrong places. We fear they will search but never find God. We fear they will believe they have found God but come up short like those mentioned in **Matthew 7:21-23**. Therefore we teach, we counteract error like Dan Brown’s, we strive to persuade. There is only one path leading to life (**Matthew 7:13-14**).
- G. We should not be surprised a self-proclaimed Christian says there are more ways to God than through Jesus. After all, most self-proclaimed Christians look at the distinct “Christian” churches and claim they are all getting to God. If we can all get to God through whichever doctrine of Christ we want, why can’t others get to God through a doctrine that doesn’t include Christ?
- H. This is the real danger of ***The Da Vinci Code***, not that people will believe in the goddess, rather that they will believe it no longer matters what we believe. Our post-modern culture wants everything to be subjective and everyone to have their own way. However, if all these mutually exclusive approaches to God are equally valid, none of them carry any weight. We cannot all be right.

III. Conduct Code Catch

- A. The real draw behind the fiction seems to be universal in our society. No one likes to be told what to do. Religion is personal. I get to do what I want and no one can say anything contrary.
- B. Consider what Brown has said.
 1. After complaining about religion’s leaps of faith noted above, Langdon continued, “And then there are the codes of conduct. The Bible, the Koran, Buddhist scripture...they all carry similar requirements—and similar penalties. They claim that if I don’t live by a specific code I will go to hell. I can’t imagine a God who would rule that way” (A&D, p 108-109).
 2. “The Sangreal documents simply tell the *other* side of the Christ story. In the end, which side of the story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration, but at least the information has survived” (DVC, p 256).
 3. “Sopie looked skeptical. ‘My friends who are devout Christians definitely believe that Christ *literally* walked on water, *literally* turned water into wine, and was born of a *literal* virgin birth.’

“My point exactly,’ Langdon said. ‘Religious allegory has become a part of the fabric of reality. And living in that reality helps millions of people cope and be better people.’

“But it appears their reality is false.’

“Langdon chuckled. ‘No more false than that of a mathematical cryptographer who believes in the imaginary number “i” because it helps her break codes” (DVC, p 342).

- C. This is the bane of our post-modernist age. Everything is relative and subjective. Situation ethics rules the day. What is right for me, may not be right for you and vice versa. We do not want to be told what to do and no one has the right to say we are wrong. If we were able to delve into the hearts of those who rebel against religion and those who embrace religion on an ecumenical level, I believe we will find this at the foundation. “I want to do what I want to do and no one has the right to tell me otherwise.” All religious paths are equally valid because truth and error do not matter. All that matters is does our religion help us feel better about life.
- D. But think about this logically. Are we really supposed to believe God created all this but doesn't care how we live? Robert Langdon says he cannot imagine a god who would have a standard of conduct and then punish those who violate it. I can hardly imagine a god who would do otherwise. Think about it. When men establish nations, what is the first thing we expect them to do? Establish laws. When people found companies, what is the first thing we expect them to do? Establish charters and by-laws. Why would it challenge our creative minds to believe in a God who did the same thing with the world He created? **Genesis 1:1** says, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” As Creator, God would and does have the absolute right to establish a code of conduct. In fact, we would expect God to. Because I accept **Genesis 1:1**, I am not surprised to read **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is evil or good.”
- E. Despite the fundamental fact that God the Creator must, by very nature of His creative action, also be God the Judge, most—Christians included—want to run their own lives. We must never forget **II Timothy 3:16-17**. God gave us the Word to teach us how to behave. He has determined what is good and what is not. We do not get to make that decision. God is God; we are not (**Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**). As **James 1:19-20** says, when we approach God, we must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Even calling ourselves Christians or calling Jesus our Lord is not enough. We must actually do what the Father commands (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

Conclusion:

I want to address another issue brought up in both of Brown's Robert Langdon books.

“The girl glared. ‘So, is *anything* in Christianity original?’

“Very little in *any* organized faith is truly original. Religions are not born from scratch. They grow from one another. Modern religion is a collage...an assimilated historical record of man's quest to understand the divine” (A&D, p 243).

“Teabing groaned. ‘Don't get a symbologist started on Christian icons. Nothing in Christianity is original” (DVC, p 232).

If there is nothing else, there is one original thing in Christianity. There are no religions in the history of mankind except those who hearken back to Christianity whose God offered the ultimate sacrifice for sins. To be sure, some of the pagan gods are spoken of as dying and returning to life. But none were sent to live among us as one of us and to die as the propitiation for our sins even though we have already blown the code of conduct they established (**I John 1:8-2:2**). There are none whose resurrection proves to be the hope of our own resurrection in the end. Only Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the Son of God did that. And it is only through faith in Him and His resurrection and through submission to Him that we can find our path to God (**Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38**).

If you choose to accept the religion of ***The Da Vinci Code***, search hard and maybe you will be able to bow before the bones of Mary Magdalene. But we Christians do not have any bones to search out. There is no tomb. No followers of Jesus kept the relics of His bones or flesh. Why? Because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, left His tomb and then left the earth. You may seek out the dusty relics of ancient bones and decayed bodies if you like, but we serve a risen Savior. Can we invite you to join us?