

8. The Priority of Sion Hoax

- What role does the Priority of Sion play in Brown's novel? What claims are made about it?
- Where does Brown get his information about the Priority of Sion? What problems exist with his sources?
- Who were the Merovingians? Are there differences between their true history and what is said about them in *The Da Vinci Code*?
- Who founded the Priority of Sion and for what reason was it established?
- How has the Priority of Sion been exposed as a hoax? Why does it remain so popular?

9. The Code Puts on Artistic Errors

- Brown claims that he thoroughly researched the life and artwork of Leonardo da Vinci in writing *The Da Vinci Code*. What simple errors show otherwise?
- What is Brown's primary source for what he writes about the Italian painter? Examples?
- Was Leonardo a homosexual? Did he receive hundreds of lucrative commissions from the Vatican?
- What is problematic about Brown's interpretation of Leonardo's paintings *The Madonna of the Rocks* and *The Virgin of the Rocks*?
- What differences exist between the two paintings? Why?
- What evidence exists for Brown's claim that Mary Magdalene is depicted as seated at the right hand of Jesus in *The Last Supper*? What evidence is there that it is actually the Apostle John?
- What claims does *The Da Vinci Code* make about the architecture of Gothic churches? What are some problems with those claims?

10. More Errors and Final Thoughts

- What is fiction and what is fact regarding the execution of people accused of witchcraft in the late medieval era?
- How does Brown misrepresent the origins and meanings of "left" and "right"?
- What flawed claims does *The Da Vinci Code* make about the Jewish religion and Jewish worship in the Temple? What is Brown's apparent source for these mistakes?
- Do you think *The Da Vinci Code* is a "post-modern myth"? Why do you think it has been so popular? What does its popularity say about contemporary culture?

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THE DA VINCI HOAX

by CARL OLSON & SANDRA MIESEL



STUDY GUIDE

Study Guide Questions to use with

The Da Vinci Hoax:

Exposing the Errors in *The Da Vinci Code*

By Carl E. Olson and Sandra Missel

The Da Vinci Code Phenomenon: An Introduction

- How did you hear about *The Da Vinci Code*? Have you read it?
- Do you think *The Da Vinci Code* is “just fiction”? Why or why not?
- What concerns do you have about *The Da Vinci Code* and its success?
- Why is history important? Can history accurately be known?

1. Gnosticism: The Religion of the Code

- Why is it difficult to define “gnosticism”? What are the major characteristics of gnosticism in its various forms?
- How does *The Da Vinci Code* use gnosticism? Avoid or misrepresent it?
- What are the “gnostic gospels”? How are they similar to the four canonical Gospels? Different?
- What is the gnostic view of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation? How does it differ from orthodox Christian doctrine?
- What is the contemporary connection between gnosticism and radical feminism?
- What gnostic sources does Dan Brown rely upon?

2. The Magdalene: Saint, Sinner, or Goddess?

- How is Mary Magdalene depicted in *The Da Vinci Code*? Compare that depiction to those found in the four canonical Gospels.
- Did the Catholic Church attempt to smear Mary Magdalene’s name? Why? What did Pope Gregory the Great teach about Mary Magdalene? Why? What does it mean today?
- What traditions about Mary Magdalene existed in ancient and medieval Christianity?
- What evidence does *The Da Vinci Code* provide for the supposed marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene? Are there problems with this evidence?
- Why do many feminists dislike the Church’s teachings about Jesus and His Mother?
- Who really is Jesus’ Bride? Why is this important?

3. The Christ and the Code

- What does *The Da Vinci Code* say about the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Council of Nicaea? Where does this information come from?
- What evidence exists for the divinity of Jesus?
- What are some contemporary examples of people attempting to remake Jesus in their image?
- Brown and his characters state that history has been “written by the winners”? What do they mean by that? Are they correct?

- What is “heresy”? Where does the word come from?

4. Constantine, Paganism, and Nicaea

- What major claims does *The Da Vinci Code* make about Emperor Constantine? Are they accurate?
- What was the relationship between Christianity and the pagan mystery religions in the first three centuries of the Church? How does Brown present this relationship? What evidence does he offer for his claims?
- What are the sources for early Christian doctrines, liturgy, and practice?
- Why was the Council of Nicaea convened?
- What was Arianism? What was defined in the Council of Nicaea to combat Arius’s heretical teachings?
- What influence did Emperor Constantine have on the New Testament canon? How was that canon established?

5. Myths of the Holy Grail

- What does *The Da Vinci Code* say about the Holy Grail?
- What evidence is offered for these claims? What are Brown’s sources?
- What are the true origins of the legend of the Holy Grail? What does the Church teach about the Holy Grail?
- What relationship exists in Catholic teaching between the Holy Grail and the Eucharist?
- Is there a relationship between the Holy Grail and the Virgin Mary? Discuss.

6. The Real Templars

- When were the Templars first formed? For what purpose were they established?
- What activities did the Knights Templar excel at? How were they viewed? How does this compare to what is described in *The Da Vinci Code*?
- Were the Templars involved in building churches? Why or why not?
- How and why were the Templars destroyed? What role did the Church play in the destruction of the Templars?
- Were the Templars heretics or Catholics? What evidence exists?

7. The Templar Myth

- What are the main myths that have formed around the Knights Templar? How does Brown use those myths in *The Da Vinci Code*?
- What role did Freemasonry play in the formation of those myths? Why?
- What does *The Da Vinci Code*, relying on the writings of Margaret Starbird, say about Tarot cards? Are those statements accurate?
- Why is the Templar myth still so popular today?