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The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?

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The content on pages 43–50 and 59–66 is partially adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, *Resurrection* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2000).

The content on pages 51–56 is partially adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, *The Bible Answer Book* (Nashville: J. Countryman, 2004).

The content on pages 57–59 is partially adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, "Answering More Prime Time Fallacies," *Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 23/No. 2.

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ISBN 1-4143-0279-7

Printed in the United States of America

10 09 08 07 06 05 04
8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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FOREWORD

by Hank Hanegraaff

WHEN MEL GIBSON produced *The Passion of the Christ*—a movie that substantially follows the contours of the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ death—he became the immediate subject of controversy. Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor of *The New Republic*, called *The Passion* “a repulsive, masochistic fantasy, a sacred snuff film” that is “without any doubt an anti-Semitic movie.”¹ Maureen Dowd, writing in *The New York Times*, accused Gibson of “courting bigotry in the name of sanctity.”² And Andy Rooney of *60 Minutes* fame characterized Gibson as “a real nut case” whose ulterior motive was making money.³

Conversely, when Dan Brown released *The Da Vinci Code*⁴—a novel that characterizes the New Testament Gospels as “fabrications” and the deity of Christ as a fable—he was immediately lauded as a brilliant historian. *Library Journal* characterized his work as “a compelling

blend of history and page-turning suspense,” a “masterpiece” that “should be mandatory reading.”⁵ *Publisher’s Weekly* called it “an exhaustively researched page-turner about secret religious societies, ancient cover-ups and savage vengeance.”⁶ And best-selling author Nelson DeMille christened *The Da Vinci Code* “pure genius.”⁷

Why is *The Passion* excoriated and *The Da Vinci Code* extolled? Why are Gibson’s motives denounced and Brown’s dignified? Why is Christ’s passion referred to as a “repulsive, masochistic fantasy” and his supposed marriage to Mary Magdalene touted as a researched material fact? The answer may surprise you. It is not just that in our increasingly secularist culture it has become politically correct to cast aspersions on Christ and the church he founded. It is because of a great reversal of values. Fiction—such as the notion that Christianity was concocted to subjugate women—is being cleverly peddled as fact, while fact—such as the deity of Christ—is being capriciously passed off as fiction.

Nearly all of Brown’s assertions in *The Da Vinci Code* are based on several statements he presents on page 1 under the heading of “FACT”—before the novel even begins. Most notable among these “facts” is the following:

FOREWORD

The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—is 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, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci.

At first blush, this may seem rather harmless. But Brown uses this “fact” (which in reality is completely untrue) to cast aspersions on Jesus Christ, the historicity of the Gospels, and the uniqueness of Christianity. Brown depicts the Priory of Sion as a secret society bent on covering up the scandal of Christ’s marriage to Mary Magdalene—who would have been the true leader of the church if she had not unceremoniously crashed into an apostolic glass ceiling erected by a patriarchal church. As we will see, much of what Brown trumpets as truth is based on a fabrication concocted by an anti-Semite with a criminal record. Yet Brown says he is so confident in the reliability of his claims that were he to write a nonfiction piece on the same theme, he would not change a thing.⁸

The fact that *The Da Vinci Code* is false does not, of course, prove that Christianity is true. Thus, this book is divided into two sections. The first is a fast-paced analysis of Brown's "facts." To thoroughly examine the question of the historical authenticity of the claims made in *The Da Vinci Code*, I called on an expert witness—my good friend Dr. Paul Maier. As a highly regarded professor of ancient history and an award-winning author, Dr. Maier is in a unique position to unmask the deceptions of *The Da Vinci Code*. His rapier-sharp wit and his colorful style not only make Part 1 an engaging read but also highlight the disdain we both share for historical revisionism. The second section is an apologetic for what we know to be the *truth*. Here I provide a positive defense of the faith—namely, that the Bible is divine rather than human in origin, that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, and that amid the religions of the ancient world, Christianity is demonstrably unique. Let me be clear: *no one should feel that his faith has been undermined by the fantasies and lies presented under the guise of truth in this novel.*

Finally, a word about my passion for this project. During one of my early morning treks to Starbucks, a young woman pulled me aside

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and, fighting tears, asked me to reassure her that the Christian faith was valid. She, along with a group of her friends, had read *The Da Vinci Code* and was seriously shaken by its assertions. That same morning Ron Beers, Senior Vice President at Tyndale House Publishers, called to tell me about an avalanche of inquiries his office had received regarding *The Da Vinci Code*—and to urge me to provide a response. Further solidifying my resolve to debunk this novel and defend the faith was my final conversation with my friend Bob Passantino. In his view this project was necessary not only because *The Da Vinci Code* is a runaway bestseller (as of this writing the book has sold more than 6 million copies, and film director Ron Howard is working in collaboration with Columbia Pictures to turn it into a major movie) but because the novel is on the vanguard of a growing movement seeking to reconstruct Christ, reinvent Christianity, and reject the canon of Scripture.

Bob not only encouraged me to write a response to Brown's book but also exhorted me to redouble my efforts to defend the faith. One hour later, a massive heart attack ushered Bob into the very presence of the historical Christ

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this book is designed to defend. His death is a sober reminder that “*soon* this life will be past—and only what’s done for Christ will last.” Thus, *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* is dedicated to his memory.

Avast double standard overhangs Western society today that is totally deplorable—namely, *you dare not attack any of the religious systems of the world . . . except for Christianity*. To criticize the polytheism and caste system in Hinduism or fault Gautama Buddha for leaving his wife and son to meditate in the forest provokes immediate charges of intolerance and bigotry. To question aspects of the prophet Muhammad’s life is not politically correct in a pluralist society—and can even be dangerous.¹ To identify *any* Jewish role whatever in the Good Friday trial of Jesus raises instant charges of anti-Semitism. But skewer Christianity? Caricature Christ and present falsehoods about the church he founded? *No problem!* Join the crowd! It’s the “in” thing—politically *very* correct and high fashion to boot!

THE JESUS GAME

The past four decades in particular have seen an outpouring of sensationalist books, motion pictures, and television specials in which Jesus and the true origins of Christianity are barely recognizable. We might call this phenomenon “The Jesus Game,” and here is how it is played: Begin with a general sketch of Jesus on the basis of the Gospels, but then distort it as much as you please. Add clashing colors, paint in a bizarre back-

ground, and add episodes to the life of Christ that could not possibly have happened. If the end result still faintly resembles the Jesus of the New Testament, you lose. But if you come up with a radically different—and above all, sensational—portrait of Jesus, you win. The prize is maximum coverage in the nation's print and broadcast media. Any frowns from the faithful will be ignored amid the skyrocketing sales of your product.

The Jesus Game has been played ever since the pagan philosopher Celsus first helped set up the rules in the second century AD, but it has never been played with such enthusiasm as at the present moment.

Consider some of the recent players:

- England's Hugh Schonfield unveiled a portrait of Jesus in 1966 that might well be styled "The Passover Plotter"—a false "Savior" who schemed the whole Golgotha scenario.²
- Nikos Kazantzakis's book *The Last Temptation of Christ*, later made into a movie, cast Jesus as an object of St. Paul's scorn.³
- Also in the tumultuous '60s, we might even have expected to see "Jesus the Radical Revolutionary," courtesy of the S. G. F. Brandon books.⁴
- Of course, there were mercurial (read

“bewildered”) authors like John M. Allegro, another British scholar who once worked on the Dead Sea Scrolls but ruined his reputation by favoring us with the image of “Jesus the Mushroom Cultist” in 1970. In his *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, Allegro seriously argued that Jesus was invented by myth-makers who got high on the hallucinogenic qualities of the red-topped, white-flecked fly agaric mushroom and wrote the Gospels to communicate their cultic secrets!⁵

- Not to be outdone, Morton Smith presented “Christ the Master Magician” in his 1973 book *The Secret Gospel*, explaining away Jesus’ miracles as sleight-of-hand.⁶
- In claims similar to those in the Qur’an, Australian Donovan Joyce’s *The Jesus Scroll* unveiled “Jesus the Senescent Savior” who survived Golgotha and lived on to the ripe old age of eighty.⁷
- “Jesus the Happy Husband” staged his debut in several books, the most influential of which was Baigent, Lincoln, and Leigh’s *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* in the 1980s.⁸ These authors spun the impossible saga that is the heart of the storyline of *The Da Vinci Code*—that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that their offspring

persisted in the Merovingian dynasty of medieval France.

- After Jesus as “The Clownish Christ” in *Godspell* and “The Rock Redeemer” in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (both forgivable) came the ’90s and the irrepressible John Dominic Crossan, oracle of the Jesus Seminar, who gifted us with “Jesus the Rustic Redeemer” (or, perhaps, “Seinfeld—the Savior,” depending on which chapter you follow in his *The Historical Jesus—The Life of a Jewish Mediterranean Peasant*).⁹

The television and film media have been quick to follow suit. Whenever one of the networks attempts a serious documentary on Jesus, it usually tips scholarly representation heavily in the direction of radical, revisionist critics rather than serious, centrist biblical scholars, as witness Peter Jennings’s ABC special “In Search of Jesus,” which aired in June, 2002, or *Dateline NBC* in February, 2004. Bank on it: John Dominic Crossan and his colorful Irish brogue will always have a prominent role on such programs because producers love his sensationalist attacks on traditional Christianity.

And now, crowning this retinue of revisionism, comes *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown.¹⁰ What sets this latest, horrendously skewed portrait of Jesus apart is not its originality—its central

premise, in fact, is just a copy of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*—but its sales. With more than 6 million copies sold as of this writing, *Da Vinci* enjoys a greater readership than all of the previous books combined, which only compounds the damage done to the cause of truth, as we shall see.

And the damage will continue. The book is being translated into 40 languages and will be made into a film by Columbia Pictures.

How to explain the novel's success? For openers, "Weird sells," as a colleague who teaches literature commented, wryly. Then, too, Brown and the Doubleday promotion machine, with superb timing, capitalized on the current disenchantment with Roman Catholicism due to the pedophilia and "lavender clergy" scandals, thus aiming at an already vulnerable target. The rise of radical feminism and the women's movement in general was also a powerful assist, as *Newsweek's* cover story on Mary Magdalene demonstrated (December 8, 2003). In *The Da Vinci Code*, the author claims to restore the feminine role to the place supposedly denied it by male church authorities. Add to that an opening murder inside the Louvre Museum in Paris, a labyrinth of symbolic clues followed by an embattled couple chased by Interpol, and intrigue involving the church, the state, and secret societies, and you have the perfect formula for a page-turner.

outright falsehood. To represent such details as fact is positively dishonest. Yet Brown does exactly this, starting on the very first page, where, under the heading of “FACT,” he presents opening statements that form the basis of the entire novel. Furthermore, Brown has publicly clarified that he believes that the conspiracy theory he presents in the *The Da Vinci Code* is actually true.¹³

In all direct quotations from the novel that follow, the views presented are unquestionably those of Brown himself, since the reader is led to assume full credibility in the dialogue of all the major personalities in the book. Identifying the speaker in each case, therefore, is unnecessary, although the majority of the misstatements throughout the novel may be attributed to a character named Leigh Teabing (Leigh plus Baigent—the anagram of Teabing—are two of the three authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, which is the source for the main plot line in *Da Vinci*).

The Priory of Sion

Even before the novel gets underway we see this blend of fact and fiction. In the same prefatory list of “facts” as above, Brown places the Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei cheek by jowl with “The Priory of Sion.” Both groups play very central roles in this novel, Opus Dei that of the antagonists and the Priory those heroic sorts who

secretly communicate the truth about Jesus and the early church. But while Opus Dei is indeed an authentic, fiercely conservative, Roman Catholic organization, the Priory merits no credibility whatever.

“The Priory of Sion” is supposedly a secret European society founded in Jerusalem in 1099 by a crusading French king named Godefroi de Bouillon (in fact, 1956 is the true date, and it was officially registered in France). Its purpose, according to Brown, was to preserve a great secret that had been handed down from generation to generation of Godefroi’s ancestors since the time of Christ. Hidden documents buried beneath the ruins of the Temple in Jerusalem allegedly corroborated this secret. And what was the “great secret” that they supposedly sheltered? Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene, which resulted in a daughter named Sarah. Jesus’ bloodline supposedly continued through the Merovingian dynasty of French kings and survives even today. The Priory of Sion exists, Brown claims, to keep a watchful eye over the descendants of Jesus and Mary and wait for the perfect moment to reveal the secret to the world.

Search for the Priory of Sion at a university library and you will likely find little or nothing. Switch to the Internet—that egalitarian haven for both sages and charlatans—and you will find yourself trudging through a wilderness of the

Calumny against Constantine

Next we have the most concerted falsification of a historical personality that I have ever encountered in either fiction or nonfiction. The victim is Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor. Writes Brown: "The Priory believes that 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" (page 124).

The author claims that Constantine not only eliminated goddess worship in the Roman Empire, he also collated the Bible, used Christianity for political gain, moved Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday, and decided that Jesus should be made into a deity in order to suit his own purposes. In reality, the first Christian emperor did many things for church and society in the early fourth century, but *not one* of these claims is among them.

According to Brown's character Leigh Teabing, Constantine "commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike" (234). *False!* Most of the canon was well known and in use nearly two centuries *before* Constantine, a time

when the early church had already dismissed the many apocryphal gospels that arose later in the second century. The rejected gospels, far from containing the real truth about Jesus, were all distortions derived from the first-century canonical Gospels and laced with fanciful aberrations.¹⁵

For Brown, Constantine “was a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed, too weak to protest” (232). This assertion is also totally false. While Constantine was undeniably a flawed individual, historians agree that he certainly abjured paganism, became a genuine Christian convert, repaid the church for its terrible losses during the persecutions, favored the clergy, built many churches throughout his empire, convened the first ecumenical council at Nicea—underwriting the expenses of clergy to attend it—and *desired* baptism near death. As for the last, he was merely following the custom at the time (innocent though mistaken) of delaying baptism until the end of life because it wiped your slate clean of preceding sins.¹⁶

Did Constantine shift Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday “to coincide with the pagan’s veneration day of the sun” (232–233). No. The earliest Christians started worshiping on the first day of the week, Sunday, which they called “the Lord’s Day,” to honor the day on which Christ rose from the dead. This is obvious both from the New Testament (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2,

Distortions on Display

Other endearing phrases in the book include “the New Testament is based on fabrications” (341); “the greatest story ever told is, in fact, the greatest story ever *sold*” (267); and “the Church has two thousand years of experience pressuring those who threaten to unveil its lies” (407). The anti-Christian bias of the author is obvious and blatant. This is certainly not to say that the Church has always been on the side of the angels. Anything but! It has committed many tragic errors across the centuries, including medieval anti-Semitism, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Galileo affair, and other persecutions. And just look at the evils perpetrated today by the few members of the clergy who inflict on children the horrors of pedophilia. But keeping “Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene” under wraps—the main theme in Brown’s book—is not one of the church’s offenses.

Detailing all of the errors, misinterpretations, deceptions, distortions, and outright falsehoods in *The Da Vinci Code* makes one wonder whether Brown’s manuscript ever underwent editorial scrutiny or fact-checking. The entire novel is literally riddled with miscues, the most important and obvious of which we shall examine here. For purposes of clarity, Brown’s statements, in bold print, will precede each instance. All are direct quotes.

“**Noah was himself an albino**” (166). There

is no canonical evidence for this. And the “albino monk” of Opus Dei seems to have no problem whatever with his eyesight, as would be the case with true albinism. Besides all of which, Opus Dei does not have an order of monks. Nor does it have a bishop, as claimed for one of Brown’s central characters.

“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” (309). This atrocious claim provokes either dismissive laughter or head-shakings of stupefaction among biblical scholars, for it is a ridiculous assertion based on fantasy rather than fact. Nothing was—or is—as basic to the Hebrews as their foundational belief in *one* God (not two or more); monotheism is the ancient Jews’ great gift to the world. Attaching sexuality of any kind to this *one* God was so abhorrent to Jews that they did not even have a word in Hebrew for *goddess*. The term “Shekinah” in Hebrew refers to the glory of God present in his indwelling, not some divine consort.

“The Jewish tetragrammaton YHWH—the sacred name of God—in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine *Jab* and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, *Havab*” (309). False in its entirety!

YHWH, the original name for God, reflects the Hebrew verb “to be.” But since tradition forbade verbal pronunciation of the name, rabbis in the sixteenth century pronounced the consonants from YHWH together with the vowels from the word *Adonai* (“Lord”) resulting in the word “Jehovah.” This *later*, synthesized name not only did not pre-date YHWH, it has absolutely nothing to do with an androgynous union.

“As a tribute to the magic of Venus, the Greeks used her eight-year cycle to organize their Olympic Games” (36). Here Brown shows himself to be an equal-opportunity exploiter in his crusade against the truth, muddling Greek history as well as Jewish and Christian history. In reality, the games were dedicated to Zeus. A day-long festival in his honor interrupted the games midway through, which is why they were terminated in the Christian era until their revival in 1896 on a strictly secular basis. They also occurred every four years rather than eight, as Brown implies. As for the five linked rings of the Olympic flag in the modern games, these had nothing to do with the “Ishtar pentagram,” since new rings were supposed to be added with each new set of games. The organizers, however, stopped at five—a nice number to fill Olympic logos, reflecting the five major, inhabited continents.²¹

“The Bible . . . has evolved through count-

less translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book” (231). To say that the Bible has “evolved” implies a progression of constant change, as in the term *evolution*. This is totally misleading. The only “changes” to the Bible that have taken place across the centuries have been an ever-more-faithful rendering and translation of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament, without *any* additions to the text. Part 2 will discuss this matter in further detail.

“More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion” (231). Brown’s statement implies that there was a general submission of gospels to some sort of early church panel that reduced the field to the familiar four. This was not at all the case. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were foundation documents in what later came to be called the New Testament. Eusebius, the first church historian, tells how they were the core of the canon from the start, and how their authority was determined on the basis of *usage* in such early Christian centers as Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. He also clearly identifies some of the later spurious writings, including the Gnostic gospels, that the church rejected as soon as they surfaced.²² Today they are known as the “New Testament apocrypha.” Brown must

have had this group in mind with his “eighty,” which is an exaggerated figure in any case.

Speaking of exaggeration, Brown outdoes himself in the following: **“Because Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries after Jesus’ death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man”** (234). First of all, Constantine did not “upgrade Jesus’ status.” The New Testament makes it clear that the earliest Christians regarded Jesus as divine. Furthermore, since Jesus died in AD 33 and Constantine converted in AD 312, almost *three* (not four) centuries is the proper time span. But did “thousands of documents” exist regarding Jesus as a mortal? Sorry. Try several dozen instead, which tell not only of his mortal humanity but his divinity as well!

“The Sangreal documents include tens of thousands of pages of information. . . . in four enormous trunks. . . . that the Knights Templar found under Solomon’s Temple” (256). In fact, there was no such find. No trunks, no documents, nor even any search for them by the Knights Templar. Furthermore, the Jerusalem Temple—the very citadel of Judaism—would be the last place on earth to look for *Christian* documents relating to the Holy Grail. And even in fiction, Brown cannot produce these “tens of thousands of pages” for us at the culmination of his plot.

Brown's other miscues are of less importance, even if they also deviate from the facts in every instance.

Well, there it is: according to *The Da Vinci Code*, Christianity was built on a lie, but pagan polytheism and goddess worship were structured on the truth! Without question, Dan Brown has played "The Jesus Game" as a winner.

WHY NOT TRY THE TRUTH?

All such Jesus Game players and their caricatures of Christ have the following in common:

1. The flight from hard evidence—solid historical, literary, and archaeological source material—to the flimsies of sensationalistic reconstruction.
2. The substitution of opinion for fact and hypothesis for history, leading to the most arbitrary conclusions possible.
3. Twisting the language of a historical source out of context to make it mean what the author wants it to mean in accord with his caricature.
4. Exchanging objectivity for bias, admitting only sources that favor the author's hypothesis and dismissing the rest.
5. What might be called "smorgasbord research": ignoring the succulent dishes

of evidence spread out by the past but pouncing on a caviar wisp of data, then reporting that the entire dinner consisted only of delicious fish eggs.

6. Façade “scholarship”: peppering the findings with references, book titles, or notes that may look authoritative, but substantiate nothing at all.
7. In the case of fiction, exaggerating at will, removing data out of context, and masking outright falsehoods under the claim that the literary vehicle is fiction.

Against this misuse of history, the truth has an enormous freshness and credibility. The genuine historical records about Jesus and Christianity are clear, coherent, convincing, and infinitely more credible than the many strands of gossamer gossip that critics and fantasists have spun out to try to occlude them. Quite apart from the copious detail found inside the New Testament, many purely secular sources readily confirm many of the main facts about the life of Christ and the early church. Often the same people, places, and events referenced inside Scripture are cited also in nonbiblical materials. These range from a myriad of geographical place names to the hard evidence provided by archaeology to a host of documents that have come down to us from the

ancient world that correlate completely with the biblical evidence.

As for the early church, both the primary sources in the writings of the early fathers and the detailed history of the church's first three centuries by Eusebius of Caesarea provide a quick corrective to the sensationalism foisted on the world by players of "The Jesus Game" today. Even secular history provides a reliable sounding board against which to compare later suppositions about the true history of Christianity.

A CLOSING COMPARISON

Listing errors in a work of literature is not a happy task, and it can even lull the reader into disregarding the perils of the printed page. In concluding, therefore, perhaps a model or analogy of how seriously *The Da Vinci Code* attacks Christianity may be appropriate.

Imagine that someone were to write a novel about George Washington, the nation's founder, rather than Jesus Christ, the church's founder. At the start, the author assures the reader that all his material is based on fact, then goes on to present the following scenario:

While doing research at Mount Vernon into the life of the father of our country, a veteran scholar is murdered. While dying, he leaves a long trail of intricate clues for his granddaughter and a

friend so that they might avenge his death. After solving the clues despite their Byzantine complexity, the two finally learn an awful truth: George Washington was really a member of a secret society that worshiped King George III of England and his queen, Charlotte Sophia. In fact, the reason for the American reverses early in the Revolutionary War was that Washington, a true but clandestine Tory, was secretly communicating Colonial war plans to the British via Benedict Arnold, Washington's secret illegitimate son. At Yorktown, while awaiting a British support fleet, Washington was preparing to surrender to Cornwallis, but when De Grasse arrived with his fleet of French ships to aid the American side, Washington had to accept Cornwallis's surrender instead.

At the end of his life, Washington's conscience got the better of him, and he wrote a confession that was buried with him in his tomb at Mount Vernon. The scholar who discovered it was then murdered by the CIA, who feared that his find would destroy the patriotic mystique of America's founding father and demoralize the country. When the FBI and CIA learn that the granddaughter and her friend know the awful truth, an all-points bulletin is issued for the pair. After a harrowing series of misadventures, the two escape capture. But no, they will not reveal the "truth" about Washington either.

Readers with only a smattering of knowledge

about American history but a great appetite for conspiracy might well buy into such worthless madness, since it contains just enough tangential truth—real people, real places, real situations—to be credible. While the parallel with *The Da Vinci Code* is certainly imperfect, Dan Brown has accomplished a very similar hoax, successful largely because so many today have “only a smattering of knowledge” about Jesus and Christianity.

ULTIMATE TRUTH

Can it be that Dan Brown truly believes his own aberrant misconstructions, as he has claimed? Or is he, perhaps, post-Modernist in his philosophy? Such deconstructionists believe that “whatever is true for you is the truth, pure and simple; there are no objective standards or universal norms, since everything is relative.” Even as I write, they are attempting to ruin the historical disciplines and have apparently widened their target to include literature as well (actually, literature may well be the place where post-Modernism started: “Forget whatever truth the author was trying to convey—accept only what seems true to you”).

I, for one, would hate to be treated in a hospital in which the doctors could prescribe whatever struck their momentary fancy as a medical necessity (“I know he has an appendicitis, but I’d prefer doing a tonsilectomy this morning”). And

What is truth?" This is the very question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus. In the irony of the ages, the Roman governor stood toe-to-toe with Truth and yet missed its reality. Many people in our postmodern culture are in much the same position. They stare at truth but fail to recognize its identity. So what is truth? The answer is simple: truth is anything that corresponds to reality. As such, truth is not determined by the popularity of a book like *The Da Vinci Code*. Nor is it a matter of preference or opinion. Truth is true even if everyone denies it, and a lie is a lie even if everyone affirms it. When sophistry, sensationalism, and superstition sabotage truth, our view of reality is seriously skewed.

That is precisely what *The Da Vinci Code* does. It is based on an idiosyncratic brand of fundamentalism that is fond of making dogmatic assertions while failing to provide defensible arguments.

We have already seen in the previous section the many reasons why *The Da Vinci Code* can be safely labeled absolute fiction. But demonstrating the falsity of Brown's dogmatic assertions is not the same thing as positively demonstrating the truth of Christianity. The fact that Brown's assertions are based on false faith does not in and of itself prove that the Christian faith is based on the foundation of firm facts. Thus, we now move on to demonstrate what we *know* to be truth—

namely, that the Bible is divine rather than human in origin, that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, and that amid the religions of the ancient world, Christianity is demonstrably unique.

GOSPEL TRUTH OR GHASTLY TALES?

The Bible is a product of man, my dear.
Not of God. . . . it has evolved through countless
translations, additions, and revisions.

—*The Da Vinci Code*, PAGE 231

Dan Brown is quick to accuse the Bible of being patently unreliable. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the Bible we have today is merely a copy of a copy of a copy, with fresh errors introduced during each stage of the process. That, however, is far from true. Though we no longer have the original autographs, we can be certain that the copies we have are faithful representations of those original writings.

Manuscript Evidence

First, we should note that the New Testament manuscripts Brown calls into question have stronger manuscript support than any other work of classical literature, including Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, and Tacitus. There are presently more than five thousand copies of Greek

manuscripts in existence¹ and as many as twenty thousand more translations in such languages as Latin, Coptic, and Syriac. Incredibly, there's reason to believe that the earliest manuscript fragments may be dated all the way back to the second half of the first century.² This is amazing when you consider that only seven of Plato's manuscripts are in existence today—and there is a 1,300-year gap separating the earliest copy from the original writing! Equally amazing is the fact that the New Testament has been virtually unaltered, as has been documented by scholars who have compared the earliest written manuscripts with copies of manuscripts dated centuries later.

Furthermore, the reliability of the Gospel accounts is confirmed through the eyewitness credentials of the authors. For example, Luke says that he gathered eyewitness testimony and “carefully investigated everything” (Luke 1:1-3). John writes, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). Likewise, the apostle Peter reminded his readers that the disciples “did not follow cleverly invented stories” but “were eyewitnesses of [Jesus'] majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

Finally, secular historians—including Jose-

phus (before AD 100), the Roman Tacitus (c. AD 120), the Roman Suetonius (c. AD 110), and the Roman governor Pliny the Younger (c. AD 110)—confirm many of the events, people, places, and customs chronicled in the New Testament. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome—all writing before AD 250—also shed light on New Testament historical accuracy. Unlike Dan Brown, even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document.

Massive Archaeological Evidence

As with the manuscript evidence, archaeology is a powerful witness to the accuracy of biblical documents. Over and over again, comprehensive archaeological fieldwork combined with careful biblical interpretation affirms the reliability of the Bible. It is telling when secular scholars must revise their biblical criticism in light of solid archaeological evidence.

For years, critics dismissed the book of Daniel, partly because there was no evidence that a king named Belshazzar ruled in Babylon during that period. Later archaeological research, however, confirmed that the reigning monarch, Nabonidus, appointed Belshazzar as his coregent while he was waging war away from Babylon.

One of the most well-known New Testament

examples concerns the books of Luke and Acts. Sir William Ramsay, a biblical skeptic who was trained as an archaeologist, set out to disprove the historical reliability of this portion of the New Testament. But through his painstaking archaeological trips throughout the Mediterranean region, he became converted as, one after another, the historical allusions of Luke were proved accurate.³

Furthermore, archaeologists recently discovered a gold mine of archaeological nuggets that provide a powerful counter to objections raised by some scholars against the biblical account of Christ's crucifixion and burial. In *U. S. News and World Report*, Jeffrey Sheler highlights the significance of the discovery of the remains of a man crucified during the first century. This discovery calls into question the scholarship of liberals who contend that Jesus was tied rather than nailed to the cross and that his corpse was likely thrown into a shallow grave and eaten by wild dogs rather than entombed and resurrected.⁴

Finally, recent archaeological finds have also corroborated biblical details surrounding the trial that led to the fatal torment of Jesus Christ—including the existence of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea who ordered Christ's crucifixion, and the burial site of Caiaphas, the high priest who presided over the religious trials

of Christ. Sheler notes that in 1990 a burial chamber dating back to the first century was discovered two miles south of the Temple Mount. “Inside, archaeologists found 12 limestone ossuaries. One contained the bones of a 60-year-old man and bore the inscription *Yehosef bar Qayafa*—‘Joseph, son of Caiaphas.’ Experts believe these remains are almost certainly those of Caiaphas the high priest of Jerusalem, who according to the Gospels ordered the arrest of Jesus, interrogated him, and handed him over to Pontius Pilate for execution.”⁵

Regarding Pontius Pilate, excavations at the seaside ruins of Caesarea Maritima—the ancient seat of the Roman government in Judea—uncovered a first-century inscription confirming that Pilate was the Roman ruler at the time of Christ’s crucifixion.⁶ Archeologists working at the Herodian theater found a plaque inscribed with the Latin words *Tiberieum . . . [Pon]tius Pilatus . . . [praef]ectus Juda[ea]*. “According to experts, the complete inscription would have read, ‘Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius.’ The discovery of the so-called Pilate Stone has been widely acclaimed as a significant affirmation of biblical history because, in short, it confirms that the man depicted in the Gospels as Judea’s Roman governor had precisely the

responsibilities and authority that the Gospel writers ascribe to him.”⁷

Truly, with every turn of the archaeologist’s spade, we continue to see evidence for the trustworthiness of Scripture.

Messianic Prophecies

The Bible records predictions of events that could not have been known or predicted by chance or common sense. Surprisingly, the predictive nature of many Bible passages was once a popular argument (by liberals) *against* the reliability of the Bible. Critics argued that various passages must have been written later than the biblical texts indicated because they recounted events that occurred sometimes hundreds of years later than when the accounts were supposed to have been written. They concluded that, subsequent to the events, literary editors went back and doctored the original texts.

But such arguments are simply wrong. Careful research *affirms* the predictive accuracy of the Scriptures. For example, the previously mentioned book of Daniel (written before 530 BC)⁸ accurately predicts the progression of kingdoms from Babylon through the Medo-Persian Empire, culminating in the persecution and suffering of the Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, his desecration of the Jerusalem Temple, his un-

timely death, and freedom for the Jews under Judas Maccabeus in 165 BC.⁹

Old Testament prophecies concerning the Phoenician city of Tyre were fulfilled in ancient times, including prophecies that the city would be opposed by many nations (Ezekiel 26:3); its walls would be destroyed and towers broken down (26:4); and its stones, timbers, and debris would be thrown into the water (26:12). Similar prophecies were fulfilled concerning Sidon (Ezekiel 28:23; Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 27:3-6; 47:4) and Babylon (Jeremiah 50:13, 39; 51:26, 42-43, 58; Isaiah 13:20-21).

Since Christ is the Living Word of the New Testament and since his coming as Messiah is the culminating theme of the Old Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding him outnumber all others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus deliberately to conspire to fulfill—such as his descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:3; 17:19; Matthew 1:1-2; Acts 3:25); his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1, 6); his crucifixion with criminals (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38); the piercing of his hands and feet on the cross (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25); the soldiers gambling for his clothes (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35); the piercing of his side (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34); the fact that his bones were not broken at his death (Psalm 34:20;

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FOREWORD

- ¹ Leon Wieseltier, "The Worship of Blood: Mel Gibson's Lethal Weapon," *New Republic*, February 26, 2004, <http://www.tnr.com/>.
- ² Maureen Dowd, "Stations of the Crass," *New York Times*, February 26, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.
- ³ Andy Rooney, *60 Minutes* (CBS), aired February 22, 2004.
- ⁴ Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).
- ⁵ Jeff Ayers, *Library Journal*, (February 1, 2003): 114.
- ⁶ *Publisher's Weekly*, (March 18, 2003): 76.
- ⁷ Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, back cover.
- ⁸ Dan Brown, interview by Charles Gibson, *Good Morning America*, ABC, November 3, 2003. The following exchange between Charles Gibson and Dan Brown occurred on *Good Morning America*, ABC, November 3, 2003. CHARLES GIBSON: "... This is a novel. If you were writing it as a non-fiction book. . . . how would it have been different?" DAN BROWN: "I don't think it would have. I began the research for 'The Da Vinci Code' as a skeptic. I entirely expected, as I researched the book, to disprove this theory. And after numerous trips to Europe, about two years of research, I really became a believer. And it's important to remember that this is a novel about a theory that has been out there for a long time" (ABC News Transcripts). Additionally, on *Primetime Live (Monday): Jesus, Mary and Da Vinci*, ABC, which aired November 3, 2003, Brown told Elizabeth Vargas, "I began as a skeptic. As I started researching 'Da Vinci Code,' I really thought I would disprove a lot of this theory about Mary Magdalene and holy blood and all of that. I became a believer" (ABC News Transcripts).

PART ONE
THE DA VINCI DECEPTION

- 1 Consider, for example, the *fatwa* decreeing death for Salmon Rushdie because of his book *The Satanic Verses*.
- 2 Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot—A New Interpretation of the Life and Death of Jesus* (London: Harper Collins reprint, 1998).
- 3 Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960).
- 4 S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967). See also, by the same author, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Stein & Day, 1955).
- 5 John M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970).
- 6 Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). See also, by the same author, *Jesus the Magician: Charlatan or Son of God?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).
- 7 Donovan Joyce, *The Jesus Scroll* (New York: Signet, 1974).
- 8 Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: reprint by Delacorte Press, 2004). Several earlier books had presented the married Jesus hypothesis, including William E. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
- 9 John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). There are very few episodes in the traditional life of Jesus that Crossan has not managed to challenge with the most arbitrary conclusions.
- 10 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).
- 11 *New York Times* best-selling author, Nelson DeMille.
- 12 Taylor Caldwell, *Great Lion of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970). The same author showed her exuberant imagination in a similar novel about St. Luke, *Dear and Glorious Physician*.
- 13 Dan Brown, interview by Charles Gibson, *Good Morning America*, ABC, November 3, 2003, and *Primetime Live (Monday): Jesus, Mary and Da Vinci*, ABC, November 3, 2003. See additional information in endnote 8 in the Foreword. See also Renee Tawa, “Deep into the ‘Code,’” *Los Angeles Times* (Friday, March 19, 2004).
- 14 In a brilliant article in the *New York Times*, Laura Miller exposes the entire hoax. See Laura Miller, “The Da Vinci Con,” *The New York Times Book Review* (Sunday, February 22, 2004), 23.
- 15 Eusebius of Caesarea, the Christian historian who detailed the first three centuries of Christianity, provides abundant

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- evidence that the canon was well established before the time of Constantine. See Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.3-4, 24-25; 5.8; 6.14, 25. If Constantine *had* had any role whatever in collating or deciding on the canon, Eusebius would have been the first to report that, since he greatly admired the first Christian emperor.
- ¹⁶ In the 19th century, the Swiss historian, Jacob Burckhardt—like Dan Brown—disputed Constantine’s conversion, claiming that his actions in behalf of Christianity were done on the basis of cold political calculation rather than conscientious conviction, a strategy to use the church for partisan political support. The great majority of modern historians, however, conclude that Constantine’s conversion was indeed genuine, since the evidence is overwhelming. A whole array of book titles and scholarly articles deal with the life of Constantine, and most would agree with the masterful study by Timothy D. Barnes, who states: “With all his faults . . . [Constantine] nevertheless believed sincerely that God had given him a special mission to convert the Roman Empire to Christianity.” Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 275. See also Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius—The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 306ff.
- ¹⁷ Sunday is called “the Lord’s Day” in Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and later, in *Didache* 14, as well as in a treatise by Melito of Sardis (died c. 190) called *The Lord’s Day*. Of these references, that of Pliny the Younger—as a pagan—is the most interesting. In his letter to the emperor Trajan (AD 117–138) regarding Christians in Asia Minor, Pliny writes that the Christians “met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god.” (Betty Radice, ed., *The Letters of Pliny the Younger* [Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967] 294.) In Acts 20:7, when St. Paul visited the Christians at Troas “on the first day of the week,” that day began (in Jewish fashion) on Saturday evening when they were accustomed to “break bread,” i.e., the Lord’s Supper. Under Trajan, since these evening gatherings were prohibited, the “fixed day” to which Pliny refers was moved to before dawn on Sunday.
- ¹⁸ The two dissenting bishops were Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica, both Libyan bishops associated with Arius. All three went into exile after the Council of Nicea. See Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 217.
- ¹⁹ For the origin of the Knights Templar, the most important primary source is the chronicler William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, xii, 7. Most of the secondary literature is in French, while the classic in English is: G. G. Addison, *The History of the Knights Templars, the Temple Church, and the*

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Temple 3rd ed., 1852; New York: AMS Press reprint, 1978. See also G. A. Campbell, *The Knights Templar* (New York: AMS Press, 1980); Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Templar: A New History* (Stroud, UK: Sutton, 2001); and Frank Sanello, *The Knights Templar: God's Warriors and the Devil's Bankers* (Lanham, MD: Taylor, 2003).

- ²⁰ For true, rather than contrived, historical detail regarding Leonardo da Vinci, see V. P. Zubov, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Patrice Bousset, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell, 1980); Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Viking, 1988); and Sherwin B. Nuland, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Viking, 2000).

For a good supplementary critique of *The Da Vinci Code*, please see Sandra Miesel, "Dismantling The Da Vinci Code," <http://www.crisismagazine.com/September2003/feature1.htm>.

- ²¹ For the Olympic Games, see M. I. Finley and H.W. Pleket, *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 1976); J. Kieran and A. Dailey, *The Story of the Olympic Games* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977); B. Henry and R. Yeoman, *An Approved History of the Olympic Games* (Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred, 1984); and Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

- ²² See previous Eusebius references at note 15.

- ²³ The early core of Paris was on the Île de la Cité, a natural stronghold already in the third century BC, which was owned by the tribe of the Parisi. The Romans conquered and called the place Lutetia, but the name changed to Paris between AD 305 and 310. Clovis, founder of the Merovingian dynasty, moved his capital to Paris about AD 500.

- ²⁴ The best primary source for this information is Eddius Stephanus, *Vita Wilfridi*. See Bertram Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid* (1927; repr., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 66–69. I am indebted to Western Michigan University's distinguished Medievalist, Professor Tom Amos, for the specifics regarding Dagobert.

- ²⁵ For a good supplementary critique of *The Da Vinci Code*, please see Sandra Miesel, "Dismantling The Da Vinci Code," <http://www.crisismagazine.com/September2003/feature1.htm>.

PART TWO BUT WHAT IS TRUTH?

- ¹ The New Testament was originally written in Greek. Nearly all of the Greek manuscripts that exist today predate the invention of the printing press, and some 800 predate AD 1000. Lee

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Strobel, interviewing Dr. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary, provides an excellent summary of the various types of manuscripts:

While *papyrus* manuscripts represent the earliest copies of the New Testament, there are also ancient copies written on *parchment*, which was made from the skins of cattle, sheep, goats and antelope.

We have what are called *uncial* manuscripts, which are written in all-capital Greek letters,' Metzger explained. 'Today we have 306 of these, several dating back as early as the third century. The most important are *Codex Sinaiticus*, which is the only complete New Testament in uncial letters, and *Codex Vaticanus*, which is not quite complete. Both date to about AD 350.

A new style of writing, more cursive in nature, emerged in roughly AD 800. It's called *minuscule*, and we have 2,856 of these manuscripts. Then there are also *lectionaries*, which contain New Testament Scripture in the sequence it was to be read in the early churches at appropriate times during the year. A total of 2,403 of these have been cataloged. That puts the grand total of Greek manuscripts at 5,664. (Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 62–63.)

The acronym L-U-M-P can be used as a memory aid so as not to *lump* all the varieties of manuscripts together—*Lexionaries*, *Uncials*, *Miniscules*, and *Papyri*.

- ² The earliest New Testament manuscript fragments date to the first and second centuries AD, within 30 to 50 years of the original writing. More than 40 remaining Greek manuscripts date *before* the fourth century—several from the second century—collectively composing most of the New Testament. The earliest existing copy of an entire New Testament text is *Codex Sinaiticus* (c. 350); *Codex Vaticanus* (c. 325) also contains the entire New Testament except Pastoral Epistles and Revelation. Note also that virtually the entire New Testament can be reconstructed from quotations found in the writings of the early church fathers.

According to New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg, the standard dating of the Gospels (which is accepted even among very liberal scholars) sets "Mark in the 70s, Matthew and Luke in the 80s, and John in the 90s." If these dates are correct, Blomberg points out, they are well within the lifetimes of the "eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus, including hostile eyewitnesses who would have served as a corrective if false teachings about Jesus were going around" (Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zonder-

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van, 1998], 33). Of course, if the earliest manuscripts do indeed date to the first century, then the original writing of the New Testament would be pushed back even earlier, so we can all the more infer that the New Testament was written within the lifetimes of the community that bore witness to the events described therein.

See also Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew d'Ancona, *Eye-witness to Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 29–31, chap. 5; and Philip Wesley Comfort, ed. *The Origin of the Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 179–207.

³ See William M Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1953).

⁴ Sheler explains, “Explorers found the skeletal remains of a crucified man in a burial cave at Giva’at ha-Mitvar, near the Nablus road outside of Jerusalem. It was a momentous discovery: While the Romans were known to have crucified thousands of alleged traitors, rebels, robbers, and deserters in the two centuries straddling the turn of the era, never before had the remains of a crucifixion victim been recovered. An initial analysis of the remains found that their condition dramatically corroborated the Bible’s description of the Roman method of execution.

“The bones were preserved in a stone burial box called an ossuary and appeared to be those of a man about 5 feet, 5 inches tall and 24 to 28 years old. His open arms had been nailed to the crossbar, in the manner similar to that shown in crucifixion paintings. The knees had been doubled up and turned sideways, and a single large iron nail had been driven through both heels. The nail—still lodged in the heel bone of one foot, though the executioners had removed the body from the cross after death—was found bent, apparently having hit a knot in the wood. The shin bones seem to have been broken, corroborating what the Gospel of John suggests was normal practice in Roman crucifixions.” (Jeffrey L. Sheler, “Is the Bible True?” *U. S. News and World Report*, (October 25, 1999): 58; reprinted from Jeffrey L. Sheler, *Is the Bible True?* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

⁶ See Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 145ff.

⁷ Jeffrey L. Sheler, “Is the Bible True?” *U. S. News and World Report*, (October 25, 1999): 59. Sheler discusses other archaeological and historical insights of recent years as well, including the House of David inscription at Dan, which affirms the historicity of King David (54–58).

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- ⁸ According to Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer, “Despite the numerous objections which have been advanced by scholars who regard this as a prophecy written after the event, there is no good reason for denying the sixth-century Daniel the composition of the entire work. This represents a collection of his memoirs made at the end of a long and eventful career which included government service from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the 590s to the reign of Cyrus the Great in the 530s. The appearance of Persian technical terms indicates a final recension of these memoirs at a time when Persian terminology had already infiltrated into the vocabulary of Aramaic. The most likely date for the final edition of the book, therefore, would be about 530 BC, nine years after the Persian conquest of Babylon.” Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 423; see 423–447 for discussion.
- ⁹ Chapters 2 and 7 of the Old Testament book of Daniel describe Daniel’s prophesies related to the coming kingdoms; Daniel’s vision in chapter 8 represents details of Antiochus Epiphanes’ reign in the second century BC. The “horn” that “started small but grew in power . . . until it reached the host of the heavens” represents Antiochus Epiphanes.
- ¹⁰ Historian Edwin Yamauchi explains: “It is a cardinal misconception to equate the Egyptian view of the afterlife with the ‘resurrection’ of Hebrew-Christian traditions. In order to achieve immortality the Egyptian had to fulfill three conditions: (1) His body had to be preserved, hence mummification. (2) Nourishment had to be provided either by the actual offering of daily bread and beer, or by the magical depiction of food on the walls of the tomb. (3) Magical spells had to be interred with the dead-Pyramid Texts in the Old Kingdom, Coffin Texts in the Middle Kingdom, and the Book of the Dead in the New Kingdom. Moreover, the Egyptian did not rise from the dead; separate entities of his personality such as his Ba and his Ka continued to hover about his body. Nor is Osiris, who is always portrayed in a mummified form, an inspiration for the resurrected Christ. As Roland de Vaux has observed: ‘What is meant of Osiris being “raised to life”? Simply that, thanks to the ministrations of Isis, he is able to lead a life beyond the tomb which is an almost perfect replica of earthly existence. But he will never again come among the living and will reign only over the dead. . . . This revived god is in reality a “mummy” god’ [The Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1971, p. 236].” (Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?” *Christianity Today*, March 29, 1974, available at <http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/yama.html> (accessed March 10, 2004). See also Ronald Nash, “Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan

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- Religions?" *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 16 (no. 2), available at <http://www.equip.org/free/DB109.pdf>, accessed 10 March 2004.)
- 11 Ronald Nash, "Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?" *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 16 (no. 2), 11.
 - 12 Ronald H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003). For an excellent summary overview, see Nash, "Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?" available at <http://www.equip.org/free/DB109.pdf>.
 - 13 See Nash, "Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?"
 - 14 The champion of the line of argumentation I follow is the philosopher and Christian apologist William Lane Craig. See especially his chapter "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" in Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 141–176; his contribution throughout Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, eds., *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); and William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, revised edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 255–298.
 - 15 The late liberal scholar John A. T. Robinson of Cambridge conceded that the burial of Christ "is one of the earliest and best-attested facts about Jesus" (John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973], 131, as quoted in Paul Copan, ed., *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 27). Also, New Testament critic D. H. van Daalen has noted, "It is extremely difficult to object to the empty tomb on historical grounds; those who deny it do so on the basis of theological or philosophical assumptions" (as quoted in William Lane Craig, "Contemporary Scholarship and the Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Truth* 1 [1985]: 89–95, available at <http://www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth22.html>).
 - 16 In 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 Paul is reiterating a Christian creed that can be traced all the way back to the formative stages of the early Christian church. Incredibly, New Testament scholars of all stripes agree that this creed can be dated to within three to eight years of the crucifixion itself. In his seminal work titled *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, Dr. Gary Habermas lists a variety of reasons by which scholars have come to this conclusion. First, Paul employs technical Jewish terminology used to transmit oral tradition when he uses such words as "delivered" and "received." Scholars view this as evidence that

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- Paul is reciting information he received from another source. The eminent scholar Joachim Jeremias, a leading authority on this issue, also points to non-Pauline phrases such as ‘for our sins’ (verse 3); ‘according to the Scriptures’ (verses 3-4); ‘he has been raised’ (verse 4); the ‘third day’ (verse 4); ‘he was seen’ (verses 5-8); and ‘the twelve’ (verse 5). Furthermore, “the creed is organized in a stylized, parallel form” that reflects an oral tradition. Finally, Paul’s use of the Aramaic word *Cephas* for Peter points to an extremely early Semitic source. (See Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* [Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Co., 1996], 153-54.)
- 17 See 1 Corinthians 15:5, where the original apostles, minus Judas, are referred to as the Twelve.
 - 18 See Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 2.25;3.1; Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, chap. 5.
 - 19 James 1:1 (NASB).
 - 20 Eusebius, *History of the Church* 2.23. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.9.1; see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 57-9.
 - 21 Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 251.
 - 22 See Genesis 2:2-3; cf. Exodus 20:11.
 - 23 See Deuteronomy 5:15.
 - 24 See Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 4:1-11.
 - 25 Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992), 78. See Matthew 28:1-10; John 20:26ff; Acts 2:1; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.
 - 26 See Hebrews 8-10.
 - 27 See John 1:29.
 - 28 Adapted from Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 253.
 - 29 “Proselytes entering Judaism were expected to strip themselves of their former clothing, submit to circumcision, and bathe themselves completely, after which they were reckoned members of the Jewish community. The rite was acknowledgment of defilement and of the acceptance of the law as a purifying agent.” (Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Basic Christian Doctrines* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], 256.)
 - 30 See Acts 2:36-41.
 - 31 Adapted from Strobel, 253.

FOR FURTHER READING

HISTORICITY OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION

Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1996).

Hank Hanegraaff, *The Third Day* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2003).

Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997).

EVIDENCE FOR JESUS OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT

Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1996).

Paul L. Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Works* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988).

THE BIBLE AND THE EARLY CHURCH

F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius—The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999).

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND PAGAN RELIGIONS

Ronald Nash, “Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?” *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 16 (no. 2), available at www.equip.org/free/DB109.pdf.

HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1960).

SUPPLEMENTARY CRITIQUES OF THE DA VINCI CODE ON THE WEB

James Patrick Holding, “*Not InDavincible: A Review and Critique of The Da Vinci Code*,” www.answers.org/issues/davincicode.html.
Sandra Miesel, “Dismantling The Da Vinci Code,” www.crisismagazine.com/September2003/feature1.htm.

As this book is being published, other books on the subject are in press:

Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everybody's Asking* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Da Vinci Deception* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).

For additional resources on this topic, see the Christian Research Institute Web site: www.equip.org.