

# 1 John

## Obey in Love to Fight Early Gnosticism

| Need to Obey  | How to Love  | Benefits of Obedience   |
|---|--|---|
| Chapters 1–2  | 3:1–5:3  | 5:4-21  |
| Humanity of Christ<br>Depend on Christ<br>Hindrances to obedience | Don't sin<br>Don't hate believers<br>Compassion<br>Confidence before God<br>Obey apostolic teaching<br>Care for believers<br>Obey God's commands | Victory over the world<br>Assurance of salvation<br>Guidance in prayer<br>Freedom from sin<br>Fidelity to God |
| Ephesus to Asia Minor Churches                                    |  |   |
| AD 85-95  |  |   |

**Key Word:** Love

**Key Verse:** “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray... And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:26, 28).

**Summary Statement:** The benefit of obedience and love is what we really need instead of early Gnosticism.

**Application:**

How can you show love to another believer so that heresy might be thwarted? Who do you know that needs to see your Christian love to turn from false teaching?



# 1 John

## Introduction

I. **Title:** The Greek title (*Ἰωάννου ἁ΄ First of John*) follows the practice of naming General Epistles after their authors and distinguishes this epistle from John's other two letters.

### II. Authorship

A. **External Evidence:** The letter of 1 John is the best attested of all the General Epistles.

1. Evidence for John's authorship is very early after its composition, starting with Polycarp—John's contemporary for 20 years (*Letter to the Philippians*; AD 110-135). Irenaeus quoted John as author of this epistle (*Against Heresies* 3.16.5; 3.16.8; ca. AD 185). Many other Church Fathers also taught John as author: Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-215), Tertullian (AD 150-222), Origen (AD 185-253), Cyprian (AD 200-258) and all Latin and Greek Fathers. The Muratorian Canon and Old Syriac Version also attributed 1 John to the Apostle John.
2. The major opposing views are: (a) a second "John" penned the epistle that was known either as "John the Elder" or possibly "John the Presbyter," and (b) a disciple of John wrote the book. In one statement, Papias seems to make a distinction between "John the Elder" and "John the Apostle" (Guthrie, 868-69, 886-87); however, elsewhere he uses the term "elder" to refer to the original apostles, so the "two men" should be interpreted as one and the same.

B. **Internal Evidence:** The contents of the epistle itself support the strong tradition for Johannine authorship. He is not mentioned by name, but he is an eyewitness (1:1-4) who carries great authority shown in the assertiveness by which he speaks (2:19; 4:6, 14). The style is also very similar to that of the Fourth Gospel.

### III. Circumstances

- A. **Date:** Most conservative scholars date 1 John from AD 80-97 and liberals date it soon after (AD 90-110). The epistle does not mention any persecution, which lasted during Domitian's reign (AD 81-96). This may suggest a date just before AD 81 or after AD 96 (but is an argument from silence). At any rate, John was an old man in his eighties or older when he wrote. This course uses a date of AD 85-95 as it likely preceded Revelation (AD 95-96).
- B. **Origin/Recipients:** The traditional view is that John wrote this to be a circular letter from his home in Ephesus to the churches of Asia Minor (Hiebert, 3:199; Guthrie, 873-76). The admonition to keep oneself from idols (5:21) substantiates this tradition since idols were prominent in the pagan Graeco-Roman culture but rare in Israel.
- C. **Occasion:** John notes that many antichrists had gone out into the world (2:18f.) and perhaps had even infiltrated the churches. Although Gnosticism did not develop into its worst form until the second century, an early (beginning) form of Gnosticism is evident in this letter. Gnosticism had two basic heretical elements: the exaltation of intellect (*gnosis*) and the belief that matter is evil.

John combats two forms of Gnostic teaching in his letter that supposedly exalted the intellect:

1. Docetic Gnosticism denied the *humanity* of Christ (4:2-3), saying that he only *seemed* to be human (cf. *dokeo*, "to seem"), so John wrote that he actually touched Jesus (1:1).
2. Cerinthian Gnosticism denied the *deity* of Christ. Cerinthus, who lived near John in Asia Minor, taught that Jesus was only a man upon whom "the Christ" descended at his baptism but left before his crucifixion. John refuted Cerinthus in 5:6 by attesting that Jesus Christ came both by water (his baptism) *and* by blood (his death). Jesus died as

the God-man and not only a human. If he also was a sinner, Jesus could not atone for humanity's sin.

The practical outworking of Gnostic belief that matter is evil also fell into two camps:

1. Some Gnostics reasoned that since matter is evil, one should avoid it at all costs, resulting in asceticism. (Asceticism is the attempt to remove oneself from all possible temptations to sin by withdrawing from society—some forms are called monasticism.) In his letter John attempts to defeat asceticism by encouraging fellowship among believers (1:7).
2. Other Gnostics took a more fatalistic attitude, thinking that since one cannot change the fact that matter is evil, any type of immoral aberration is acceptable. John especially responded to this latter philosophy (1:6, 8, 10; 3:4-10). His letter shows that obedience to God's commands, especially through loving others, is the best rebuttal to the practices of Gnosticism. He also sought to defeat immorality by exhorting obedience and righteousness (2:28-29).

| Docetic Gnosticism  | Cerinthian Gnosticism   |
|---|---|
| From <i>dokeo</i> , "to seem"<br>(Christ only seemed to be a man) | From Cerinthus, founder in Asia<br>(Christ only seemed to be God) |
| Matter is Evil  | Spirit is Good  |
| Depreciated Materialism   | Exalted Knowledge ( <i>gnosis</i> )                               |
| Denied Christ's Humanity  | Denied Christ's Deity   |
| Touched Jesus (1:1)   | Water & Blood (5:6)   |
| Led to Asceticism   | Led to Pride  |
| Immorality exalted  | Education exalted   |

#### IV. Characteristics

A. The literary characteristics are unique:

1. John makes many absolute statements, especially 1 John 3:6. Sometimes this verse is translated as, "No one who abides in Him *sins*" (NASB; held by commentators Kubo, Marshall, R. Brown, and Smalley). However, others interpret this with a habitual sense: "No one who lives in him *keeps on sinning*" (NIV; held by commentators Ross, Stott, Barker, Plummer, F. Stagg, and Zerwick). The absolute sense is more natural and also deals with the reality that Christians indeed do sin, often habitually as carnal believers (1 Cor 2). John is saying that when a believer sins, he does so because he is not abiding in Christ.
2. John's definition of abiding in Christ is clearly explained as obeying God's commands and loving one's brothers (2:28–4:16).
3. Teaching by contrast (antithetical parallelism) is common as John sees everything black or white: light vs. darkness (1:5; 2:9-11), life vs. death (3:14; 4:12), love vs. hatred (4:20), new vs. old (2:7), Christ vs. antichrist (2:22), truth vs. falsehood (4:6), confidence vs. fear (4:17-18), love of the world vs. love of God (2:15), confession of sin vs. denial of sin (1:8-10), and sin leading to death vs. sin not leading to death (5:16).
4. The style is very simple and yet profound in meaning. Concepts are frequently repeated, but not monotonously (e.g., love, light, life, truth, and righteousness). This makes outlining the letter challenging as many themes are repeated throughout.
5. It surprisingly has not even one Old Testament quotation and only one incident (Cain, 3:12).

- B. A significant textual problem in 1 John 5:7 deserves attention. In the KJV this reads, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” This provides the clearest statement of the Trinity in the Bible and thus has been forcefully defended by some KJV advocates.

However, this translation has a questionable origin (to the delight of Jehovah's Witnesses):

1. Alexandrian and Byzantine texts convincingly show this reading as an error. It is in only four Greek manuscripts—and the earliest is a 12th century manuscript (min. 88) with the added phrases scribbled in the margin! Thus, *thousands* of earlier manuscripts do not include it.
2. Despite its dubious origin, some questioned Erasmus in the 16th century why he did not include the verse in his *Textus Receptus* (his Latin translation from the Greek). He said that if anyone could show it to him in a *Greek* manuscript then he would include it. Someone promptly added it to a Greek manuscript (min. 61) and showed it to him. Although embarrassed, he then *had* to include it, even though he did not believe it was original. Unfortunately, Erasmus' *Textus Receptus* became the basis of the King James Version soon after, reproducing the error into the most popular English translation of the Bible. See D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 34-35, 59-61.

## Argument

John's letter has at least five stated purposes: to promote fellowship (1:3), to produce joy (1:4), to protect holiness (2:1), to prevent heresy (2:26), and to provide assurance of salvation (5:13; *TTTB*, 483, adapted). This fivefold purpose makes the book difficult to summarize in a central theme or purpose and difficult to outline, especially since the subjects overlap. However, it seems that the general theme of obedience, especially shown in loving others, encompasses all of the above purposes. The word “love” is used 35 times (NIV), so the outline below seeks to combine these key themes of love and obedience.

Viewed in this manner, John exhorts obedience (1 John 1–2) especially by loving others (3:1–5:3) resulting in many benefits (5:4–21). These benefits are innumerable, but the most immediate benefit of obedience by love is its protection from early Gnosticism.

## Synthesis

### Obedience in love combats early Gnosticism

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>1–2</b>     | <b>Need to obey</b>                         |
| 1:1-5          | Humanity of Christ (vs. Docetic Gnosticism) |
| 1:6–2:14       | Depend on Christ                            |
| 2:15-29        | Hindrances to obedience                     |
| 2:15-17        | Worldliness                                 |
| 2:18-29        | Deception                                   |
| <b>3:1–5:3</b> | <b>How to love</b>                          |
| 3:1-10         | Don't habitually sin                        |
| 3:11-15        | Don't hate believers                        |
| 3:16-20        | Show compassion                             |
| 3:21-24        | Show confidence before God                  |
| 4:1-6          | Obey apostolic teaching                     |
| 4:7-21         | Care for believers                          |
| 5:1-3          | Obey God's commands                         |

|               |                              |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| <b>5:4-21</b> | <b>Benefits of obedience</b> |
| 5:4-5         | Victory over the world       |
| 5:6-13        | Assurance of salvation       |
| 5:14-17       | Guidance in prayer           |
| 5:18-20       | Freedom from habitual sin    |
| 5:21          | Fidelity to God              |

## Outline

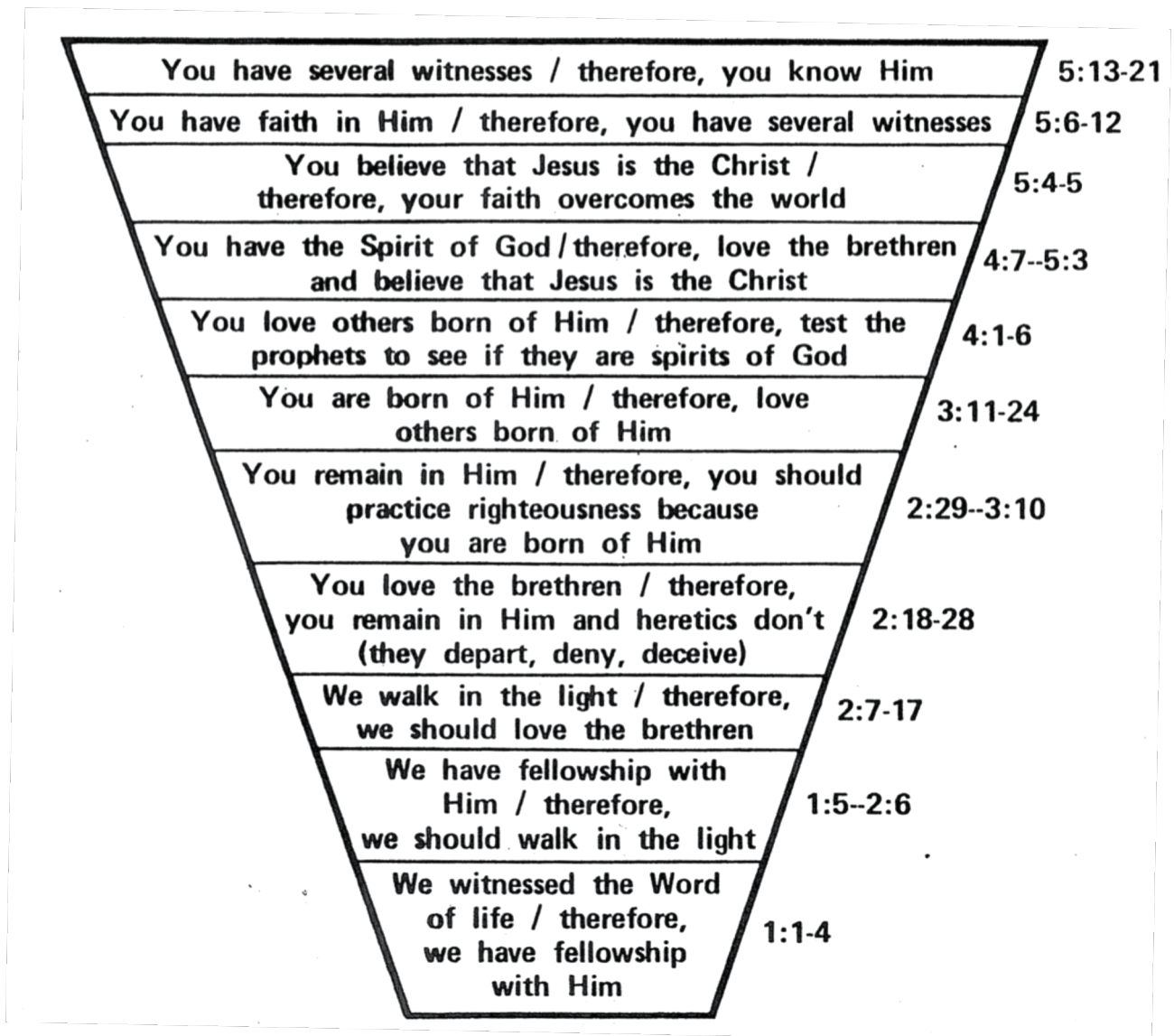
### Summary Statement for the Book

**Exegetical Idea:** The benefit of obedience and love is what we really need instead of early Gnosticism.

- I. **One way to be protected from early Gnosticism was to obey God's commands (1 John 1-2).**
  - A. Christ's humanity rebuts Docetic Gnosticism and Christian fellowship brings joy (1:1-5).
  - B. We cannot obey Christ without depending on him (1:6-2:14).
  - C. Avoid two hindrances to a life of obedience to stop the spread of early Gnosticism (2:15-29).
    1. Worldliness in believers leads them into false teaching and practice (2:15-17).
    2. Deception in believers leads them into the practices of early Gnosticism (2:18-29).
- II. **Another way to be protected from early Gnosticism was to love others (3:1-5:3).**
  - A. An *inability to sin* when abiding in Christ characterizes one who loves (3:1-10).
  - B. An *inability to hate other believers* characterizes one who loves (3:11-15).
  - C. *Compassionate acts* characterize one who loves (3:16-20).
  - D. *Confidence before God* due to righteous behavior characterizes one who loves (3:21-24).
  - E. *Obeying apostolic teaching*—not Docetic Gnosticism—characterizes one who loves (4:1-6).
  - F. *Care for others* like Jesus characterizes one who loves since God is love (4:7-21).
  - G. *Obedience to God's commands* characterizes one who genuinely loves (5:1-3).
- III. **The benefit of obedience is what we really need instead of early Gnosticism (5:4-21).**
  - A. *Victory over the world system* results from a life of obedience (5:4-5).
  - B. *Assurance of salvation* results from a life of obedience (5:6-13).
  - C. *Guidance in prayer* results from a life of obedience (5:14-17).
  - D. *Freedom from habitual sin* results from a life of obedience (5:18-20).
  - E. *Fidelity to God* shown in avoiding idolatry results from a life of obedience (5:21).

## Ascending Spiral Structure in 1 John

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## The Da Vinci Code Heresy

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### THE INFLUENCE

- A. Truth has always been attacked.
  - 1. John was clear about the deity of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14).
  - 2. Nevertheless, truth is always attacked, so Peter admonished us always to be ready to defend our faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).
  - 3. Since the first century Christians have faced many challenges to their faith. Each century new heresies have forced us to articulate the truth about what we believe.
- B. We are there again with Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. Its impact is incredible:
  - 1. Released only in March 2003, the book sold 12 million copies by February 2005, so by then Brown had earned over US\$260 million in royalties. Sales passed 100,000 copies in Singapore alone.<sup>1</sup> This far surpasses Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* (22 million copies sold) as the best selling fiction of all time.
  - 2. Interest in *The Da Vinci Code* led to increased sales of his other three books, adding another US\$100 million to his pockets. By May 2006 it sold over 45 million copies worldwide, as it has been a bestseller in over 100 countries—second only to the Bible.
  - 3. It has been translated into over 44 languages as well as spawning board games and at least 30 other books in its wake—both in support of its thesis as well as critiques.
  - 4. *The Da Vinci Code* movie was released worldwide in May 2006 with a computer game that followed.

### THE PLOT

- A. The story involves characters that try to answer why Silas, a Catholic (Opus Dei order) monk, kills the curator (Jacques Saunière) of the Louvre museum in modern-day Paris.
- B. As the old curator dies, he forms his body into the position of da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.
- C. These characters then try to solve the murder (real names in *italics*):
  - 1. Robert Langdon (*Tom Hanks*), a Harvard so-called "expert" in studying symbols, is asked to help solve the murder.
  - 2. Sophie Neveu (*Audrey Tautou*) is a French detective and granddaughter of the victim.
  - 3. Since Langdon is the prime suspect, they end up running away from French detective Bezu Fache (*Jean Reno*).

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<sup>1</sup> Kristina Tom, "Da Vinci Decoded," *The Sunday Times* (Singapore, 13 Feb 2005), page L8.

- D. As the police chase Landon and Neveu, they find clues to the murder in places such as Westminster Abbey. Clues also lie in paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, especially his Last Supper, which supposedly has a dagger with no one holding it (the paint of Peter's hand has chipped away!). They seek to decipher da Vinci's backward writing (where da Vinci concealed astronomy and math theories—but not religious ones). These clues “reveal” that Christianity, as we have known it for 2000 years, is a farce. How? Read on...

### THE SUMMARY (THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO BROWN)

- A. Jesus married Mary Magdalene.
- B. His daughter Sarah grew up in France.
- C. His deity was invented in AD 325.
- D. We have the wrong NT Gospels in our Bibles.
- E. The roots of Christianity lie in the “Divine Feminine.”
- F. Christians cover up this conspiracy. (But even up to the last fictional scene they never actually see evidence of Mary's sarcophagus and the chests proving these claims.)

### THE SOURCES

- A. Amazingly, Brown claims to be a Christian, though he does not clearly identify his definition of “Christian” ([http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code/faqs.html](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html)).
- B. Does Brown really believe all this? He says, “I began as a skeptic. As I started researching *The 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.”<sup>2</sup>
- C. Brown makes the astonishing claim in his preface: “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.”
- D. Brown looks convincing to the uninformed, but depends mostly on flawed works.<sup>3</sup> Four books are cited in the book itself as sources—but none of these four is a real historian.
- E. In fact, the name of Leigh Teabing, Brown's main “historian” in the book, is derived from two author's names in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.
- F. Brown's errors in history, art, and biblical interpretation are surveyed in these notes:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ABC News Special, “Jesus, Mary, and Da Vinci,” aired 3 Nov 2003.

<sup>3</sup> In April 2006 Brown won the lawsuit accusing him of plagiarizing Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (Doubleday, 1982). His book cites them as sources. His inaccurate details on da Vinci stem from Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, *The Templar Revelation* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Brown's historical errors begin with the book's misspelled title, for Leonardo da Vinci's name had no capital “d.” Nor was “da Vinci” his “last name,” as Brown claims. Rather, it was his city of origin.



## THE HISTORICAL ERRORS

- A. One key belief of Brown's is that "history is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books—books which glorify their own cause" (DVC, 215). This thesis has several flaws:
1. If winners alone wrote history, there would have been no gospels at all. The early church was far from being "winners" as the Romans dominated the first three centuries. Christians were greatly persecuted, yet the NT emerged from the ashes.
  2. Brown denies that competing views of Christianity coexisted. It is true that the orthodox second-century church ("losers") fought Gnosticism (other "losers") as a heresy, and this orthodoxy eventually prevailed (became "winners"). However, like Gnostics, Roman historians (the "winners") around AD 100 also taught Jesus as only a man,<sup>5</sup> but this view coexisted with Christ's deity held by the church.
  3. Even today we have examples of history being revised by the losers—not the winners. The Japanese clearly lost WWII, yet they have written their own version of the war with no mention of their atrocities. Some Americans have rewritten their history to eliminate references to the Christian founding of the nation as well.<sup>6</sup>
- B. Brown's assertion that the supposed "80 gospels" were narrowed down to our four in the NT because of their patriarchal view is untrue. Actually, only about 22 gospels were composed (e.g., *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, etc.) and all of these except our four canonical ones were from the mid-second to fourth centuries. The church also consistently acknowledged these four gospels (see Appendix 1 chart).
- C. The Development of the New Testament
1. Dates: NT writings were composed from the AD 40s (James) to AD 94-95 (Revelation). For details, please see my NT Survey notes, 41-43.
  2. Canonicity: How did the early church identify which letters were inspired?
    - a) *Apostolic Authority*: An apostle or someone under the guidance of an apostle composed each NT book (Luke under Paul, Mark under Peter).
    - b) *Early & Widespread Acceptance*: The NT letters were not accepted simply by one man, Constantine (*contra* Brown), but by churches in Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Italy, etc. In fact, NT letters were considered inspired even as they were being written.
      - (1) Paul wrote in AD 62 that churches should pay their leaders well (1 Tim. 5:18). He argued that the "Scripture" said not to muzzle the ox while it treads the grain (quoting Deut. 25:4) and that "the worker deserves his wages." This latter scriptural support quotes Luke 10:7 as inspired, even though Luke's gospel was written no more than five years earlier (likely written in AD 57-59 during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea).

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<sup>5</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3; 20.9.1; Pliny the Younger, *Epistle* 10.96; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 25. See these in [www.earlychristianwritings.com](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Maier also notes, "I can give you some interesting instances where history was written by the losers. For example, one of the greatest civil wars in the ancient world was the famous Peloponnesian War. [Its history] was written by Thucydides, who was an Athenian, and the Athenians lost the war. Sparta won. And yet, Thucydides wrote a very objective treatment of what happened in the Peloponnesian War" (in Lee Strobel and Garry Poole, *Exploring The Da Vinci Code* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 16).

- (2) Peter also said in AD 64 that false teachers misinterpreted Paul's letters, just "as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The ink was hardly dry on Paul's epistles (penned AD 49-62), with Titus and 2 Timothy not even written—but Paul's epistles were already considered equal to OT Scriptures.
- c) *Consistency of Doctrine*: Nothing in the NT writings contradicts the OT corpus. This requirement excludes the heretical *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Philip*, which Brown uses as sources for his beliefs.
3. These books were not all recognized at the same time. Some took longer to establish such credibility due to particular problems (e.g., the authorship of Hebrews and 2 Peter, the supposed discrepancy between James and Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, etc.). Appendix 1 shows that by Irenaeus' time (AD 130-202) most were already accepted, and at the Council of Hippo (AD 393) all 27 were accepted. In AD 180 Irenaeus noted that all agreed upon our four gospels.<sup>7</sup>
- D. Brown says Emperor Constantine invented the deity of Christ at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325).<sup>8</sup> What can be said in response?
1. Would Christians who "believed that Jesus was only a man" really need to worship secretly in the catacombs? The Romans would have had no problem with them believing in the principles of a crucified man. The "problem" was that believers saw Jesus as God, which the empire saw as a threat.
  2. Would Christians who "believed that Jesus was only a man" die as martyrs? Hardly! Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, refused emperor worship and was fed to wild beasts in Rome. Perpetua (AD 203) and many others died for their belief in Christ's deity.
  3. The Council only *affirmed* this teaching against the Arian heresy that claimed Christ was created—it did not *create* it. While he claims the Council vote was "close," it actually was 300-2 in favor of upholding Christ's deity.<sup>9</sup> Also, of the 20 rulings at Nicaea, none of them related to the canon of the NT.
  4. Paul and early creeds affirmed Jesus as God almost immediately (Rom. 9:5; cf. Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8-9; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:2) and the gospels agree (e.g., John 1:1, 18; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28).
  5. Many church fathers affirmed Christ's deity before Nicaea:<sup>10</sup>
    - Ignatius: "God Himself was manifest in human form" (AD 105)
    - Clement: "It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God" (AD 150)
    - Irenaeus: "He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this" (AD 180)

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<sup>7</sup> Irenaeus warned of heretics that used only one gospel, such as Marcion, who rejected the OT and all gospels except his own edition of Luke. Irenaeus said that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were "the four pillars of the Church" and that "it is not possible that there can be either more or fewer than four." He presented the analogy of the four corners of the earth and the four winds (*Against Heresies* 3.11.8).

<sup>8</sup> Brown's view of Jesus is taught through "historian" Leigh Teabing: "My dear," Teabing declared, "until [AD 325], Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal." [Sophie:] "Not the Son of God?" "Right," Teabing said. "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea" (p. 197, emphasis his).

<sup>9</sup> Paul L. Maier in *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* with Hank Hanegraaff (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004), 15, notes, "The two dissenting bishops were Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Mamarica, both Libyan bishops associated with Arius. All three went into exile after the Council of Nicaea. See Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 217" (p. 73, n. 6).

<sup>10</sup> David Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1998), 93-100; cited in Garlow & Jones, 94.

- Tertullian: "... Christ our God" (AD 200)
  - Origen: "No one should be offended that the Savior is also God" (AD 225)
  - Lactantius: "We believe Him to be God" (AD 304)
- E. Sun worship was not the ancient religion of Rome, as Brown asserts. It actually centred on Jupiter and was patriarchal (not matriarchal *contra* Brown) as male gods dominated.
- F. Brown also depends on the second-century heretical (Gnostic) *The Gospel of Thomas*, a patriarchal work that he misinterprets as matriarchal even though its final verse (saying 114) reads, "For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom."
- G. The author advocates that the "holy grail" was the womb of Mary Magdalene, which held the blood of Christ or sacred bloodline as it held their child.
- H. The Knights Templar was established in the Middle Ages to guard pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. However, Brown says that this was only a guise of their "real" aim—to retrieve the bones of Mary Magdalene and four chests of documents "proving" that Jesus and Mary were married. These were supposedly found underneath the Jerusalem temple ruins and brought to Europe (DVC, 158 hb. ed. or p. 219 pb. ed.). What is the truth?
1. There is no support for this fanciful theory, and he also gives no support for his view that the "v" shape of the chalice symbolized the womb of Mary Magdalene.
  2. The legend of the Holy Grail first appeared in 1170 in *Perceval*, a romantic writing about a legendary King Arthur and his kingdom of Camelot. The Grail was never linked to Mary Magdalene until *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982).
  3. Templars began in 1118 by Hugo des Payens to protect pilgrims traveling to Israel.<sup>11</sup>
  4. Brown admits that no one knows what the Knights actually found underneath Temple Mount (p. 218 pb. ed.), then his entire book continues around the theory that they discovered proof that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married (pp. 219ff.)! Guesses as to what they actually found include the ark of the Covenant, Shroud of Turin, or architectural plans for Gothic cathedrals with the new "flying buttresses" design.<sup>12</sup>
  5. Brown says that Templars became rich by having documents about Jesus' supposed marriage. Actually, their wealth came from grateful pilgrims and by selling relics.
- I. Brown's secret society information on the Priory of Sion is flawed as well.
1. His preface says, "FACT: The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975 Paris's Bibliotheque Nationale discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, ... and Leonardo da Vinci...."

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<sup>11</sup> Robert G. Clouse, "Templars," in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, gen. ed., J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 956 (cited by Josh McDowell, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*, IM print Edition [Singapore: Campus Crusade Asia Ltd., 2006], 57); Richard Abanes, *The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code: A Challenging Response to the Bestselling Novel* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2004), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Abanes, 58, who also cites the buttress idea in BBCi, "The Knights Templar," March 13, 2000, [www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A272558](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A272558).

2. What is the historical truth?
  - a) My research shows divided opinion whether there really existed a medieval Priory of Sion starting around AD 1100, which was absorbed into the Jesuits in 1617.<sup>13</sup> What is clear is that a modern “Priory of Sion” with the purposes of knightly chivalry and “solidarity” to assist people with low-cost housing was founded on 7 May 1956 by Pierre Plantard (1920-2000), an anti-Semitic Frenchman who went to jail for fraud. It dissolved in 1957.<sup>14</sup>
  - b) *Les Dossiers Secrets (The Secret Records)* were forged documents in the 1960s and 70s planted in libraries throughout France by Plantard to “prove” his right to be king of France! In 1993 he admitted under oath to a French judge that he had fabricated all these documents relating to his “Priory of Sion.”<sup>15</sup>
  - c) No evidence exists to support Brown’s view that Newton, Botticelli, and da Vinci were so-called Grand Masters of the Priory. Brown’s assertions are based on Plantard’s forged document called *Les Dossiers Secrets d’Henri Lobineau (The Secret Records of Henri Lobineau)*.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Ann Collins, “The Da Vinci Code and Other Deceptions,” writes that there was indeed a legitimate, medieval Priory of Sion that venerated “Our Lady of Zion,” or the Virgin Mary (not Mary Magdalene!) in endnote 11 at <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/006/da-vinci-code.htm#11>: “A collection of articles from different countries, all saying that the Priory of Sion was a hoax <http://priory-of-sion.com/psp/id43.html>

In 1993, Pierre Plantard admitted, under oath, that the Priory of Sion was a hoax. <http://priory-of-sion.com/psp/id70.html>

An article about Pierre Plantard  
<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/P/Pierre-Plantard.htm>

Pierre Plantard's criminal convictions  
<http://priory-of-sion.com/psp/id30.html>

An article from a Swiss newspaper (translated into English) <http://priory-of-sion.com/psp/id80.html>.”

<sup>14</sup> See Laura Miller, “The Da Vinci Con,” *The New York Times Book Review* (Sunday, February 22, 2004), exposes the entire hoax.

<sup>15</sup> *The Da Vinci Code: Separating Fact from Fiction*,” Radio Bible Class, 10 (available for free download at [rbc.org](http://rbc.org)).

## THE ART ERRORS

- A. Leonardo's "enormous output of art" with "hundreds of lucrative Vatican commissions" is false. He actually had but one commission and few art works due to his varied interests.
- B. Brown's idea of the Mona Lisa being a self-portrait of Leonardo himself is ridiculous; this is the wife/mistress of a prosperous merchant. Such an idea would certainly anger Mona!
- C. In the Last Supper painting, is "John" on the right of Jesus actually Mary Magdalene? No, John here is depicted in the typical Florentine manner as "the beautiful young man," with the twelve disciples in four groups of three men each.<sup>16</sup>
- D. Brown's supposed "disembodied dagger" in the Last Supper proves nothing. This painting is on a wall with perishable materials, so it has been touched up at least seven times—the last being in 1999.
- E. Jack Wasserman, retired art history professor at Temple University, says, "Just about everything [Dan Brown] says about Leonardo da Vinci is wrong."<sup>17</sup> Other art critics agree.

## THE BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION ERRORS

- A. The Reliability of the Bible
  - 1. Leigh Teabing accuses, "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" (p. 195).
  - 2. What is the truth of the matter here? The Bible is the *best*-attested book of antiquity.<sup>18</sup>
    - a) The number of Greek copies is presently 5,686. Add to this over 14,000 non-Greek manuscripts of the NT plus OT manuscripts and the figure is 24,772 MSS.
    - b) The time interval between the original and existing copies is very short:
      - (1) Our oldest copy of most ancient documents is 1000+ years after the original.
      - (2) The NT has copies as early as 150 years away from the original autographs.
    - c) The accuracy of the copies is astonishing:
      - (1) Even with over 20,000 manuscripts, they are so close that we are virtually certain of 97-98% of the NT.

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce Boucher, "Does The Da Vinci Code Crack Leonardo?" *The New York Times*, 8/3/03; Sian Gibby, "Mrs. God," *Slate*, 11/3/03. An excellent analysis of symbols in Leonardo's work is Richard Abanes, *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code*, 68-75; from [rbcdavincicode.org/art\\_and\\_symbols.php](http://rbcdavincicode.org/art_and_symbols.php).

<sup>17</sup> In Patrick Reardon, "The Da Vinci Code Unscrambled," *Chicago Tribune*, February 5, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Norman Geisler, *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 532.

- (2) The Dead Sea Scrolls included two copies of Isaiah from 200 BC. A comparison with the AD 1000 Isaiah scroll shows astounding accuracy.<sup>19</sup>

TABLE 1. QUMRAN VS. THE MASORETES

Of the 166 Hebrew words in Isaiah 53, only seventeen letters in Dead Sea Scroll 1QIsb differ from the Masoretic Text.

10 letters = spelling differences

4 letters = stylistic changes

3 letters = added word for "light" (vs. 11)

17 letters = no affect on biblical teaching

B. Who was Mary Magdalene?

1. Christ delivered her from demons and she became an ardent follower (Luke 8:2).
2. She was one of the three "Marys" that witnessed his death and resurrection (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; John 19:26-27).
3. However, Brown claims far more than this. He says Jesus married Mary Magdalene and together they had a daughter named Sarah, but Constantine and the early church made Mary out as a prostitute to hide the "truth" of their marriage (DVC, 254).
  - a) But when did this confusion occur? Pope Gregory in the sixth century in a sermon in AD 591 was the *first* to confuse her with the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-8:2).
  - b) In other words, Constantine had no tarnished image of her to restore within the church three centuries earlier!
4. Support for Mary Magdalene as Jesus' wife is sought in *The Gospel of Philip* 63:32-64:10. It reads, "And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene. [...] loved her more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [...]. The rest of the disciples [...]. They said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" What Brown does *not* say is that...
  - a) This is a second-century heretical work. Even if it clearly noted Mary as Jesus' wife, this document 100-200 years after Christ would not be a reliable source.
  - b) If Jesus really were married then why would the disciples be jealous?
  - c) "Companion" need not indicate a wife. Jesus had several traveling companions, many of them women. *The Gospel of Thomas* is in Coptic, not Aramaic, anyway (as alluded to by Brown).
  - d) The word "mouth" is missing in the original, so translators supplied it. It could just as easily be her head, hand, or cheek. However, Philip 58:34-59:4 reads, "we all kiss one another," meaning that in the only other place in his work where "kiss" is used, the author intended a kiss of fellowship—not romance.

<sup>19</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *Introduction to the NT* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 382; cited by Garry K. Brantley, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Integrity" at <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/266>.

- C. Brown's claim that first century Jews always needed to marry is patently false. The Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:7) and men at Qumran valued celibacy, as did Judaism for one dedicated to the Lord. Also, no evidence exists that Jesus ever married (or even a hint in the NT).<sup>20</sup> Even if Christ had married, this would not have destroyed God's plan anyway.
1. Marriage is an honorable institution created by God.
  2. But had Jesus married, the NT would have noted this significant point.
  3. The real problem would have been if Jesus, who had no sin nature, fathered a child—thus not passing on this sinful nature.
- D. Brown's claim that Yahweh and Shekinah were male and female deities, respectively, is blasphemous—as is the contention that the sacred name *Jehovah* came from sex between the male *Yah* and pre-Hebraic female name for Eve, *Havah*.<sup>21</sup>
1. Actually, *Jehovah* resulted from a spelling error when the vowels of the name *Adonai* (Lord) were wrongly added to the sacred name of consonants only: YHWH. Thus "Yahweh" is correct. *Havah* in Hebrew (not "pre-Hebraic") simply means "Eve," from the root meaning "life" (Gen. 3:20).
  2. Further, *Shekinah* refers to God's glory dwelling with his people as a cloud at day and a pillar of fire at night in Exodus 40:38. Nothing about these two terms relate to being male and female.

## THE SUMMARY

- A. *The Da Vinci Code* has too many other errors even to list here. While many do not worry about these claims and dismiss them as fiction, Brown boasts of his "extensive research" and the publisher claims the main aspects of the book are true. *The Chicago Tribune* even called the research "impeccable." Such lies are leading millions of uninformed Christians into error—and unbelievers into everlasting peril. In contrast to liberal theology read mostly only by scholars, this attack on biblical authority has reached the masses.
- B. Brown has rewritten history based on false data. His main thesis should concern every believer: "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."<sup>22</sup> However, there *never* has been a matriarchal society.
- C. Simply put, Brown claims that Christianity was originally goddess worship, but this was changed three hundred years later by inventing the deity of Christ and selecting only gospels that favored men to be in the NT. He implies that, to be truly Christian, believers today should admit that Jesus needed Mary Magdalene as a feminine consort and we should be involved in modern goddess worship—including ritual sex! Does Brown's wife Blythe (to whom he dedicated the book) actually agree with her husband?
- D. "Saying that Dan Brown's book is about Christianity is like saying 'Finding Nemo' is about marine biology. We have just as much evidence to suggest that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene as we have that clown fish talk."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James L. Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2004), 117.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, 262.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Boa and John Alan Turner, *The Gospel According to the Da Vinci Code: The Truth Behind the Writings of Dan Brown* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, May 2006 at [www.lifewaystores.com](http://www.lifewaystores.com)).

## OUR CONTEXT

(What about society today gives this ridiculous book such a following?)

### A. Women's "Liberation"

1. Some of Brown's most preposterous claims concern women.
  - a) One of his website FAQs notes, "THIS NOVEL IS VERY EMPOWERING TO WOMEN. CAN YOU COMMENT?"
  - b) Brown answers his own question: "Two thousand years ago, we lived in a world of Gods and Goddesses. Today, we live in a world solely of Gods. Women in most cultures have been stripped of their spiritual power. The novel touches on questions of how and why this shift occurred and on what lessons we might learn from it regarding our future."
  - c) Brown says the church has suppressed women but he is liberating them. He even claims the church killed over *five million* women to stamp out witches!
2. The truth is that at times the church has not given women their full status as created along with men in the image of God. However...
  - a) One need not resort to Brown's fiction of Mary Magdalene as the leader of the church at Jerusalem to give women a prominent place in the early church. Women served in many leadership roles: Priscilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), Phoebe was a leader in Greece (Rom. 16:1), etc.<sup>24</sup>
  - b) Brown's claim of five million executions grossly exaggerates the actual number of 40,000 deaths—which is 40,000 more than it should have been. (The movie is more accurate here by lowing the figure to 50,000 deaths.)
  - c) Yet even this must be put into context of the *true* liberation that women have received in Christian societies around the world. Wherever the gospel has gone, women's rights have followed. One example is India's terrible practice of *sati*, where countless thousands of widows were burned after their husband's deaths. Abolishing this horrendous practice became one of the life goals of the Christian missionary William Carey, who saw it accomplished in 1829. Christians have also been on the forefront of abolishing slavery of various forms (e.g., William Wilberforce), including the sex slavery of women.
  - d) Brown advocates *hieros gamos* (the so-called "holy sex" pagan religious ritual)—a sex orgy that denigrates and abuses women. In contrast, God offers women His fulfilling experience of sex within a committed, lifelong, marriage relationship.
  - e) *The Da Vinci Code* view of Mona Lisa as a man and the Last Supper's John as a woman *blurs* the sexes, *robbing* woman of her true femininity. Women never had a high status as sex slaves in ancient pagan temples. May women never return to the kind of "exalted status" that Brown endorses!

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<sup>24</sup> For a brief discussion on the NT view of women, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Is Christianity Anti-Women?" at <http://www.thedavincichallenge.com/expert.cfm?e=140>. She teaches NT at Princeton.



## B. Entertainment Better Than Truth

1. James Frey, author of the 2005 bestseller *A Million Little Pieces*, confessed in January 2006 that he really wasn't a criminal, didn't go to jail, etc. even though these were key aspects of his "autobiography."
2. When confronted with these fabrications, this was his response: "The writer of a memoir is retailing a subjective story." His friend, Oprah Winfrey, commented on 12 January 06 that this insistence on truth was "much ado about nothing," yet later recanted and expressed disappointment in Frey's lying.<sup>25</sup>
3. Literary theorist Stanley Fish also noted in this vein that the death of objectivity "relieves me of the obligation to be right"; it "demands only that I be interesting."<sup>26</sup>

## C. Subjectivity characterizes our age

1. Movies rarely espouse any form of absolute authority.
2. All literary sources are considered of equal authority.
  - a) Brown's key sources are Gnostic, which he assumes to have equal authority to Scripture and had two main forms.

| Docetic Gnosticism  | Cerinthian Gnosticism   |
|---|---|
| From <i>dokeo</i> , "to seem"<br>(Christ only seemed to be a man) | From Cerinthus, the founder in Asia<br>(Christ only seemed to be God) |
| Matter is Evil  | Spirit is Good  |
| Depreciated Materialism   | Exalted Knowledge ( <i>gnosis</i> )                                   |
| Denied Christ's Humanity  | Denied Christ's Deity   |
| Touched Jesus (1:1)   | Water & Blood (5:6)   |
| Led to Asceticism   | Led to Pride  |
| Immorality exalted  | Education exalted   |

- b) *The Gospel of Judas* recently discovered makes Judas the hero of the passion story—chosen by Christ as chief over the disciples in Jesus' own plot to betray him. The media neglects to note that this is a Gnostic gospel with no Christian teaching at all, which only proves that heresy existed in the second century. Irenaeus noted in AD 180 that the church rejected this false gospel.<sup>27</sup>
3. Commentators serve up opinion instead of news.
4. Talk shows and talk radio (46% of USA radio) give a venue for uninformed publicity.
5. Reality TV (over 50% of USA TV programming) continually degenerates to retain viewers, having no moral compass.

<sup>25</sup> AP Jan. 27, 06, "Frey Admits Lying; Oprah Apologizes to Viewers" ([msnbc.msn.com/id/11030647](http://msnbc.msn.com/id/11030647))

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Michiko Kakutani, "Truth Fast Losing Its Value in Non-Fiction," *The Sunday Times* [Singapore], 22 January 2006, p. 33 reprint of *The New York Times*. Stanley Fish is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at University of Illinois at Chicago and one of the most influential and controversial theorists and critics of literature, law, and philosophy of our time.

<sup>27</sup> "They [the false teachers] declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the *Gospel of Judas*" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.31.1) in <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103131.htm>).

6. Blogging gives an outlet to air any view publicly with no checks and balances.

## OUR RESPONSE

- A. Know both the Word and the enemy arguments.
1. Know the Best Book first.
  2. Know Brown's book. I suggest that you read it—but only a borrowed one—don't buy it! Alternatively, you can read his own summary of the book on his website.<sup>28</sup>
  3. Read the critiques—especially the Radio Bible Class pdf summary at rbc.org.
  4. The Singapore DVC Project ([www.davincicode.org.sg](http://www.davincicode.org.sg)) can help. Attend DVC seminars to see how best to respond to this heresy. I will present a two-part seminar at Wesley Methodist Church at 7:30 PM on September 17 & 24, 2006.
- B. Dialogue with people about *The Da Vinci Code* by using these questions:<sup>29</sup>
1. Answer according to the perspective that the doubter is coming from:
    - a) “This is just a work of fiction so I don't understand all the fuss about it”: Tell this person that you agree and let it be.
    - b) “I didn't know that the church has covered up the truth about Jesus”: Show where the NT itself proves the deity of Christ whereas Brown uses Pierre Plantard as a key source (forged documents to “prove” Jesus married Mary Magdalene).
    - c) “This gives me a reason not to believe”: Counsel this person based on his or her own personal history of where he or she has been hurt by the church.
  2. Six Basic Questions
    - a) Open: What did you think of the movie?
    - b) Passion: Why do you think speculation on how Jesus lived stirs so much passion?
    - c) Cost: Christians were persecuted for believing Jesus was God the first 300 years after Christ. Do you think they would die for this belief if they knew it was a lie?
    - d) Death: Brown does not discuss if Jesus died willingly. If Jesus did not claim to be the Son of God, why didn't he speak up to Pontius Pilate to prevent his death?
    - e) Resurrection: Brown also never notes Christ's resurrection in his account. Yet...
      - (1) It is a well-established fact of history that Jesus' tomb is empty.
      - (2) Can you think of a way to explain the fact of the empty tomb yet also believe that Jesus was just a man as Brown claims (DVC, 233)?

<sup>28</sup> Brown offers free excerpts at [www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code/excerpt.html](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/excerpt.html).

<sup>29</sup> Questions in sections “2” and “3” are adapted and used with permission from Dr. Dave Geisler, Meekness & Truth Ministries ([www.meeknessandtruth.org](http://www.meeknessandtruth.org)). This website has free downloads to critique the DVC in PPT and pdf formats. For those interested in pre-evangelism training contact Dr. Geisler at [dgeisler@meeknessandtruth.org](mailto:dgeisler@meeknessandtruth.org).

- f) Application (If you sense they are open ask): Can I share with you why I believe he is alive and why it makes a difference? (Share the gospel here.)

3. Extra Questions

- a) Do you think it is possible that Jesus Christ could be something more than what the book portrayed him to be?
- b) Many people today believe that truth (especially religious truth) is relative to one's particular culture or situation. However can the truth about who Jesus is be specific to one's culture (or situation) and at the same time it be correct that "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (DVC, 235)?
- c) How could Christians have wiped away any traces of the real Jesus from secular literature if they were not "the winners" even when these things were written?
- d) If Jesus was just a "mortal prophet," what was the focus of the Church for the first 300 years if nobody was worshipping Jesus as God?
- e) Does it make more sense to you that man sins because he has forgotten that he is in fact god, or is it more likely that man sins because he has fallen short of measuring up to the standards of a Holy God?
- f) Let's say for the sake of argument that everything we have been taught about Christianity is a lie and that the Gnostic gospels came before Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and were the true Gospels.
- (1) What this kind story would tell us about Christianity? It would say that:
- (a) Salvation equals liberation from the body.
- (b) Jesus came to bring us the true gnosis (knowledge).
- (c) Not everyone can obtain this true knowledge.
- (d) Jesus only appeared to be physical but was not really a human being.
- (2) How then does this belief fit with Brown's assertion that "Jesus was just a man"? (In other words, Brown tries to use Gnostic writings but his view is not even consistent with Gnosticism.)
- g) How can Brown say that the Christian writers of the NT devalued the rights of women when the Gnostic gospels he uses to devalue the writing of the gospels actually devalue women even more (see The Gospel of Thomas 114)?
- h) The Christian writer C.S. Lewis has pointed out concerning the New Testament claim that Jesus was God that this proves that he either was a liar, a lunatic, or actually Lord (Savior). Others have also suggested that he was actually a legend. Do you think it is possible that Jesus Christ could be something more than what the movie portrayed him to be? Why or why not?
- i) How does a painting made 15 centuries after Christ (The Lord's Supper by da Vinci, 1495–1497) have anything to do with verifying whether the NT documents are a reliable record of the things that Jesus said and did?
- j) Has anyone ever explained to you the difference between Christianity and all other religions? (explain Do versus Done) If not would you be interested in this?

- (1) Most religions teach us to “Do”:
  - (a) Muslims believe that salvation depends upon man measuring up (Do).
  - (b) Buddhism says salvation comes when one desires to stop desiring (Do).
  - (c) Hinduism teaches that if one does enough good he can pay off his karmic debt and escape the cycle of reincarnation (Do).
- (2) However, Jesus says accept the gift I offer. It has already been “Done” for you (you can do nothing to earn God’s gift). Invite me to come into your life and change you from the inside out (John 1:12; Phil. 2:13).
- (3) Something to think about...

“...I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him, ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 56

C. Did you know that...?

1. Were you aware of the fact that two-thirds of all the New Testament books were accepted as sacred Scripture by the middle of the second century?
2. Did you know that the Priory of Sion was not founded in Jerusalem in 1099 but in 1956 and was officially registered in France?
3. Did you know that in the 1960s a man named Pierre Plantard *planted* the cache of documents “discovered” in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris?<sup>30</sup> These documents supposedly “proved” that the French kings (including Plantard!) descended from Jesus and Mary Magdalene’s daughter Sarah. Did you know that these lies were exposed in France in a BBC Documentary in 1996?
4. Did you know that Plantard was determined to be an anti-Semite with a criminal record for fraud who formed a social group over 50 years ago?<sup>31</sup>
5. Did you know that not only were the books of the Bible not “voted on” during the council of Nicaea in 325 but that none of the four gospels nor the Apostle Paul’s letters were ever questioned as authentic scripture?
6. Did you know that the Council of Nicaea did not debate over whether Jesus was divine or mortal but whether he was co-eternal with God the Father?

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<sup>30</sup> Documented in James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci’s Code* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2004), 112.

<sup>31</sup> See Laura Miller, “The Da Vinci Con,” *The New York Times Book Review* (Sunday, February 22, 2004), 23.

7. Did you know that the Jewish Tetragrammaton (YHWH) was the sacred name for God that was not derived from the word Jehovah?
8. Brown said “The pre-Christian God Mithras—called the Son of God and the Light of the World—was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days.” Did you know Mithraism scholars know nothing of this?
9. Did you know that the documents that Brown cites to verify his claims about Christ teaches that salvation can only be attained through higher knowledge (“*gnosis*”) and that few ever actually can achieve this?
10. Did you know that the documents that Brown cites to verify his claims that Jesus was just a man actually teach that Jesus was not a man since Gnosticism teaches that Jesus could not be involved with a corrupt material existence?
11. Did you know if Dan Brown is right about what he says about the sacred feminine the Jews have been wrong about their belief in worshiping one God?
12. Did you know that neither the Gospel of Philip nor the Gospel of Mary teach that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus?
13. Did you know that the Edict of Milan in AD 313 did not make Christianity the state religion but only declared that Christian worship was to be tolerated?

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  - m) Starbird, Margaret. *The Woman With the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail*. Bear & Co, 1993, & *The Goddess in the Gospels: Reclaiming the Sacred Feminine*. Bear & Co, 1998.
2. Website: Brown, Dan. [www.danbrown.com](http://www.danbrown.com) is a beautifully done interactive website that presents Brown's writings and helpful FAQs as background material.

## B. Debunking Dan Brown<sup>32</sup>

### 1. Books

- a) Abanes, Richard. *The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code: A Challenging Response to the Bestselling Novel*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2004 is a 96-page critique by a recognized cult expert.
- b) Boa, Kenneth, and Turner, John Alan. *The Gospel According to the Da Vinci Code: The Truth Behind the Writings of Dan Brown*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, May 2006 at [www.lifewaystores.com](http://www.lifewaystores.com).
- c) Bock, Darrell L. *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*. Nashville: Nelson, 2004 is an exhaustive treatment by a NT professor at Dallas Seminary.
- d) Ehrman, Bart D. *Truth and Fiction in The Da Vinci Code: A Historian Reveals What We Really Know about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine*. Oxford University Press, 2004. He teaches religious studies at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- e) Fisher, Dennis. "The Da Vinci Code: Separating Fact From Fiction." Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 2005, is a concise (32-page) study presented in a non-offensive way (available for download at <http://www.rbcdavincicode.org/> or as a free booklet). This is available in Chinese from Georgiana Wang, Radio Bible Class Singapore office (tel. 6858-0900).
- f) Garlow, James L. and Jones, Peter. *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*. Colorado Springs: Victor, 2004.
- g) Hanegraaff, Hank, and Maier, Paul L. *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004 is a 78-page quick summary of Brown's errors.

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<sup>32</sup> Marci Ford presents reviews of 11 of the 15 books debunking or responding to Dan Brown at [http://www.faithfulreader.com/features/0405-da\\_vinci\\_debunkers.asp](http://www.faithfulreader.com/features/0405-da_vinci_debunkers.asp).

- h) Kellmeyer, Steve. *The Fact and Fiction in The Da Vinci Code* (Bridegroom Press) is only 96 pages but a good Catholic response to 72 issues.
- i) Lunn, Martin. *Da Vinci Decoded: The Truth Behind the New York Times #1 Bestseller* (The Disinformation Company).
- j) Lutzer, Erwin W. *The Da Vinci Deception: Credible Answers to the Questions Millions Are Asking about Jesus, the Bible, and The Da Vinci Code*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004.
- k) McDonald, Lee, and James A. Saunders, ed. *The Canon Debate*, Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2002.
- l) McDowell, Josh. *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. IM print Edition. Singapore: Campus Crusade Asia Ltd., 2006 is a 112-page dialogue about the Brown's book by fictitious college students. Only S\$6.60 at Popular Bookstores, it is the most affordable critique of Brown, yet also has an extensive bibliography.
- m) Olson, Carl, and Meisel, Sandra. *The Da Vinci Hoax*. Ignatius Press, 2004 is a Catholic response.
- n) Oxbrow, Mark, and Ian Robertson. *Rosslyn Chapel and the Grail*, 2005 (<http://www.rosslyngrail.com>) answers Brown's lies about this church building.
- o) Solomon, Robert M. *Faith & Fiction: The Fallacy of The Da Vinci Code and the Facts of Christianity*. Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2006 is an insightful response to Brown's book by the bishop of the Methodist Church of Singapore (<http://www.armourpublishing.com/armour/products/product2.jsp?pid=9814138673>).
- p) Strobel, Lee, and Poole, Gary. *Discussing the Da Vinci Code*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006 is a DVD discussion guide (see entry in DVD section). Strobel is the director of spiritual discovery at Willow Creek Community Church.
- q) Strobel, Lee, and Poole, Gary. *Exploring the Da Vinci Code*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, April 2006 is a concise, 112-page question & answer format selling at only US\$4.99 on amazon.com.uk.
- r) Wallace, Daniel, M. James Sawyer, Jr. and J. Edward Komoszewski. *Reinventing Jesus: What the Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You*. Kregel, 2006. Wallace teaches NT at Dallas Seminary.
- s) Welborn, Amy. *De-Coding Da Vinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of The Da Vinci Code*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004 is a Catholic view.
- t) White, James Emery. *The Da Vinci Question*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006, comes from the president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.
- u) Witherington, Ben, III. *The Gospel Code: Novel Claims About Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004 is a substantial work by a noted NT scholar that responds to new scholarship underlying Brown's book.

## 2. Websites

- a) Crossan, John Dominic. "Why Didn't Jesus Marry." Beliefnet.com, fall 2003.
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- c) Geisler, Dave. [www.meekneessandtruth.org](http://www.meekneessandtruth.org) has free downloads to critique the DVC in PPT and pdf formats. For those interested in pre-evangelism training contact Rev. Dave Geisler at [dgeisler@meekneessandtruth.org](mailto:dgeisler@meekneessandtruth.org).
- d) McDowell, Josh. Singapore Campus Crusade for Christ. [www.right2reason.com](http://www.right2reason.com) presents the gospel in an engaging way but has nothing about the DVC. He also has a free and very helpful pdf download, "The Da Vinci Code: A Companion Guide to the Movie" at <http://www.godsquad.com/davinci/resources.htm>.
- e) RBC Ministries at <http://www.rbcdavincicode.org/> has many articles. See also under Dennis Fisher in books above.
- f) Singapore DVC Project Team. Singapore: Campus Crusade for Christ, Meekness and Truth Ministries, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and Covenant EFC. <http://www.davincicode.org.sg/>.
- g) Wilson, Jonathan. [www.partialobserver.com/davinci](http://www.partialobserver.com/davinci) has many links to articles.

### 3. DVDs

- a) Anderson, Kerby. "Redeeming the Da Vinci Code." This DVD is by the National Director of Probe Ministries and frequent host of the Point of View radio show. It features interviews with Darrell Bock, Ph.D., Professor of NT at Dallas Theological Seminary and author of the book, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*, and John Hannah, Ph.D., Professor of Historical Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary. Available at [http://www.probe.org/documents/redeeming\\_dvc2.html](http://www.probe.org/documents/redeeming_dvc2.html)
- b) Boa, Kenneth, and Ibsen, Bill. "Unraveling *The Da Vinci Code*." Ken Boa's Spiritual Study Series, 2005. <http://www.kenboa.org/> (1-800-372-9632) is an excellent PowerPoint critique of Brown's plot and teaching.
- c) Grizzly Adams Productions. "The Da Vinci Code Deception." Singapore: Campus Crusade Asia Ltd., 2006 ([info@crusademediamedia.com.sg](mailto:info@crusademediamedia.com.sg)), has interviews with Lutzer, Bock, Garlow, and Jones for S\$24.00 at the SBC Book Centre.
- d) DVC Resource Pack, Singapore DVC Project Team. Resources in a Singapore context at [www.davincicode.org.sg](http://www.davincicode.org.sg).
- e) Licon, Mike. "Exploring the DVC." [VEC/05-001923] is essentially a video of the speaker discussing Brown's book with PowerPoint backup.
- f) Kennedy, D. James. "The Da Vinci Delusion" is a 60-minute DVD that includes help from renowned scholars to debunk Brown's errors. Available for US\$25 donation at <https://store.afa.net/productcart/pc/viewPrd.asp?idproduct=109>.
- g) Strobel, Lee, and Poole, Gary. "Discussing the "Da Vinci Code." Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006 is a DVD linked to a group discussion guide (see entry above).

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- c) Rotten Tomatoes is a secular site that links to many other reviews of the movie: [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/da\\_vinci\\_code/?critic=tomatometer\\_rotten](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/da_vinci_code/?critic=tomatometer_rotten)



### Appendix 1: Developing the Canon

# The New Testament Canon During the First Four Centuries

|          | BOOK | INDIVIDUALS                 | CANONS | TRANSLATIONS | COUNCILS |
|----------|------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------|----------|
| Matt.    | X    | PSUEDO-BARNABAS (c. 70-130) |        |              |          |
| Mark     | X    | CLEMENT OF ROME (c. 95-97)  |        |              |          |
| Luke     | X    | HERMAS (c. 110)             |        |              |          |
| John     | X    | POLYCARP (c. 110-50)        |        |              |          |
| Acts     | X    | DIDACHE (c. 115-40)         |        |              |          |
| Rom.     | X    | PAPAS (c. 120-50)           |        |              |          |
| 1 Cor.   | O    | IRENAEUS (c. 130-40)        |        |              |          |
| 2 Cor.   | X    | DIAGNETUS (c. 130-202)      |        |              |          |
| Gal.     | X    | JUSTIN MARYR (c. 150)       |        |              |          |
| Eph.     | X    | CLEMENT MARYR (c. 150-55)   |        |              |          |
| Phil.    | X    | CRIGEN (c. 150-220)         |        |              |          |
| Col.     | X    | TERTULLIAN (c. 150-215)     |        |              |          |
| 1 Thess. | X    | CRIGEN (c. 185-254)         |        |              |          |
| 2 Thess. | X    | EUSEBIUS (c. 325-40)        |        |              |          |
| 1 Tim.   | X    | JEROME (c. 340-420)         |        |              |          |
| 2 Tim.   | X    | AUGUSTINE (c. 400)          |        |              |          |
| Titus    | X    | MARCION (c. 140)            |        |              |          |
| Philemon | X    | MURATORIAN (c. 170)         |        |              |          |
| Heb.     | X    | BAROCCIO (c. 206)           |        |              |          |
| James    | X    | APOSTOLIC (c. 300)          |        |              |          |
| 1 Peter  | X    | CHELTENHAM (c. 360)         |        |              |          |
| 2 Peter  | X    | ATHANASIUS (367)            |        |              |          |
| 1 John   | X    | TITIAN DIALESSARON (c. 170) |        |              |          |
| 2 John   | X    | OLD LATIN (c. 150-170)      |        |              |          |
| 3 John   | X    | OLD SYRIAC (c. 200)         |        |              |          |
| Jude     | X    | HIPPO (393)                 |        |              |          |
| Rev.     | X    | CARTHAGE (397)              |        |              |          |
|          |      | CARTHAGE (419)              |        |              |          |
|          |      | NICEA (c. 325-40)           |        |              |          |

X = Citation or allusion  
 O = Named as authentic  
 ? = Named as disputed

Taken with adaptation from William E. Nix and Norman L. Geisler, Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody, 1968). Used by permission.

## Appendix 2: NT Teaching on False Teaching

This chart shows that many New Testament writings responded to false teaching or persecution. Notice also how often persecuted recipients were encouraged with the eschatological hope of Christ's return. The key NT texts of entire books that emphasize eschatology appear in **bold** print.

|                 | <b>False Teaching</b>          | <b>Persecution</b>        | <b>Eschatological Hope</b>                    |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Matthew         |                                | by Jews (AD 40s)          | 13:1-52; 24:1—25:46                           |
| Mark            |                                | by Romans (AD 60s)        | <b>13:1-37</b>                                |
| Luke            |                                |                           | 21:5-38                                       |
| John            | <u>AD 60s</u>                  | by Romans (AD 60s or 90s) |   |
| Acts            |                                | by Romans (AD 60s)        | 2:16-20, 25, 34-35, 40                        |
| Romans          | <b>1</b> 2:1-4                 |                           | 11:25-27; 13:11-14                            |
| 1 Corinthians   | 15:12, 58                      |                           | 15:12-58                                      |
| 2 Corinthians   | <u>3:1; 10:10; 11:3-4</u>      |                           |   |
| Galatians       | <b>2</b> 1:6-9; 3:1            |                           |   |
| Ephesians       |                                |                           |   |
| Philippians     | 3:2-4, 9, 18-19                | 1:13, 28-30               | 1:6, 10; 2:10, 16; 3:20-21                    |
| Colossians      | <u>2:8, 16-23</u>              |                           |   |
| 1 Thessalonians | <b>3</b> 4:8                   | 1:6; 3:6                  | <b>1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11, 23</b>        |
| 2 Thessalonians | 1:8-9; 2:1-3; 3:2, 6           | 1:4-7; 3:2                | <b>1:9-10; 2:1-12</b>                         |
| 1 Timothy       | <u>1:3-11; 4:1-3, 7; 6:3-5</u> | 1:18-19; 6:12             | 4:8; 6:14, 19                                 |
| 2 Timothy       | <b>4</b> <u>3:6-9; 4:3-4</u>   | 1:8                       | 3:1-9   |
| Titus           | 1:10-16                        |                           |   |
| Philemon        |                                |                           |   |
| Hebrews         | <u>2:1</u>                     | 10:30-32                  | 1:11-13; 4:1-11                               |
| James           |                                | 1:2-4                     | 5:7-9   |
| 1 Peter         |                                | 1:6-7; 3:8-17             | <b>1:5, 20; 4:7; 5:4</b>                      |
| 2 Peter         | <b>5</b> 2:1-22                | 3:3-13                    | <b>1:16; 3:3-15</b>                           |
| 1 John          | 2:18-19; 4:1-3                 |                           |   |
| 2 John          | <u>vv. 7, 9</u>                |                           |   |
| 3 John          | <b>6</b> vv. 9-11              |                           |   |
| Jude            | v. 4                           | v. 19                     | <b>vv. 14-18, 24-25</b>                       |
| Revelation      | 2:14-15, 20                    | 2:13                      | <b>1:1, 5-8; 2:27; 3:5, 12, 21; chs. 4-22</b> |
|                 | 19                             | 15                        | 17  |

The texts in the false teaching column above divide into texts for six small groups (from the number until and including the underlined passage below it). Read the passages for your group and state any principles that they show on how believers should respond to *The Da Vinci Code* heresy. Word them as commands in universal truths.

## The Things of the World

1 John 2:15-16

| <u>Description (NIV)</u>           | <u>Meaning</u>  | <u>Eve's Temptation</u>        | <u>Christ's Temptation</u>                           |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| "Cravings of sinful man"           | Ungodly bodily desires<br>• Sex outside of marriage<br>• Gluttony, etc.           | "Good for food"                | Stones to bread                                      |
| "Lust of the eyes"                 | Greed<br>Coveting<br>(10th commandment)   | "Pleasing to the eye"          | Possess all kingdoms                                 |
| "Boasting of what he has and does" | Pride<br>Boasting of:<br>• occupation<br>• position<br>• worldly advantages, etc. | "Desirable for gaining wisdom" | Acclaim by men<br>("throw yourself from the temple") |

## Eternal Security

### *Will Every True Christian Really Go to Heaven—For Sure?*

One of the most important questions a Christian can ask is whether his salvation is permanent. Can one who genuinely trusts Christ—and therefore inherits eternal life and a place in heaven—can that person lose this salvation? Please note that we are talking about a real believer here, not simply one who *thinks* he is a Christian. While Paul and other NT writers address this question, none address it as completely as John (though others are dealt with below as well).

Another introductory clarification concerns the difference between eternal security and assurance of salvation. Security refers to one's position before God forever, whereas assurance indicates whether the believer has *knowledge* of this security. Believers can be secure without knowing it (i.e., without having assurance). My wife as a little girl once saw the water in her bathtub flow down the drain. She reasoned that since the water occupied more space than she did, if the water can all pass through the drain, then she could too. In reality, she was secure from this tragedy ever occurring, but for some time she lacked assurance of salvation from the drain. Security and assurance are different matters.

Conversely, a person can *think* he or she is eternally secure (i.e., feel assurance of salvation) but actually be an unbeliever with no security at all. Although assurance is a wonderful study worthy of our time, this study concerns itself with eternal security.

There are many reasons that every Christian is eternally secure:

### **Theological Support for Eternal Security**

#### A. The Work of the Triune God

##### 1. The Work of God the Father

- a) The Father is the One who elects people for salvation. One who says that God's choice is ever wrong or inadequate to save is on a shaky foundation.
- b) But if God chooses one for salvation, is this permanent? Christ answered this important question in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me *will come to me...*" (emphasis mine).

##### 2. The Work of the Christ the Son

- a) Jesus protects the salvation of true believers. He declared, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).
- b) Christ claimed that salvation is permanent. He promised, "Whoever comes to me *I will never drive away*" (John 6:37, emphasis mine).

### 3. The Sealing Work of the Spirit

a) The seal of salvation is God's Spirit—not our works or continued faith or anything else. This seal shows our ownership and guaranteed protection by God.

(1) Eph. 1:13-14 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit *guaranteeing our inheritance* until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." Paul's point is that if God gives us his Spirit, then he will surely give us our *full* inheritance in heaven!

(2) The only way this seal could be broken is through the fault of the Spirit!

b) This assurance of salvation in the sealing is the reason we should never grieve the Spirit. Eph. 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." All who are sealed are also the same ones who will receive full and final redemption of their bodies.

### B. The Nature of Salvation

1. Salvation is God's free gift and is not earned by good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9). Since it is received by grace *without* works then it cannot be undone by *lack* of works. Since security depends upon what *God* has done for you, this work of God would have to be *undone* for your security to be lost!
2. All believers are promised eternal life (1 John 5:11-12; Tit. 3:5-6). The term "*eternal* life" indicates that this life cannot be lost. If believers had the potential of possessing only "temporal life" spiritually, it would be a lie to say this life is eternal.

### C. The Believer's Standing before God

1. God sees each believer as eternally perfect before Him. Hebrews 10:14 says "by one sacrifice he has made perfect *forever* those who are being made holy."
2. No Christian can experience God's condemnation by going to hell. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).
3. A believer cannot be separated from God's love. Romans 8:35-39 affirms this: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
4. Someone may ask, "God may not reject me, but can I disqualify *myself*?" The "nor anything else in all creation" noted above includes our own lack of good works or our committing of a sin which would "undo" God's gift on our behalf. If we needed to add anything to the work of Christ on the cross, his work would be incomplete.

## Biblical Support for Eternal Life Leading to Eternal Security

Many explicit statements in the New Testament say that our salvation is simply through belief and results in **eternal life** (all verses from the English Standard Version of 2002):

John 3:15-16 Whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have **eternal life**.

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has **eternal life**. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have **eternal life**, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has **eternal life**.

John 10:28 I give them **eternal life**, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 17:3 And this is **eternal life**, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Timothy 1:16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for **eternal life**.

Titus 3:7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of **eternal life**.

1 John 2:25 And this is the promise that he made to us— **eternal life**.

1 John 5:11-13 <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony, that God gave us **eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have **eternal life**.

## Sources for Further Study on Eternal Security

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- E. Stanley, Charles. *Eternal Security*. Nashville: Nelson, 1990. 194 pp.

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- “The Three Tenses of Salvation” (155a)
  - “Theological Words in Romans” (155h)
  - “Justification, Sanctification and Death to Sin” (155k)
  - “The Sealing of the Spirit” (155o)
  - “Eternal Security in Corinth” (161dd)
  - “The Scriptural View of Justification” (174c)
  - “Our Position in Christ” (180e)
  - “Eternal Security in Ephesians” (180h)
  - “Eternal Security in Hebrews” (266a)
  - “Views on the Warning Passages” (266c)
  - “Views on Eternal Security and Perseverance” (266d)
  - “Romans vs. James on Justification” (272)
  - “Views on Lordship Salvation” (274b-c)
  - “What is the Gospel?” (317a-b)
  - “Does Major Sin Prove a Person is Unsaved (Rev. 21:8)?” (350-51)

### Discussion Questions:

- A. Why do you think most people have difficulty accepting the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer?
- B. “If Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, and yet we can somehow become unsaved—and therefore undo what Christ came to do—would it not be wise for God to take us on to heaven the moment we are saved in order to insure we make it? Isn't it unnecessarily risky to force us to stay here?” (Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security*, 10) Do you agree? Why or why not?
- C. “If our salvation hinges on the consistency of our faith, by what standard are we to judge our consistency? Can we have any doubts at all? How long can we doubt? To what degree can we doubt? Is there a divine quota we dare not exceed?” (Stanley, 95) Agreed?
- D. Do you think believing in the “once saved, always saved” view causes Christians to neglect their salvation? Why or why not?