

Decoding the DaVinci Code

Seek The Real Truth

I. Introduction: Why respond to a work of fiction?

- a. In a created universe there is such a thing as **objective truth** and it does matter.
- b. **Christians** need to know the basic historical facts
- c. **Unsuspecting** people who are ignorant of the truth may be affected

“What about those who are not blessed with absolute certainty? What about those who look at the cruelty in the world today and say, where is God today? Those who look at Church scandals and ask, who are these men who claim to speak the truth about Christ and yet lie to cover up the sexual abuse of children by their own priests?

..What happens to those people Robert if persuasive scientific evidence comes out that the churches’ version of the Christ story is inaccurate, and that the greatest story ever told is in fact the greatest story ever sold.” P.288

II. Assertions We Will Address

What Orthodox Christians Believe	The DaVinci Code alleges
that the Kingship of Jesus has to do with a heavenly kingdom	The kingship of Jesus was about establishing a royal bloodline and earthly government
that Jesus remained single throughout his life	That He was in fact married to Mary Magdalene.
that Jesus's death and resurrection were the center of His earthly mission	His chief contribution was fathering a child by His wife, Mary.
that the Bible, though written by human beings, is divinely inspired	That the Bible is merely a human invention
that the New Testament gospels are reliable sources of information about Jesus	The trustworthy gospels come from other collections, like The Dead Sea Scrolls or the Gnostic library from Nag Hammadi.
That Jesus was fully God and fully man	That Jesus was in fact a mere mortal, and that His deity was invented in order to augment the power of the fourth-century Roman emperor Constantine.

While the book makes all kinds of fictitious and wild claims about a number of things both secular and sacred we are only going to spend time on three:

Is the bible reliable? How do we know that the book we now have is linguistically and doctrinally the same as the first manuscript that was written by the prophets and Apostles?

If the Bible is reliable, then we can make the case for accepting the Gospel account of the life of Jesus as opposed to deriving our beliefs from the so-called Gnostic gospels.

Finally, next week we need to address the issue of the Deity of Christ. **At what point did believers acknowledge that Jesus was the Christ and that He truly was God in the flesh?**

Upon these questions the entire Christian religion either stands or falls. So let’s tackle them head on.

III. What Can History Really Tell Us?

How do we know anything historically? There is no "scientific" proof that JFK was the president. We cannot recreate him in a laboratory or bring him back to life. We cannot reproduce the experiment. We cannot calculate an equation that tells us that he was. But we can assert with a high degree of probability that JFK was indeed our president and was assassinated in 1963. We do this by appealing to historical evidence. Many people saw JFK, many who are still alive today. We have some of his writings and even his picture, movie and television footage of him. But none of this "proves", in a scientific sense, that JFK ever lived or was the president.

- a. The kind of evidence used in historical research is the same kind as that used in a court of law in order to determine what exactly happened.
- b. Eyewitnesses are questioned, motives are examined, and physical evidence is scrutinized such as journal writings.
- c. The evidence we will present in defense of the Bible is better evidence than we have that Plato ever lived, or Homer, or the Caesar’s or many historical figures that we take for granted.
- d. The written sources of evidence include:

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1. Official documents of church and civil authorities: acts of councils and synods, confessions of faith, liturgies, church laws, and the official letters of popes, patriarchs, bishops, and representative bodies.
2. Private writings of personal actors in the history: the works of the church fathers, heretics, and heathen authors.
3. Accounts of chroniclers and historians, whether friends or enemies, who were eye-witnesses of what they relate.

Can We Trust The Bible?

The DaVinci code says "The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book". (231)

a. Is the Bible the product of man or of God?

1. It is both Inspired by God and written by man. 2 Tim 3:16

b. How was it put together?

1. God spoke it. Like honey do list from my wife she tells me what to do and I write it down
2. Prophets would record it
3. God provided a way for people to be certain that what the prophets said was from God. Deut 18:21-22

c. How did the prophets and Apostles know what to write down?

1. God had a distinct voice his message was unmistakable The word of the lord is used 219X
 - a. Moses Ex 17:14 "Write this"
 - b. Isaiah 8:1 "write in it"
 - c. Jeremiah 30:2 "Write thee"
 - d. Ezekiel 37:19 "Say unto them"
 - e. Habakuk 2:2 "Write the vision"
 - f. Rev 1:19 "Write these things"

Davinci codes says that History has never had a definitive version of the book
Let's check that out:

d. How do we know what they wrote thousands of years ago was passed onto us accurately?

1. 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls All of the books of the Bible are represented in the Dead Sea Scroll collection except Esther
2. These gave us the oldest copies of the OT ever found dating back to 200 BC

The DC says that the scrolls highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled by men p 254-55

e. Do the DSS reveal historical discrepancies and fabrications?

1. Textual comparison reveals almost perfect agreement between our modern version of the OT and the Dead Sea scrolls.
2. Jesus is never mentioned and the scrolls have nothing to do with Christianity since they were written before the time of Christ.

F. To what extent do we find errors in comparing the DSS to our received text?

1. The answer to this is found in the applied science of textual criticism.
2. Textual criticism is a branch of philology that examines the existing copies of a written text to produce a version of the text that is as close as possible to the original.
3. Before the invention of printing, literary works had to be copied by hand, and each time a manuscript was copied, it was possible for errors to be introduced by the human scribe.
4. The difficulty in textual criticism of differing manuscripts of a single text is that it is not always immediately apparent which variant is original and which is an error.
5. The task of the textual critic, therefore, is to sort through the variants and establish a "critical text" that is intended to best represent the original by explaining the state of all existing witness copies.

g. Do we have enough evidence to ensure the accuracy of the language and the purity of the doctrine of the New Testament?

The Weight of the Manuscript evidence

1. The New Testament has been preserved in more manuscripts than any other ancient work.
 - a. We have over 5,300 Greek manuscripts,
 - b. 10,000 Latin manuscripts
 - c. 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages. DO GRAPH DEPICTING THIS

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2. This compares to less than 700 manuscripts for Homer's *Iliad*, the next most well-documented work from antiquity.
3. Because the copies are so numerous, they have been cross checked for accuracy.
4. Professor Daniel Wallace notes that in the entire NT (20,000 lines of text), only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words). None of the problem texts affects any significant doctrine.
5. This means that we can be absolutely certain about the precise wording of the Greek text from which we derive our New Testament translations in 99.8 percent of the lines of text.
6. We can also conclude with great certainty that there is no existing evidence of any kind to suggest that either the OT or the NT that we have today are in any way corrupt or inaccurate.

Reconstructing Aunt Sally's Recipe. Here's a little story you can use to illustrate how such a test works. Pretend your Aunt Sally learns in a dream the recipe for an elixir that preserves youth. When she wakes up, she

scribbles the directions on a scrap of paper, then runs to the kitchen to make her first glass of the potion. In a few days Aunt Sally is transformed into a picture of radiant youth because of her daily dose of "Sally's Secret Sauce."

Aunt Sally is so excited that she sends detailed, handwritten instructions on how to make the sauce to her three bridge partners. They, in turn, make copies for 10 of their own friends.

All goes well until Aunt Sally's dog eats the scrap of paper on which she first wrote the recipe. In a panic she contacts her three friends who have suffered similar mishaps, so the alarm goes out to the others in an attempt to recover the original wording.

Sally rounds up all the surviving handwritten copies, 26 in all. When she spreads them out on the kitchen table, she immediately notices some differences.

Twenty-three of the copies are exactly the same. Of the remaining three, however, one has misspelled words, another has an inverted phrase ("mix then chop" instead of "chop then mix"), and one includes an ingredient that is not listed on any of the others.

Do you think Aunt Sally can accurately reconstruct her original recipe from this evidence? Of course, she can. The misspellings are obvious errors and are easily corrected. The single inverted phrase stands out and can easily be repaired. Sally would then strike the extra ingredient, reasoning that it is more plausible that one person would accidentally add an item than that 25 people would accidentally omit the same one. Even if the variations were more numerous or more diverse, the original could still be reconstructed with a high level of confidence if Sally had enough copies.

This, in simplified form, is how scholars do "textual criticism." It's not a haphazard effort based on hopes and guesses; it's a careful linguistic process allowing an alert critic to identify and correct the possible corruption of any work.

The DC states that there were 80 other Gospels existing at the time of the council of Nicaea but that Constantine ordered them suppressed in order to support the deity of Jesus. "**The Bible as we know it today was collated by the Page Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.**" P. 231

h. How do we know that the four Gospel accounts of the Life of Jesus are the right versions of events? Aren't there other Gospels that could have been included but were not?

The Canon of Scripture

1. By the year 170 AD elders of each congregation had approved certain writings and rejected others as they became available.
2. Most of the churches were in agreement, having approved the same books independently.
3. The approved books were then called the "canon" of Scripture, "canon" being a Greek word meaning "rod" or "ruler."
4. These books constituted the standard *rule of faith* for all the churches.
5. The canon was not imposed by church authorities at the council of Nicaea as the DC asserts.
6. The canon grew up by many independent decisions of elders who were responsible for their congregations alone.

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7. By the time of the council of Nicaea (325 AD) the church was already circulating the approved Gospels and Epistles and had been for over 150 years.
8. Since the literacy rate among Palestinian Jews was about 3%, there never was anything close to 80 different gospels to be considered for inclusion in the canon of Scripture.

h. How did the elders of the churches decide which writings should be read in the church as authoritative? The answer is simple:

1. They received the writings of the *apostles* and their closest companions, and the writings endorsed by them.
2. The entire Old Testament was received by the implicit endorsement of the apostles.

i. How did they know that these writings were not forgeries?

1. The churches did not receive them from strangers. These documents were hand-delivered by friends of the apostles to elders who also knew the apostles personally.
2. Forgeries would be obvious, especially if the writing promoted strange doctrine.

Application

1. To what extent do you consider the Bible to be reliable and God's authoritative Word? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. What is the basis for your level of trust or distrust?
3. To what extent do you consider the DaVinci Code to be reliable? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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