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MYTH OR REALITY IN THE NOVEL BY DAN BROWN “THE DA VINCI CODE”

The novel by Dan Brown “The Da Vinci Code” is a world bestseller, which was published in 2003. Eighty million copies of this novel have been sold; the critically-derided 2006 film based on the novel has made over \$750 million on the big screen and an additional \$100 million in DVD sales. The video game has brought in another \$2 million. Add rentals, library-loans, and book/DVD sharing to this number. A lot of people have heard about Dan Brown's absorbing story with mysteries, riddles, and even “real historical facts”. But does the author really depict true history?

The majority of christians know about the antiquity of the Holy Grail, a cup that was filled with the blood of Jesus Christ and lately became the object of numerous wars. The owner of this relic received political authority. Even nowadays the Holy Grail is a symbol of renewal and power, it's mentioned in books, films and artworks.

Dan Brown took the motif of the Holy Grail as a base for his novel “The Da Vinci Code” [1]. On the first pages of the work author acknowledged that *all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in it are accurate* [1, p.1], but are they? Writers often try to add more authenticity to their works, adding real facts to them. However, they can also change them in ways necessary for improvement of their story, and Brown, unfortunately, did that. His book proves the famous philosophical saying: *"The most dangerous lie is a slightly perverted truth."* (G.C.Lichtenberg).

According to his version of “the history” the Holy Grail wasn't a cup at all. The relic was the body of Mary Magdalene, who is presented by Dan Brown as Jesus Christ's wife, which is an absolute lie. There is not even the remotest hint of historical evidence that Jesus was supposedly married to Mary Magdalene. There is nothing like that in the Bible. The apostle Paul, in declaring the right to *"have a wife for a companion"* (1 Cor. 9:5), says that the other disciples, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas [Peter] had wives, but he does not say this about Jesus.

On the cross Jesus asks John to take care of His mother (John 19), but shows no concern for Mary Magdalene, His already-almost-widow, if Brown is to be believed.

The "Gospels" of Philip and Mary Magdalene that Brown cites are considered to be apocrypha, non-canonical books. They do not say that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife. Brown's main "proof" is a quote from the Gospel of Philip: "*And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene.*" Brown writes, "*As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse.*" [1, chapter 58]. This is wrong! According to another researcher, The Gospel of Philip was not written in Aramaic, but in Greek, and translated into Coptic (i.e., Egyptian, not Aramaic) [3]. The Greek word *κοινωνός* (*koinonos*), which in question, stands for "*friend, companion*"; it is never used in the New Testament in the meaning "*spouse*" [2].

Further in the novel, Dan Brown tries to question the deity nature of Christ and the reliability of the Bible. To top it all off, he also reinterprets Christianity by suggesting that Jesus wanted Mary Magdalene to lead the church after His death.

According to Professor Michael Wilkins, from a historical and biblical perspective, Dan Brown's book is "*rife with startling inaccuracies*" [4]. For example, Brown claims that the ancient Olympic Games were dedicated to the magic of Venus (chapter 6). In fact, they were held in honour of Zeus, the supreme Greek deity; and Venus is a Roman goddess in general, not a Greek one. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 (not "in the fifties" as stated in chapter 55) and can in no way include the "Gospels" (chapter 55), since they appeared earlier than the New Testament.

The Priory of Sion (which Brown calls the guardian of the "mystery" of Christ) was not at all founded in Jerusalem in 1099 by a French king named Godefroy de Bouillon (chapter 37). As M. Wilkins proves that it was "invented" and registered (according to French law) on 7 May 1956 by two Frenchmen, the convicted fraudster Pierre Plantard and Andre Bonhomme [4]. Thus, much of the storyline concerning Leonardo is based on falsification, which has been irrefutably proven.

Brown describes the Holy of Holies as an underground room beneath King Solomon's Temple (chapter 104). It isn't. The Holy of Holies was a small room inside the Temple where the high priest offered sacrifices (3 Kings 7:50).

This list of errors and falsifications can be continued endlessly, but this small part is enough to make everything clear.

Though one question connected with "The Da Vinci Code" is not answered yet: How could this book become so popular?

Firstly, it is because of an exciting plot. Despite the fact that the whole story is an author's fiction, the adventures of Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu look realistic and exciting. There are lots of mysteries, codes along with conspiracy theories. Readers can feel like these things are real, and

subconsciously they may think that they are learning something new about our world. “The Da Vinci Code is not just fantasy. It is a neo-pagan version of history. Covered by the creative imagination inherent in prose fiction, Brown boldly questions the divinity of Christ. And some gullible readers, having "swallowed" these fabrications, begin to share the views of Brown's fictional characters and doubt the truths about Jesus that they have always professed.

Secondly, the presentation of information. Dan Brown is a professional journalist, who is able to manipulate people’s minds. He forced readers to question real history. If the information is presented in a special way, it can be interpreted like truth.

And thirdly, the topic of the book is familiar for different ethnic groups, citizens of different countries. As was mentioned before, the history of the Holy Grail is famous around the whole world, so when you see a book about something familiar to you, there are more chances that you will buy it, than other fiction tale.

Also breaking fact, known to everyone, that there was a huge investment into advertisement of “The Da Vinci Code”, and, as we can see, it worked.

We consider that Brown deliberately replaced the true story with an obvious mystification, which, of course, is good for his wallet, but very dangerous for the immortal souls of many readers.

In conclusion, it’s important to say that critical thinking nowadays is more important than ever. As once Albert Einstein said: “*The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.*”

References

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