

Minister's Message – May 2006

The da Vinci Code

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the titles of four eye-witness accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ found in the canon of Scripture. People often wonder why we have to have four accounts. Would not one account have been sufficient! It seems that for sceptics like Dan Brown even four eye-witness accounts written in the first century AD are not sufficient. He is not the first of course, and will not be the last, to try and discredit these Biblical accounts of the life of Jesus.

Brown's basic thesis is that Jesus married Mary Magdalene. This theory is far from original, but Brown seeks to base it in historical accounts. These accounts are much later than those in the Bible and of dubious authenticity. Moreover, even these documents do not clearly record such a marriage. Mary supposedly had a child, Sarah, born in France. For centuries this secret was guarded by a society called the Priory of Sion. Brown claims this society started in 1099 but the truth is that it was the invention of Pierre Plantard in 1956. A friend of Plantard's, Gerard de Sede revealed this hoax in 1967. Leonardo da Vinci was supposedly a member of this society.

Conspiracy theories make popular reading. Brown uses this method to discredit the Biblical accounts of Jesus. The Emperor Constantine is his villain – he chose the four gospels in the Bible rejecting eighty others because they spoke of 'Jesus' human traits'. He 'embellished those gospels that made him godlike'. The truth is that Jesus' human traits do not have to be downplayed for he was fully human – as well as fully divine. Brown, like many others, cannot understand or accept this truth.

'The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned' by Constantine according to Brown. But the gospel accounts were circulating early in the second century, a hundred years before Constantine (AD 325) supposedly 'turned Jesus into a deity' by getting the Council of Nicea to endorse divine status by 'a relatively close vote'.

Why men write what they do is often of more interest than what they actually write. This may well be the case with Brown. Why did he write this novel, manipulating history to fit his theory, and then call it fact? 'Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false' writes Brown.

Apart from Brown's imagination and ability to write a 'historical' novel based on fiction, the question arises as to why people bother to read this book and watch the movie. Why not read the truth instead? It is intriguing that Brown markets his material under the banner of 'seeking the truth'! *What is truth* Pilate asked Jesus almost 2000 years ago? Pilate never waited for an answer, even though the Truth was staring him in the face. He had more important things to do than bother about the truth. Is Brown interested in the truth? Are his readers interested in truth?

The truth is that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. He was born of a Jewish woman in Bethlehem 2000 years ago and grew up in this family. But there is no record of him ever marrying Mary Magdalene, nor of him having any children. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to

the will of God his Father (not that marrying and having children is sinful for man). His perfect life was a threat to sinful people and many took exception to Jesus works and his words. His words from the Cross, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do* must have stung those who hated him.

Still today many are threatened by the holy life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as recorded in the Bible. They are incensed by Jesus' call to repent, to turn from sin and believe in him. Dan Brown is probably such a person. The lawyers and learned men of Jesus' day tried their best to discredit him, and people have been seeking to do so ever since. Today attacks upon the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible are seen as the best way to do this. But the Biblical accounts of the life and death of Jesus – all four of them – have withstood the attacks of learned men and sceptics for centuries and will continue to do so. Wise men and women will read these accounts and not be diverted from the truth by the clever inventions of men.

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