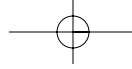


JOSH MCDOWELL

A QUEST FOR ANSWERS

THE  
**DAVINCI**  
CODE



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### **THE DA VINCI CODE: A Quest for Answers**

Josh McDowell

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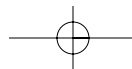
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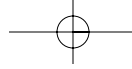
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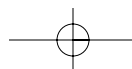
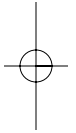
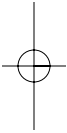
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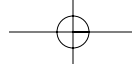




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## Preface

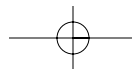
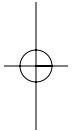
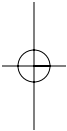
# A Journey of Discovery

It is a phenomenon.

The success of the worldwide bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*, took even its accomplished author by surprise. Dan Brown, already the successful author of the novels *Digital Fortress*, *Angels and Demons*, and *Deception Point*, nonetheless, confessed, “I never imagined so many people would be enjoying it this much.”<sup>1</sup>

Since it was first released in 2003, Brown’s book has sold more than thirty-six million copies and has been translated into forty-four languages...and counting.<sup>2</sup> It has spawned its own industry of sorts, including a special illustrated edition (with 160 illustrations interspersed with the text), guides on how to read the book, rebuttals, parodies, and an ABC television documentary.<sup>3</sup> Sony’s Columbia Pictures paid six million dollars for the movie rights in 2003 and quickly lined up Ron Howard, Brian Grazer, and Akiva Goldsman (the Oscar-winning director/producer/writer trio responsible for *A Beautiful Mind*). Superstar Tom Hanks was cast in late 2004 to portray the lead character, Robert Langdon, opposite Audrey Tatou (*Amelie*) as cryptographer Sophie Neveu.

The plot of the novel revolves around the murder of the elderly curator of the Louvre, in Paris. Because the victim is surrounded with baffling clues and ciphers, Harvard symbolologist Robert Langdon is called in to solve the riddle. Langdon’s investigation unites him with French cryptologist, Sophie Neveu, and together they uncover the late curator’s involvement in a secret society whose members included Leonardo Da Vinci, among others. Their inquiry into a murder quickly becomes a quest to expose an ancient conspiracy and discover a shocking and priceless religious relic, suppressed for centuries.



### The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers

In addition to explosive sales, *The Da Vinci Code* has ignited a resurgence of interest in Leonardo da Vinci, in particular, in Renaissance art, in general, and in books that explore historical topics and conspiracy theories, as well as a general interest in theories about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the early history of Christianity.

Around the world, those who have been fascinated by *The Da Vinci Code*—whether by the book, the movie, or both—are interested in delving deeper into artistic, historical, and spiritual mysteries. For many, Dan Brown’s intriguing characters and conspiracies have opened new doors, posed new questions, and launched them on an exhilarating quest for answers. Millions of people want to know more about the secret societies mentioned in *The Da Vinci Code*. They’re intrigued by the hints of mystery religions and evidences of “the sacred feminine” in the history of Christianity. They’re hungry for more details about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, their relationship, and the Holy Grail. They’re interested in all the twists and turns “the truth” took from the time of Jesus to the councils during the time of Emperor Constantine. And they would love to uncover layers of intrigue and conspiracy beyond those explored by Robert Langdon, Sophie Neveu, and Sir Leigh Teabing in Dan Brown’s book.

That’s what this book is about. As the subtitle suggests, it is a quest for answers, a further exploration of themes the novel introduced. And, like the novel, this book is itself a mere beginning, for the topics we will discuss in the coming pages can launch a lifelong journey of discovery.

The short upcoming chapters are structured as a series of conversations. The characters are fictional, but their discussions are based on real conversations, and the information they exchange is as real as the book you hold in your hands. For that reason, as much as possible, every claim that is made and every reference that is cited will be carefully noted. Extensive publishing information for every work that is cited is listed in a

### Preface: A Journey of Discovery

bibliography at the end of the book. The only exceptions to this format are references to *The Da Vinci Code*, which will be noted with page numbers only.

Though this book is designed primarily for those who have read *The Da Vinci Code* or seen the movie, a familiarity with the novel is not necessary to enjoy and profit from this small volume. Granted, there may be a few plot spoilers in the pages that follow, but the purpose of this book is to delve more deeply into the claims and conspiracies of the story, not to spoil the story for anyone.

So please join me on this journey of discovery, this quest for answers. Let’s join the dialogue and dig deeper into the mysteries that have already proved so captivating to so many.

### Preface Notes

1. From Dan Brown’s website, quoted in BBC News interview, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/3541342.stm>.
2. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Da\\_Vinci\\_Code](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Da_Vinci_Code).
3. “Jesus, Mary, and Da Vinci,” originally aired on November 3, 2003.

## Chapter One “I Never Knew All That”

Chris held the door and waited for his friends, Matt and Andrea. The crowd of moviegoers filed through the door, and Chris started to wonder if he'd somehow missed them.

“There you are!” he said. “I thought I'd lost you.”

Andrea rolled her eyes and elbowed her boyfriend. “He made me wait while he let everyone else go out in front of us.”

Matt smiled sheepishly. “I was just being polite.”

The trio fell in step with each other and exited the theater where they'd just watched the new *Da Vinci Code* movie together. Chris had known Matt and Andrea since freshman orientation last year at the university, having introduced them to each other while working at a registration table. They had been dating ever since.

“So,” Chris said as they crossed the parking lot to the car, “what do you think?”

“About what?” Matt asked.

“He means the movie, Sweetie,” Andrea said. “You know, the movie we just saw?”

“Oh,” Matt said, punching the key fob to unlock the car doors. He cocked his head and opened the passenger door for Andrea. He spoke again after they were all in the car. “I don't know,” he said. “I like Tom Hanks. He's a great actor.”

Andrea turned sideways in the passenger seat. “I thought it was fascinating. I mean, I never knew all that.”

“Like what?” Chris asked.

“Like the secret societies.”

“Have you ever heard of them?” Matt asked. He pulled the car into traffic.

Chris shook his head. “Not really. At least not before reading the book.”

“I think I need to read the book,” Andrea said.

### The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers

"You haven't read it?" Chris asked.

She shook her head.

"How about you?" Chris asked Matt.

He shook his head, too. "Nope. Everyone says it's really good, though."

"It's a page-turner, that's for sure," Chris said. "It's easy to read and hard to put down. So, why don't we read it, then? All three of us. We could meet once or twice a week and discuss it, over coffee. That would give us all a lot more to talk about than a two-hour movie."

"That's a great idea," Andrea said. "I mean, I'm really interested now in finding out more. This is all so new to me."

"Most of it's pretty new to me, too," Chris said. "What do you say, Matt?"

Matt nodded. "Well, I've got a pretty light load this semester," he answered. "So, as long as you're buying the coffee, Chris, I guess I'm in."

Andrea slapped her boyfriend on the shoulder. "You're so cheap, Matt."

### The Excitement Begins

A week later, Matt and Andrea met Chris at The Daily Grind, their favorite coffee shop on one of the busiest streets in town; each of them held a copy of *The Da Vinci Code*.

"What do you think so far?" Chris asked his friends. They took a table by a window. To one side, a couple chatted under a Monet art print, and on the other side sat two college students playing chess.

"You're right," Matt said. "It is hard to put down."

"And there's a lot more detail on the conspiracy stuff," Andrea said. "And I think it's amazing to see this." She turned to the first pages of the novel, before the beginning of the story, and pointed to the words on page one:

**FACT:** *The Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization. In 1975 Paris's*

### Chapter One: "I Never Knew All That"

*Bibliothèque Nationale discovered parchments known as Les Dossiers Secrets, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci.*

*The Vatican prelature known as Opus Dei is a deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion, and a dangerous practice known as "corporal mortification." Opus Dei has just completed construction of a \$47 million National Headquarters at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City.*

*All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.*<sup>1</sup>

"Yeah," Chris said, turning to that page in his own book. "Since our conversation in the car, I've done a little digging."

"What did you find out?"

### What Is Opus Dei?

"How about I start with Opus Dei?" Chris said. "It is a real organization within the Catholic Church."

"And is that true about its headquarters?" Andrea asked.

Chris nodded. "And people have accused the group of being, um, heavy-handed in their practices. Their critics say they brainwash and coerce and so on while others say that's not true. As far as I can tell, it's a very conservative group that attracts highly devoted people."

"I'd say," Andrea said, her tone scoffing, "that crazy monk is a highly devoted person!"

Chris smiled. "I think that character is the result of poetic license."

"What do you mean?" Matt asked.

"Every thriller needs a villain, and an albino monk from a shadowy organization is as good as any. But it turns out,

### The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers

though, *The Da Vinci Code* refers to him repeatedly as a ‘monk.’ There are no monks in *Opus Dei*.”

“Really?” Andrea said. “Why would he do that? The author, I mean.”

Chris shrugged. “Who knows? But in fact, *Opus Dei*’s membership is almost all lay people; less than three percent are priests.”

“But it’s a pretty scary group, eh?” Matt asked.

“I don’t know,” Chris admitted. “Passionate, definitely. I’d say, if you’re afraid of the Roman Catholic Church, you’d be very afraid of *Opus Dei*. But otherwise, no, I don’t think it’s scary. Except in the novel.”

### What Is The Priory of Sion?

“Okay, what about the Priory of Sion?” Matt swallowed a swig of vanilla latte. “The book says some French king named Godefroi de-something-or-other started the Priory of Sion in 1099, right after he conquered Jerusalem. I’m a lot farther along in the book than Andrea is.”

She rolled her eyes. “Until last night, maybe,” she said. “But I’ve read that far now, too. King Godefroi was afraid the secret of the Holy Grail would be lost forever when he died, so that’s why he started the Priory—to protect the secret and pass it on from generation to generation. And part of that had to do with finding and protecting the Documents—what were they called?”

“The Sangreal Documents,” Matt interjected.

“Yeah, that’s them,” she said. “And it’s so fascinating that the Priory still exists today.”<sup>2</sup>

Chris nodded. “A little farther into the book, it talks about the proof of the Priory’s existence being discovered in Paris’s *Bibliothèque Nationale* in papers that came to be called *Les Dossiers Secrets*.”

“No kidding,” Andrea said. “That’s fascinating.”

Chris nodded slowly. “Well,” he said, “that’s where things started to get a little interesting.”

### Chapter One: “I Never Knew All That”

“What do you mean?” Matt asked.

“Well,” Chris said, “it looks like those documents really do exist, but they’ve been proven to be a fraud.”

“What?” Matt said.

Chris shrugged. “Yeah, a historian named Paul Maier says *Les Dossiers Secrets* were planted in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* by Pierre Plantard. He says one of Plantard’s co-conspirators admitted to helping him fabricate the documents, including the genealogical tables and lists of the Priory’s grand masters—Newton, Botticelli, Leonardo, and so on.”

“You’re kidding,” Andrea said.

“I’m just telling you what I’ve read. And it’s not just one person saying this, either. It turns out that Plantard’s hoax was exposed back in the nineties in a series of French books and a BBC documentary.<sup>3</sup> A New York Times reviewer revealed Plantard to be an anti-Semite with a criminal record for fraud while the real Priory of Sion is a little splinter social group founded just half a century ago.”<sup>4</sup>

Andrea leaned back in her chair. “Are you sure? I mean, the book says it’s a real organization, right there on page one!”

“Well, it is,” Chris allowed. “It’s just that instead of being founded in 1099, like in the book, the only documents that say it existed before 1956—when this Plantard guy registered it with the French government—have been exposed as hoaxes.”<sup>6</sup>

“But it’s a novel, right?” said Matt. “So he takes a few liberties to make a good story. That doesn’t mean the whole thing is wrong.”

Chris stood and pointed to their cups. “I’m going to get a refill. Anyone else?”

Andrea shook her head, but Matt agreed to another latte.

### What is the Knights Templar?

When Chris returned a few moments later with the drinks, Andrea was ready.

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“What about that other group, the Knights Templar?” she asked. “Are they a fraud, too?”

“No,” Chris answered quickly.

“See?” Matt said.

“How far along in the book are you?” Chris asked.

Matt shrugged. “I’m somewhere around page one fifty or one sixty,” he said.

Andrea opened to her bookmark. “One sixty-two,” she said.

Chris quickly consulted his own copy. “Well, you’re right there, then. It’s on page one fifty-eight where Robert Langdon says the Priory of Sion created a military arm—‘a group of nine knights called the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon . . . More commonly know as the Knights Templar.’”<sup>6</sup>

“So, wait a minute,” Andrea said, her voice tinged with disappointment. “If the Priory of Sion never existed, they could never have created the Knights Templar.”

“True,” Chris said. “That part is fiction. But there actually was a group called the Knights Templar.”

“There was?” Andrea said.

Chris nodded. “Yeah. The book says they went to Jerusalem under ‘the guise’ of protecting Christian pilgrims on the roadways of the Holy Land, but what they were really after was the Sangreal Documents, which they believed were hidden under the ruins of Herod’s Temple. The book never says they found them but leaves the reader to suspect they did—and that they used these documents to basically blackmail the Vatican and achieve great wealth and power throughout Europe.”

“Yes!” Matt said. “That’s right where I am in the book.” He flipped a few pages. “It says that Pope Clement V decided to take them out and ‘seize their treasure’ along with the secrets they held over the Vatican. He arranged with King Philippe IV for all the knights to be captured and burned at the stake, thus basically destroying the Knights Templar...though a

### Chapter One: “I Never Knew All That”

few managed to escape.” He paused for a moment and the others watched his eyes scanning the page. “It says the Pope wanted the documents but never got them because the knights had already given the documents to the Priory, which supposedly still has them to this day.”<sup>7</sup>

“Is that true?” Matt asked.

“Well, yes and no,” Chris said. He pulled out a single page of notebook paper from the back of his book. “Here’s what I’ve found out so far. The Knights Templar were founded about A.D. 1118 by Hugh des Payens.<sup>8</sup> But I haven’t found any evidence that the knights had any other mission than what all historians have said, more or less, until Dan Brown wrote this book.”

“What mission was that?” Andrea asked.

“Protecting pilgrims to the Holy Land,” Chris said.<sup>9</sup>

“That’s not very exciting,” Andrea said. She held up her copy of *The Da Vinci Code*. “I think I like this version better.”

Chris smiled. “I hear ya,” he said. “The knights did become wealthy, but it was through the gifts of pilgrims, not by blackmailing the church. And they eventually returned to Europe not because they had found some mysterious treasure, but because in the year 1291, all Christians were expelled from Jerusalem when the last Crusader fortress, which was located at Acre, fell to the Muslims.”<sup>10</sup>

“So that’s just more poetic license,” Matt suggested. “A novel doesn’t have to stick with the facts. Most novels are all made up, but this one at least has some facts in it.”

“Yeah, but it’s the conspiracy stuff that makes it so fascinating to me,” Andrea said. “And it’s starting to sound like most of the conspiracy is fiction.”

Matt shrugged. “But it’s good fiction,” he said. “You’re interested enough to keep reading, aren’t you?”

“Yeah,” she admitted. “But I almost think I’d rather not know which parts are real and which parts are pretend.”

“Well, then,” Chris said, “you don’t want to know what I learned about the persecution of the Knights Templar.”

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"Maybe she doesn't," Matt said, "but I do."

Chris cast a quick glance at Andrea, who shrugged and stood. "I guess I will get a refill."

"Do you want me to wait until you get back?" Chris said.

"No, I won't be gone that long. Don't let me slow you down."

As she left the table, Chris turned over his page of notes. "I copied down a passage from one of the books I found. A historian from Oxford, England, named Karen Ralls quotes from *The Trials of the Templars Revisited*, which was written by Malcolm Barber, a professor of Medieval European History at the University of Reading. She says, 'The king did not proceed in the arrests of the Templars "through letters of the Pope.'"<sup>11</sup> It was actually the other way around.

"These historians say it was King Philip who forced the pope to suppress the Knights Templar to get his hands on their money. The king—not the pope—arrested them and burned some, including Grand Master Jacques de Molay, at the stake in 1314.<sup>12</sup> One book I found said the pope was basically at the mercy of King Philip."<sup>13</sup>

Andrea had returned to the table while Chris was reading his notes to Matt. Chris paused only briefly before continuing. "It really sounds like Pope Clement tried to bend over backward for the Knights Templar, as opposed to trying to destroy them to supposedly end their blackmail and get his hands on their mythical treasure."

Chris finished, and Matt and Andrea simultaneously sipped from their cups. Finally, Andrea spoke.

"You've done a lot of research," she said.

Chris shrugged. "Not really. This was all surprisingly easy to find."

"But," Matt said, "none of it's real proof. It's just that this book—he tapped *The Da Vinci Code*—"says one thing, and these other people you're quoting say another."

Chris nodded and opened his mouth, but Andrea spoke first.

**Chapter One: "I Never Knew All That"**

"Yeah, Sweetie, but the people Chris is quoting give footnotes and sources, and that sort of stuff, so you can check them out." She slapped her copy of the novel with an open hand. "This doesn't."

"Because it's a novel," Matt countered. "Some of it's true and some of it's not. Just like in those Anne Rice books you like so much, you think the descriptions of vampires are as factual as the descriptions of cities and streets?"

Chris looked on silently as his friends scrutinized each other's faces. Finally, Andrea sighed and leaned back in her chair. "Okay. Good point. But I want to know which is which. I want to know what's true and what's not."

"That's exactly the opposite of what you said a few minutes ago!" Matt said in a tone of exasperation.

She arched her eyebrows and pressed her lips together for a moment before saying, "I changed my mind."

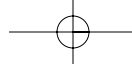
Matt studied her for a moment, and then smiled admiringly. "Fair enough," he said. He looked at Chris. "The woman has changed her mind."

Chris smiled. "Well, all right, then," he said. "Let's just keep reading and get together again Thursday."

## The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers

## Chapter One Notes

1. 2
2. 113.
3. Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Maier. *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 12.
4. Laura Miller, "The Da Vinci Con," *The New York Times Book Review* (Sunday, February 22, 2004): 23.
5. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priory\\_of\\_Sion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priory_of_Sion).
6. 158.
7. 158-160.
8. Robert G. Clouse, "Templars," in *The New International Dictionary of The Christian Church*, J.D. Douglas, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 956.
9. Richard Abanes, *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2004), 57.
10. For facts stated in this paragraph, see William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*. xii, 7; Addison, *The History of the Knights Templars, the Temple Church, and the Temple*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1852; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1978); G.A. Campbell, *The Knights Templar: A New History* (Stroud, UK: Sutton, 2001); and Frank Sanello, *The Knights Templar: God's Warriors and the Devil's Bankers* (Lanham, MD: Taylor, 2003).
11. Malcolm Barber, "The Trial of the Templars Revisited" in Helen Nicolson, ed. *The Military Orders: Welfare and Warfare* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1998), 49; and Karen Ralls, *The Templars and the Grail* (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 2003), 78.
12. Hanegraff and Maier, *Fact or Fiction*, 23.
13. Abanes, *Truth Behind Da Vinci*, 60-61.



## Chapter Two

## "I Have to Admit: I'm Hooked"

Andrea sat on the couch in her tiny campus apartment. She was thoroughly engrossed in the story of Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu, who were following a chain of cryptic clues and strange events to investigate a murder connected to a web of secret societies and the ancient search for the Holy Grail.

She turned page after page, watching Robert and Sophie peel back layer after layer of conspiracy, century after century of deceit. Desperately trying to stay one step ahead of the police, they were also managing to discover hidden codes and clues that the Roman Catholic church—among others—had worked hard to destroy.

Their knowledge was broadening and deepening considerably when they met Sir Leigh Teabing, a former British Royal Historian. "The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven," Teabing says. Patiently and authoritatively, he tells the two detectives, "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."<sup>1</sup>

Teabing's teacherly statements prompted Matt to open the discussion when he and Andrea met Chris at The Daily Grind that evening, taking their favorite table. "Andrea and I were up late talking about this guy Teabing in the book. It's amazing how much stuff I'd never heard before."

Chris stirred a packet of sugar into his cup. "Like what?"

"Well, like here," said Matt, "where he says the Bible is a product of *man*, not God. How *man* 'created it as a historical record of tumultuous times,' and how it evolved through the years."<sup>2</sup>

Chris sipped his coffee slowly. "Uh huh," he said.

