

HOPEFM

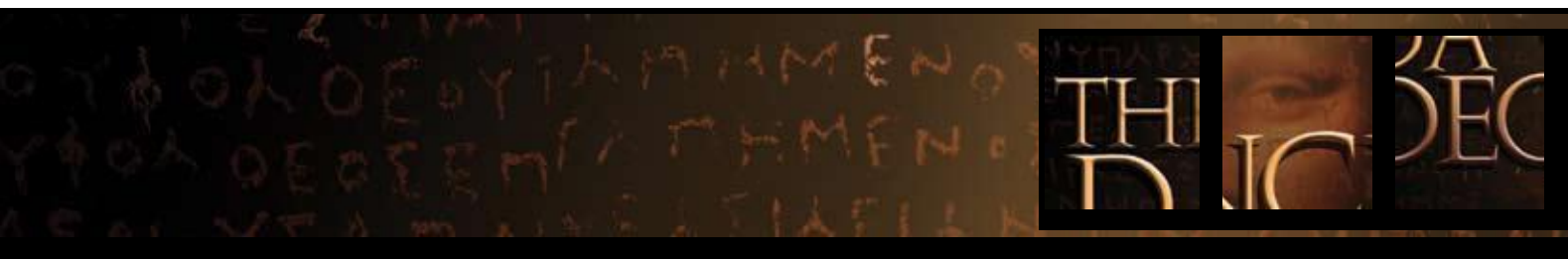
MYSTERIES UNEARTHED

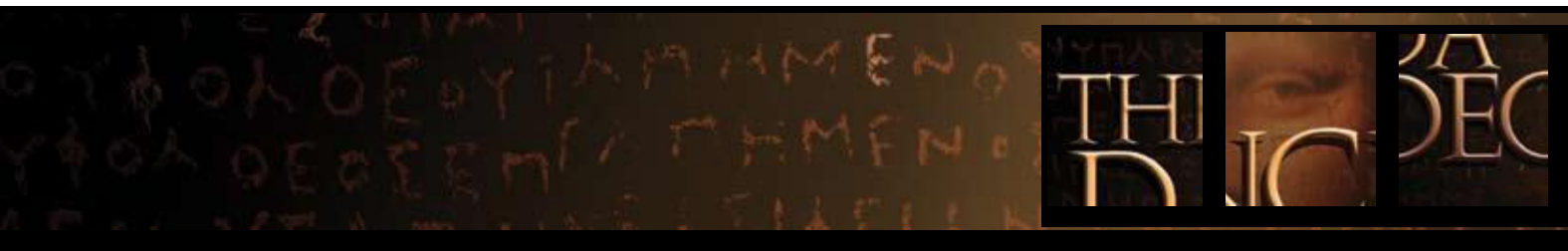
BY

PAUL HAWORTH

The Da Vinci
DECODE
EPISODE 1

The cover-up?





Notes...

The Da Vinci Code is a blockbuster. Dan Brown's novel has sold over 80 million copies in 42 languages and is now a major Hollywood film.

It claims Christianity is "the greatest cover-up in human history", because

- Jesus Christ was not God, just human: a 'mortal prophet'
- Mary Magdalene was divine, but sexist churchmen later suppressed that story
- Mary and Jesus married, and their child, Sarah, moved to France and was the ancestor of royalty
- The Bible was changed by Emperor Constantine, at the church Council of Nicea, AD325
- The Roman Catholic church violently suppressed the truth.

'If the book's claims were true, then all forms of Christianity would be false (except perhaps for Gnostic / feminist versions focusing on Mary Magdalene instead of Jesus).'

[catholic.com]

Why is The Da Vinci Code so popular?

1. Gripping plot
2. Questions organised religion

People "...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?"

Da Vinci Code p.356

"The Roman Catholic Church, especially in the U.S. and Ireland, suffered from a continuing sexual abuse scandal involving priests..."

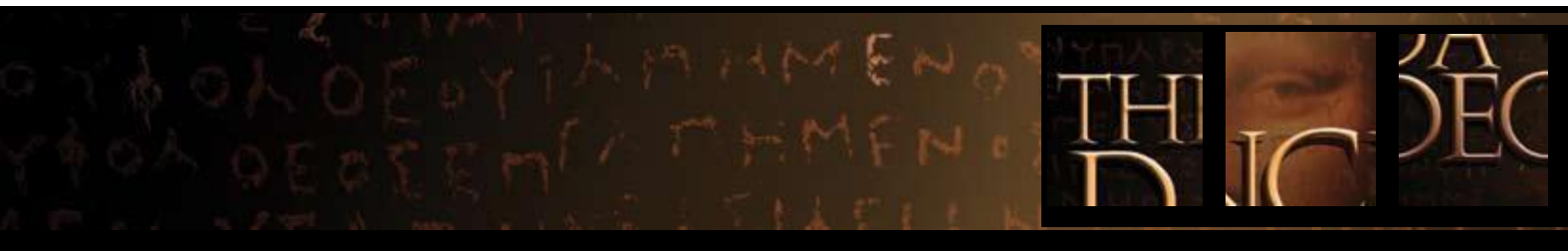
James Rudin, Religious News Service, 2005

"Christians can make Christianity seem mundane, all about rules, or all about denying yourself pleasures. I can understand why The Da Vinci Code is such an attractive alternative...[its] a view of religion that can seem more human, more in contact with the real world, more about relationships and experiences and love and sex and celebration."

Greg Clarke, Is It Worth Believing?

"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

-Jesus Christ to priests, Matthew 21:31



Notes...

3. People love exposing a cover-up.

4. It promotes a fashionable spirituality.

The Church is sometimes seen to be...

- All about rules
- Making arrogant claims of having 'the truth'
- Hypocritical
- Sexist against women
- Repressive about sex.

5. It sounds democratic about spiritual truth.

"The church should not be allowed to tell us what notions we can and can't entertain."

Sophie's grandfather, Da Vinci Code, p.332

How accurate is it?

1. CLAIM: Brown accepts Jesus as historical figure.
CHECK: No serious historian doubts this.
2. CLAIM: Jesus was merely human and mortal, but the church burned any gospels describing Jesus' human characteristics.
CHECK: The accepted Gospels show Jesus as very human!

'Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.'
John 4:5-6, NIV

'...he was hungry.' Matthew 4:2

'And Jesus grew in wisdom' Luke 2:52

'Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offence at him... And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.'
Matthew 13:54-58, NIV

Notes...

Christians have always treasured the idea that God became a human, because it shows God understands our lives and how we feel. The symbol of Christianity is the cross, where God in human form willingly died for the sins of the world.

There is no historical evidence that gospels were deliberately suppressed to censor Christ's humanity.

3. CLAIM: the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gnostic gospels found at Nag Hammadi are important early Christian documents that contradict the Bible:-

'The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. In addition to telling the true Grail story, these documents speak of Christ's ministry in very human terms. Of course, the Vatican, in keeping with their tradition of misinformation tried very hard to suppress the release of these scrolls.'
The Da Vinci Code, p.317

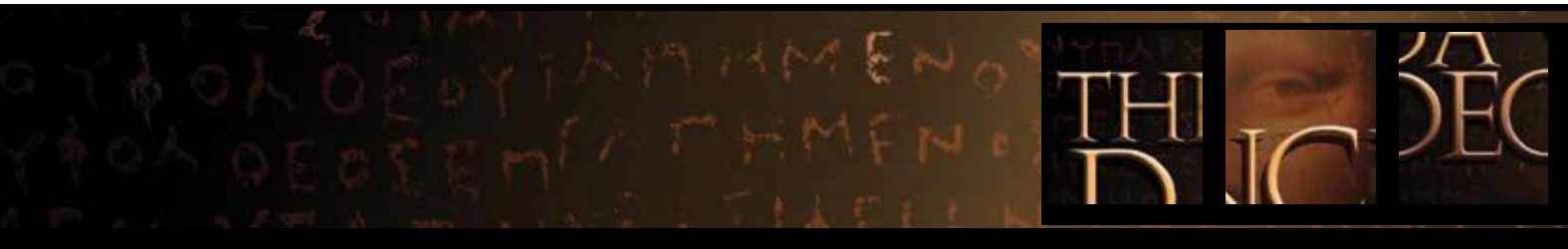
CHECK: The Dead Sea Scrolls:

- Are Jewish books – not Christian books at all.
- Contain the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) plus other Jewish documents.

The Nag Hammadi documents:

- written by AD250 - long after the death of the supposed writers like Philip, Mary, etc. (Our copies of these come from the 4th century).
- Mystical, rather than historical.
- Portray a Jesus who doesn't blink or leave footprints and only seems human.
- Do not mention the Grail (contrary to what Dan Brown claims).
- Early Christians ("church fathers") argued with them.
- Welcomed by Christian scholars as an insight into the Gnostic religion, which some New Testament books oppose.
- Sexist! The Gnostic 'Gospel of Thomas':

'Simon Peter said, "Let Mary 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 many become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."
(Saying 114)



Notes...

GNOSTICISM	CHRISTIANITY
The world was created by a lower-grade god, while our souls were created by a Supreme Being who wanted to enlighten us.	There is one God who is good and perfect, who created the world as well as the human body and soul.
Physical world and human body are evil.	God called the physical world “good” (Genesis 1)
Jesus a messenger from the Supreme Being. Sent to enlighten our souls. Only appeared to be in human form.	Jesus is God in human flesh (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7)
Because he was not in human flesh, Jesus was unable to die.	Jesus genuinely died, in order to take away the guilt of anyone who believes in him.
Enlightened with secret truth (subjective)	Faith comes by hearing eyewitness evidence (objective) (Romans 10:17; John 1:3; 2 Peter 16-21.)

“The Nag Hammadi manuscripts 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 while claiming direct, secret knowledge about them...”

Nicky Gumbel, The Da Vinci Code: a Response, p.10

4. Did the church rewrite history?

CLAIM: Dan Brown claims that at the church Council of Nicea in AD325, the Roman Emperor Constantine edited the Bible to change Jesus into God.

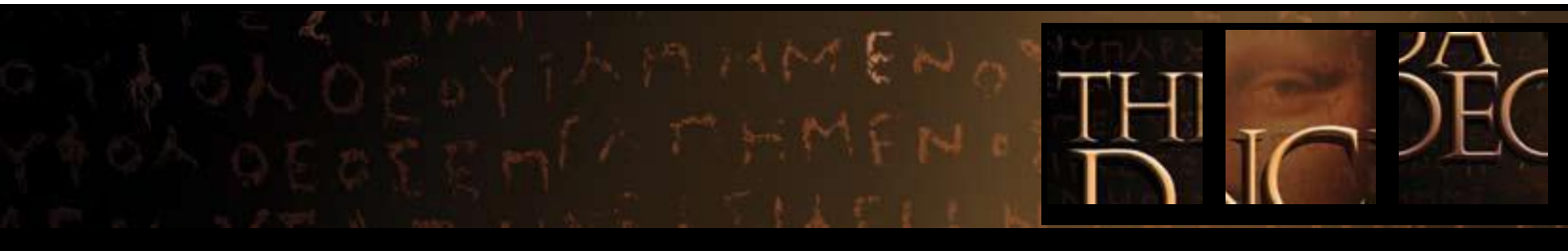
CHECK: There is documentary evidence against this:

1. Church leaders recorded their belief that Jesus was God well before AD 325, and these documents were too widely spread to be tampered with:

- C. AD110, Ignatius of Antioch: “For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God’s plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit” (Letter to the Ephesians 18:2).

- C. AD170 Tatian the Syrian: “We are not playing the fool, you Greeks, no do we talk nonsense, when we report that God was born in the form of a man” (Address to the Greeks 21).

- C. AD190, Clement of Alexandria: “The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning - for he was in God - and of our well-being. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things” (Exhortation to the Greeks 1:7:1).



Notes...

2. Roman historians independently confirm that Christians believed Christ to be God.

- Pliny (Plinius Secundus) wrote around AD112 that the Christians would meet and “pray to Christ as to a God” (Epistles X, 26).

3. Other Biblical writers, notably Paul (who most scholars now date early, around AD 50-60).

“See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy ... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form... ’ Colossians2:8-9

Early Christians believed Jesus was God in human flesh - long before AD325.

Next session we will examine historical evidence for this belief.

The Bottom Line

- The Da Vinci Code is a fascinating thriller, but should not be taken as history, and should not undermine anyone’s faith.
- Enjoy the fiction but, as the movie slogan puts it, “Seek the truth.”
- Or as Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
(John 8:32)