

Reflections

reading notes

JULY 2004—*The Da Vinci Code*

A runaway best seller, with over 8 million copies in print, and soon to be major motion picture, is Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. This thriller hooks the reader from the very beginning. It is a book about secret societies, code words, and religion—in particular Christianity.

The protagonist, Robert Langdon, is forced into a life-threatening quest for the Holy Grail. But the Holy Grail in this story is not what it is traditionally believed to be—the chalice from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. The Holy Grail is the body of Mary Magdalene. Jesus and Mary were married and gave birth to a daughter they named Sarah. After Jesus' death, Mary fled to Gaul, and, under the protection of secret societies throughout the centuries, the seed line of Christ was preserved. There is no resurrection in this story, just a dead Jesus of Nazareth. What makes Jesus important is not his deity. His deity is denied in the book. It is the fact that he came from a royal line of King David. This is the justification given in the book for the preservation of Jesus' descendents. It is purported that the works of Leonardo Da Vinci left clues for what the books claims to be true, thus the name *The Da Vinci Code*.

The Da Vinci Code comes complete with proposed evidence to support its claims. When asked what is true in the book, Mr. Brown affirms that all its history claims are true. Though it is a work of fiction, he argues that the particulars concerning Jesus and the Holy Grail are based on fact.

There are two main issues at stake in the book. One is the reliability of the New Testament documents. The second is the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. If you can destroy the first, you can cast a mighty big shadow over the second. For those whose faith may have been shaken by reading the book, let me recommend a few resources. The first is a book by F. F. Bruce, *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* Another book is by Hermann Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*. A third book I would recommend is written by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*. These should help put to rest much that is amiss in this novel. And any Bible bookstore you walk into today will have at least half a dozen books written for the explicit purpose of addressing the preposterous claims of this novel.

One of the characters in the book, an expert on the Grail, sums up the main thrust of the book in this sentence: "What I mean... is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 235).

I have written a twenty page manuscript concerning *The Da Vinci Code* and have posted it on my web site under Sermons/Manuscripts at www.closerlookbooks.com.

