

# WHAT IS THE DA VINCI CODE?

*The Da Vinci Code* is a fun, fast-paced novel that takes place in exotic locations throughout France and Great Britain. It's filled with intricate puzzles and electrifying cliffhangers. *The Da Vinci Code* is a fascinating piece of fiction that has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide. People like to discover something that's been hidden. Murder mysteries, conspiracy theories, and tales of hidden treasure have intrigued audiences for centuries.

What could possibly be more intriguing than the thought that there has been a conspiracy hidden in a place that we would never suspect—in the pages of Scripture? Yet, when the claims of Dan Brown, the author of *The Da Vinci Code* are examined, it becomes clear that the novel contains a lot of fiction hidden in the midst of a little truth. If the book's claims were only treated as fictional, there probably wouldn't be so much interest. However, the author of *The Da Vinci Code* doesn't view his work as pure fiction.

When asked how much of the book's explanation of history is based on actual events, Dan Brown has replied, "Absolutely all of it."<sup>1</sup> A similar assertion appears on the book's opening page: "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (DVC p. 1).<sup>\*</sup>

*The Da Vinci Code* claims that:

- Christians didn't recognize Jesus as divine until the fourth century AD when a group of bishops voted on his divinity (DVC p. 233).
- The earliest records about Jesus (which it claims are the Gnostic gospels discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt) are not the records that appear in the New Testament (DVC p. 245).
- The four Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were edited and embellished by the Emperor Constantine to make Jesus appear divine (DVC p. 234).
- Jesus married Mary Magdalene and had a child (DVC pp. 245-249, 255).
- Early Jews and Christians worshiped God through ritualistic sex (DVC pp. 309-310).

Each of these claims contradicts centuries of Christian history, faith, and tradition. Yet, according to Dan Brown, each claim is based on historical truth. So, who's right? Let's take an open-minded look at the claims of *The Da Vinci Code* in the light of history.

<sup>\*</sup>(DVC p. 1) refers to page numbers of *The Da Vinci Code* hardcover.

# THE NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST

## Was the recognition of Jesus as God really the result of a vote?

No, followers of Jesus from AD 30 on believed that Jesus was uniquely God. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the recognition of Jesus as divine was the result of a vote at a council in the city of Nicaea, nearly 300 years after Jesus' death—and "a relatively close vote at that" (DVC p. 233). First, the bishops' purpose wasn't to declare Jesus divine. Around AD 320, a North African elder named Arius claimed that Jesus was a created being, not God in human flesh. In response, the bishops gathered in Nicaea and summarized their shared commitment to a belief that Christians had embraced from the beginning—the belief that Jesus was uniquely God. Second, the vote *wasn't* close: Out of more than 300 church leaders present at the Council of Nicaea, only two refused to sign the Creed of Nicaea,<sup>2</sup> a document that described Jesus as "true God from true God."<sup>3</sup>

## Was Jesus "a mortal prophet, a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless"? (DVC p. 233)

No, Jesus was much more than a mere mortal. From the first century, according to tradition and historical testimony, many of the eyewitnesses who walked and talked with Jesus—the very people who would have known whether Jesus performed miracles and rose from the dead—experienced horrible deaths because they claimed, even when faced with persecution, that Jesus was no mere mortal.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the problem was convincing people not that Jesus was divine, but that he was human. John's first letter is adamant about insisting that Jesus has come in the flesh, since gnostic teaching insisted that God could not become flesh (1 John 4:1-6). It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the New Testament writings are "false testimony" as *The Da Vinci Code* claims (DVC p. 342).

## Were the New Testament writings edited and embellished by the emperor Constantine, to make Jesus appear "godlike"? (DVC p. 234)

No, Constantine became a ruler of the Roman Empire in AD 306, long after Christians had first recognized Jesus as divine. Clearly, the assertion in *The Da Vinci Code* that "Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by Constantine or the Council of Nicaea" in AD 325 is pure fiction (DVC p. 233). Even scholars who deny the unique authority of the Christian Scriptures readily admit that, within two decades of Jesus' death, the apostle Paul wrote letters about the Christian life to churches throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> Here's how these letters described Jesus: In letters written in the 40s and 50s, Paul referred to Jesus as God's Son, as the risen Lord "through whom all things were made," and as "God over all things, blessed forever." Later writings of Paul continue this theme; according to epistles written to the Philippians and the Colossians, Jesus was "in very nature God" and "the image of the invisible God." These letters were accepted, cherished, and copied by Christians throughout the first-century world. A fragment of the Gospel of John, found in Egypt, has been dated around AD 100, indicating that the Gospel of John was in wide circulation by the late first century.<sup>6</sup> The Gospel of John describes Jesus as "my Lord and my God." The other three New Testament Gospels, which were probably in circulation *before* the Gospel of John, also recognized Jesus as being uniquely related to God. In the early 100s, a pastor named Ignatius of Antioch called Jesus "Christ the God."<sup>7</sup> Another pastor declared in a message delivered to his church in the 100s, "We must think of Jesus Christ as we do of God."<sup>8</sup> Even the earliest enemies of the church knew that Christians viewed Jesus as divine: Around AD 178, in a tract written to discredit the Christian faith, the pagan scholar Celsus said that Jesus had "declared himself divine."<sup>9</sup>

(Romans 9:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:1-3, 16; 2:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15, 16; John 1:1; 20:28; Matthew 1:23; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35)



## Is there any evidence that Jesus married Mary Magdalene?

According to a central character in *The Da Vinci Code*, "The marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record" (DVC p. 245). There is no evidence in *any* record from eyewitnesses at the time of Jesus that implies a marital relationship between Jesus and Mary.

## Do *The Gospel of Philip* and *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* prove that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene? (DVC pp. 245-248)

No, neither Gnostic text reflects any eyewitness testimony about the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Both of these documents are considered Gnostic gospels and were never considered for inclusion in the Bible. Gnosticism was a heresy that began to infiltrate Christianity around AD 150. Gnostics claimed that to be saved, people need to experience a secret knowledge (*gnosis*) that takes them beyond the evil physical world. Around AD 180, Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, wrote, "...every one of them [Gnostics] generates something new, day by day, according to his ability; for no one is deemed 'perfect' who does not develop some mighty fictions."<sup>10</sup>

*The Da Vinci Code* implies that *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* is "a gospel ... in Magdalene's words" (DVC p. 247). According to this document, Jesus "loved Mary Magdalene more than the others." The style of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* indicates, however, that it was written around AD 160-200, probably even later—long after the death of Mary Magdalene!<sup>11</sup> According to *The Gospel of Philip*, Mary Magdalene was Jesus' "companion," and "he used to kiss her."<sup>12</sup> The style and content of *The Gospel of Philip* indicate that it was written in the late 200s or early 300s, nearly 200 years or more after the latest New Testament texts.<sup>13</sup>

## What does the word in *The Gospel of Philip* that describes Mary as the "companion" of Jesus really mean?

According to *The Da Vinci Code*, "As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*" (DVC p. 246). The sole ancient manuscript in which this text appears is written in *Coptic*—not Aramaic! Scholars theorize that *The Gospel of Philip* was originally written in Greek, but there is *no* evidence that an Aramaic version of the book ever existed. Furthermore, the Greek term that would have been translated "companion" (*koinonos*) did not require marital or sexual interaction. The word appears ten times in the New Testament and not one occurrence implies a marital or sexual relationship.

(Matthew 23:30; Luke 5:10; 1 Cor. 10:18, 20; 2 Cor. 1:7; 8:23; Philemon 1:17; Hebrews 10:33; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:4)

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

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Leigh Teabing condescendingly comments to Sophie, "The Bible is a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds" (DVC p. 231). In this, he is partly correct: The Bible does not present itself as solely a product of God; the Bible presents itself as *inspired by God* and *protected by God from error* and yet *written by humans*. It is, therefore, *both* a product of God and humanity. In the words of the apostle Peter, "Men spoke"—there's the human part—"from God"—there's the divine part—"as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." As such, it should not disturb us that humans were involved not only in the *writing* but also in the *compiling* of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

## Was the New Testament, as we know it, compiled and edited by men who possessed "a political agenda ... to solidify their own power base"? (DVC p. 234)

No, the New Testament underwent a compilation process referred to as *canonization*, from the Greek word *kanon* ("measuring stick"). So, how were the canonical books selected? To be included in the Christian Scriptures, writings had to meet three requirements: (1) Because the apostles were the trusted eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, the writing had to be directly connected to an apostle. (2) The writing had to be "orthodox"—it could not contradict the teachings of the Jewish Scriptures or of the apostles. (3) The writing had to be accepted in churches throughout the known world—it could not be accepted only by one group of Christians.<sup>14</sup> These requirements specifically *prevented* the manipulation of the canon by any single group.

### THE RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

*The interval between the dates of the original composition [of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] and the earliest extant evidence [is] so small as to be negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.<sup>15</sup>*

—Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum



## Are the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea scrolls “the earliest Christian records”? (DVC p. 245)

No, Dan Brown mistakenly groups the Nag Hammadi and the Dead Sea scrolls together when they're actually two separate groups of documents. The Dead Sea Scrolls are not “Christian records” at all; they're Jewish records, discovered near the Dead Sea in Israel. Most of them originated long before the birth of Jesus. They do not even mention Jesus Christ, let alone speak of his ministry “in very human terms” (DVC p. 234).

The Nag Hammadi texts, discovered in 1945 near the village of Nag Hammadi in Egypt, were copied by a sect that had been influenced by Christianity, but differed greatly in doctrine. None of the Nag Hammadi scrolls was written before AD 150. Most of the Nag Hammadi scrolls are from the 200s and 300s.<sup>16</sup> Even scholars who deny the authority of the Christian Scriptures affirm that the books of the New Testament were completed by AD 100—at least fifty years before the *oldest* Nag Hammadi text was written.<sup>17</sup>

## Were more than 80 gospels considered for inclusion in the New Testament? (DVC p. 231)

No, the four canonical gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were recognized from the very beginning as the authoritative accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. By the mid-100s—about the time the earliest texts found at Nag Hammadi were being written—a prominent church leader wrote, “Since there are four quarters of the earth, ... it is fitting that the church should have four pillars, ... the four Gospels.” Only five of the texts uncovered at Nag Hammadi claimed to be “gospels.” Three other texts that referred to themselves as “gospels” may have circulated among early Christians. Not one of these texts was ever considered by early Christians for inclusion in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup>

### WHEN WERE THEY WRITTEN?

#### The Canonical Gospels (The Gospels in the Bible)

The Gospel of Matthew, between AD 40 and 100<sup>19</sup>

The Gospel of Mark, between AD 64 and 70<sup>20</sup>

The Gospel of Luke, between AD 70 and 90<sup>21</sup>

The Gospel of John, between AD 68 and 100<sup>22</sup>

#### The Gnostic Gospels (Never in the Bible)

The Gospel of Thomas, mid- AD 100s

The Gospel of Truth, mid- AD 100s

The Gospel of the Egyptians, late AD 100s

The Gospel of Judas, around AD 180?

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, around AD 200

The Gospel of Philip, between AD 200 and 350

## What is “Q”?

According to *The Da Vinci Code*, *Q* is a hidden document, “a book of Jesus’ teachings, possibly written in his own hand.” The truth is, *Q* is nothing more than a scholarly theory! *Q*, from the German *Quelle* or “source,” is the hypothesis proposed by some scholars to explain why the Gospels of Matthew and Luke share so many of Jesus’ teachings. The idea is that, as the authors of Matthew and Luke developed their Gospels, they used a common document—now lost—that summarized Jesus’ teachings. So even if this document *did* exist at some point, the document’s content was far from scandalous; it would have been simply the teachings of Jesus.

## Was the emperor Constantine the chief player in the canonization process, commissioning and financing “a new bible which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits”? (DVC p. 234)

No, according to the historical record, Constantine was never involved in the canonization process! Emperor Constantine claimed that he became a Christian in AD 312, around the time of his victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Yet he didn’t allow himself to be baptized until a few weeks before his death.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, his imperial coins seem to indicate that he continued to worship the Roman Sun-God throughout his life.<sup>24</sup> So, if Constantine had been the chief player in the canonization process, perhaps one might question some aspects of the process.

The process of recognizing the canonical books began long before Constantine became a ruler of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century. From the first century AD onward, Christians throughout the Roman Empire recognized twenty books as indisputably reliable and authoritative—the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen letters of Paul; 1 Peter; and 1 John. The only New Testament books that were ever disputed were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. The primary basis for these disputes was uncertainty about whether these books could be authentically connected to an apostle. That’s why it created such an uproar around AD 140 when a renegade theologian named Marcion tried to eliminate Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, and three of Paul’s letters from his church’s Bible!<sup>25</sup>

If the canonization process hadn’t started until Constantine’s reign, Marcion’s actions wouldn’t have mattered to Christians in AD 140. Yet Marcion’s actions disturbed Christians so deeply that, in AD 144, the Christians in Rome excluded Marcion from their fellowship. Even after Marcion was excluded from fellowship, prominent church leaders such as Tertullian and Irenaeus wrote treatises to expose his errors.

Emperor Constantine *did*, around AD 330, finance the copying and binding of fifty copies of the Christian Scriptures. This was not, however, “a new bible,” nor did it omit or embellish any aspect of the gospels—Constantine’s project was little more than a compilation of Scriptures that Christians were already using.<sup>26</sup> The manuscripts of the New Testament that were copied *before* Constantine’s fifty Bibles do not differ significantly from the manuscripts that were copied *after* Constantine’s fifty Bibles.

## After the Bible was made final, were “earlier gospels ... outlawed, gathered up, and burned”? (DVC p. 234)

In AD 367, the bishop of Alexandria did write to Christians urging them to “cleanse the church from every defilement” and to reject “the hidden books.”<sup>27</sup> It is possible that, in response to letters such as this one, some Christians destroyed non-canonical gospels. These were, however, *not* “earlier gospels”—they were later writings that had already been excluded from the authoritative Christian texts.



# DOES DA VINCI DEPICT A WOMAN?

No, there is no evidence that Da Vinci painted a woman in his work. Leigh Teabing, a character in *The Da Vinci Code*, claims that the person sitting at Jesus' right hand is Mary Magdalene. He goes on to discuss how the figure to the right of Jesus has been hidden for centuries until the actual fresco was cleaned down to Da Vinci's original layer of paint (DVC p. 243). The fact is, Da Vinci's original layer of paint is so damaged, no one can tell if the figure is male or female. Even if the original *Last Supper* were recognizable, Leonardo Da Vinci consistently portrays young men as having very feminine features, such as his last masterpiece entitled *St. John the Baptist* located at the Louvre in Paris, France.



Most recent restoration of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci (AD 1497)  
Milan, Italy, Convent of Sta Marie della Grazie (Refectory)



Copy of *The Last Supper* by Raffaello Morghen (AD 1800)

*The Last Supper* was painted from 1495 to 1497 on the Refectory wall of the Convent of Sta Marie della Grazie in Milan, Italy. Da Vinci painted *The Last Supper* using a water-based tempera technique. The painting is 8.8 m. (28.9 ft.) long and 4.6 m. (15.1 ft.) high.

The painting quickly deteriorated. In 1518, only 20 years after the completion date, Antonio de Beatis, the secretary for the Cardinal of Aragon, reported *The Last Supper* as "most excellent although it is beginning to be spoilt, either by dampness oozing from the wall, or from some other negligence." In 1568, Giorgio Vasar, a painter, architect, and writer, described the painting as being "so badly preserved that one can only see a muddle of blots." In 1587, a painter named Giovan Battista Armenini reported *The Last Supper* as "half destroyed." In 1642, only 150 years after *The Last Supper* was completed, Francesco Scannelli, a medical doctor and amateur painter, visited the painting and later reported "that it was in such a blurred state that it was difficult to make out the well-known subject of the picture." Scannelli's further description of the painting suggested that it endured and was continuing to endure vandalism, condensation, rotting, molding, and peeling off of paint to the point of complete destruction. By the time the first restoration project began in 1726, the painting was almost completely unrecognizable.

Several copies of *The Last Supper* are also very well known including the copy *above* engraved by Raffaello Morghen in 1800, long after the original had deteriorated.<sup>28</sup>

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# WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

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## Is sex a "spiritual act" in which one may find the "spark of divinity"? (DVC p. 310)

At this point, *The Da Vinci Code* is partly correct: God is the ultimate source of our sexuality. According to Genesis, "God created humanity in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." Scripture's picture of sexuality does not reflect frenzied group ritual, such as the one celebrated in *The Da Vinci Code* (DVC pp. 310-312). Rather, the intimate pleasure expressed between a husband and his wife is illustrated as a reflection of the intense, exclusive passion that God feels for his people. Throughout Scripture, God is presented as the loving husband of his people. Contrary to what *The Da Vinci Code* implies, there is no "spark of divinity" to be found in a moment of sexual pleasure; but what we do find illustrated throughout Scripture is a beautiful reflection of divine love.

(Genesis 1:26, 27; Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 16:1-32; Hosea 2:1-20; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25)

## Did the church recast sex as "a shameful act"? (DVC p. 125)

No, the church as a whole did not recast sex as shameful. According to one of the characters in *The Da Vinci Code*, the major religions of the world have "worked hard to demonize sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act" (DVC p. 309). A glance at the Old and New Testaments quickly calls this claim into question: "Rejoice in the wife of your youth, let her breasts fill you with delight." Another text explicitly describes the bride and groom on their wedding night. According to the apostle Paul, the only reason for a wife and husband *not* to have sex consistently was if they agreed to "devote [themselves] to prayer for a limited time." Certainly, some church leaders *have* frowned on sex, but their teachings do not agree with Scripture.

(Proverbs 5:18, 19; Song of Solomon 5:10-16; 7:1-13; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

## Was Shekinah the "powerful female equal" of God, worshiped alongside YHWH in the Old Testament? (DVC pp. 309, 446)

No, the term "Shekinah" never appears in the Old or New Testaments. It is a Hebrew term used by later rabbis to describe God's presence among his people.<sup>29</sup> It simply means "the one who dwells." At no point did "Shekinah" refer to a separate, female deity.

## Was Jesus "the original feminist"? (DVC p. 248)

It depends on how one defines "feminist." Jesus did not plan for his church to be a matriarchal community, centered in "the divine feminine," as *The Da Vinci Code* implies. Jesus did teach that women are to be respected and valued equally with men as creatures formed in God's image. Jesus, however, was not advocating a new form of feminism. In fact, this sort of "feminism" is what God intended from the very beginning.

(Matthew 19:3-9; Acts 2:18; Galatians 3:28; Genesis 1:27; 2:18)

## Did ancient Jews and Christians experience the divine through "ritualistic sex"? (DVC p. 309)

No, ancient Jews or Christians who were faithful to the teachings of their religion never attempted to experience the divine through ritualistic sex. According to a main character in *The Da Vinci Code*, early Jewish worship included *Hieros Gamos* ("sacred union"), acts of ritual sex through which "the male could find spiritual wholeness" (DVC p. 309). These rites—*The Da Vinci Code* contends—continued among Christians until the established church engaged in a "brutal crusade to 'reeducate' the pagan and feminine worshipping religions" (DVC p. 125). In truth, the earliest texts from the Jewish tradition explicitly forbid practices of "cult prostitution." Early Christians were *accused* of such acts.<sup>30</sup> However, when a Roman governor thoroughly investigated the charges in AD 112, he found nothing shameful—only an ordinary worship celebration<sup>31</sup> (Deuteronomy 23:17, 18).

## Does the holy name of God, YHWH, imply a union between a masculine and a feminine deity? (DVC p. 309)

No, the holy name of God has nothing to do with masculine or feminine deities. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, "YHWH—the sacred name of God—in fact derived from Jehovah, an androgynous physical union between the masculine *Jah* and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, *Havah*" (DVC p. 309). YHWH, far from being a compound of *Jah* and *Havah*, is a noun derived from the Hebrew term "*hayah*" ("to be"). It was a variation of this term—"ehyeh" ("I AM")—that God spoke to Moses through the burning bush (Exodus 3:14)<sup>32</sup>. The ancient Hebrews viewed the name YHWH with such reverence that they did not even speak it; instead, they substituted the word *Adonai* ("Lord") and even used the vowels from *Adonai* when they wrote the word YHWH.<sup>33</sup> The word "Jehovah" emerged when a sixteenth-century German translator put the vowels from *Adonai* with the consonants from YHWH and came up with "*Yahowah*" which, in German, became "*Jehovah*." So, Jehovah comes from YHWH—not the other way around!

THE NEW TESTAMENT / ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

GNOSTIC ("SECRET") DOCUMENTS

AD 50

AD 100

AD 150

AD 28-30  
Jesus' death  
and resurrection.

AD 107  
Ignatius of Antioch refers  
to "Jesus as God."

AD 110 The Rylands fragment. The oldest New Testament fragment  
(from John 18) that we have today. It is dated from AD 90-AD 120.

AD 130  
The four Gospels and thirteen of Paul's letters are  
accepted as authoritative by many churches.

AD 150  
Clement refers to  
Jesus as God.

AD 178  
A pagan philosopher and  
writer named Celsus says  
that Jesus had declared  
himself divine.

AD 125-150  
Gnosticism  
begins to spread.

AD 180?  
The Gnostic Gospel  
of Judas is written.

AD 49-90 The books of the  
New Testament are written.

AD 110 Papias mentions  
the four Gospels.

AD 140 Marcion tries to eliminate ...  
Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, and three  
of Paul's letters from his church's Bible.

AD 150  
The Gnostic Gospel of  
Thomas is written.



# THE HOLY GRAIL AND CONSPIRACY

## Did the established church know the location of the Holy Grail and use "horrific methods" to keep this knowledge hidden? (DVC p. 266)

Not likely. The Holy Grail is never mentioned in the Bible. The earliest mention of the Grail is found in an obscure novel entitled *Perceval*, penned by Chrétien de Troyes about AD 1100—more than 1,000 years after Christ.<sup>34</sup> Traditionally, the Holy Grail has been understood as the cup from which Jesus drank during the Last Supper. In later legend, the Grail is a vessel that held Jesus' blood. If the Grail had truly been important to Christians, it is unlikely that the church kept knowledge of its whereabouts hidden.

## Is the Holy Grail a symbol of Mary Magdalene? (DVC pp. 238, 249)

No, In the 1960s and 1970s, a Frenchman named Pierre Plantard produced a series of documents that "proved" the existence of a secret society dedicated to maintaining the secret character of the Holy Grail. These documents traced a royal bloodline from Jesus and Mary Magdalene, through the kings of France, to Pierre Plantard himself. These claims were popularized in 1982 in a thoroughly discredited book entitled *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. In 1993, Plantard admitted, under oath, that his claims were completely false.<sup>35</sup> It is apparently from *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* that Brown also derived his assertion that Mary Magdalene was from the tribe of Benjamin (DVC pp. 248, 255)—a claim for which no reliable historical evidence exists.

## How can a book that contains so many inaccuracies still capture the imaginations of so many people?

The June 2004 issue of the science magazine *Discover* published an article about the golden ratio or divine proportion, which is significant to several mathematical claims found in *The Da Vinci Code*. Keith Devlin writes, "The literature on the golden ratio is full of claims that have little or no basis in fact and in some cases are known to be false. Why is it that these myths live on? And why are we so eager to believe everything we are told?"<sup>36</sup> People are intrigued with conspiracy. However, when the claims of Scripture are examined, one finds that, where there is truth, there is nothing to hide. Jesus stated it this way: "I spoke openly in the world. . . I haven't hidden anything that I've said. . . . Question those who heard what I told them! They know what I said" (John 18:20, 21). When we listen to the people who actually heard what Jesus said—people like Matthew, Peter, and the apostle John—we find that the truth is not hidden. It has been plainly presented in the pages of Scripture all along.

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32. J.H. Walton, et al., *The Bible Background Commentary: Genesis—Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997) 88.
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AD 200

AD 180-188

Irenaeus writes "Against Heresies" in which he condemns Gnosticism and mentions all four Gospels in order and lists twenty New Testament books as authoritative.

AD 250

AD 325

The Council of Nicaea condemns Arius and his teachings and produces an early version of the Nicene Creed which clearly defines Jesus as God.

AD 300

AD 350

Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete Bibles still in existence, were circulated.

AD 332

Emperor Constantine orders production of 50 vellum Bibles.

AD 350

AD 180-200

The Gnostic Gospel of Mary Magdalene is written.

AD 250-450 The rest of the Gnostic Nag Hammadi documents are written and circulated.

AD 320

Arius claims Jesus is a created being and not God.

AD 337 Constantine dies.