

## **I. An Introduction to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code***

### **Preliminaries**

Dan Brown is a 42 year old American author of thriller fiction. He was born and raised in Easter, New Hampshire in June 22, 1964. He was the oldest of the three children. His mother Constance (Connie) was a professional musician and used to play organ at Church. Brown's father Richard G. Brown was a prominent mathematics teacher who used to write text book and teach high school mathematics at Phillips Exeter Academy from 1968 until his retirement in 1997.

Phillips Exeter Academy was an exclusive boarding school, which required new teachers to live on campus for several years, so Brown and his siblings were raised at the school. The social environment at Exeter was mostly Episcopal. Brown sang in the Church choir, attended school, and spent summer at Church camp. His own schooling was at public schools in Exeter until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, at which time he enrolled in Phillips Exeter, as did his younger siblings Valerie and Gregory. After graduating from Phillips Upsilon fraternity he played squash and sang in the Amherst Glee Club, and was a writing student of novelist Alan Lelchuk. He graduated from Amherst with a double major in Spanish and English in 1986, and then dabbled with a musical career, creating effects with a synthesizer, and self-producing a children's cassette entitled SynthAnimals which included a collection of track such as "Happy Frogs" and "Suzuki Elephants." It sold a few hundred copies. He then formed his own record company called Dalliance and in 1990, self - published a CD entitled Perspective, targeted to the adult market, which also sold a few hundred copies. In 1991 he moved to Hollywood to pursue a career as singer-songwriter and pianist. To support himself, he taught classes at Beverly Hills Preparatory School.

While in Los Angeles he joined the National Academy of Songwriters and participated in many of its events. It was there that he met Blythe Newlon, a woman 12 years his senior, who was the Academy's Director of Artist Development. Though not officially part of her job, she took on the seemingly unusual task of helping to promote Brown's projects. She wrote press releases, set up promotional events and put him in contact with individuals who could be helpful to his career. She and Brown also developed a personal relationship, though this was not known to all of their associates until 1993, when Brown moved back to New Hampshire, and it was learned that Blythe would accompany him. They married in 1997, at Pea Porridge Pond, a location near Conway, New Hampshire.

Along with helping his singing career, Blythe has also been a major influence on Brown's career as an author, as she assists with much of the promotion involved with books. She co-wrote both of his early humor books which were written under pseudonyms, and there is speculation that she may have helped with other books as well. In 1993, Brown released the self-titled CD *Dan Brown*, which included songs such as "976-love" and "If You Believe in Love."

Blythe moved to his hometown in New Hampshire in 1993. Brown became an English teacher at his alma mater Philips Exeter and gave Spanish classes to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Lincoln Akerman School. It was a small school for K-8<sup>th</sup> grade with about 250 students, in Hampton Falls. In 1994, Brown released a CD entitled *Angles and Demons*. This CD included songs such as "Here in These Fields" and the religious ballad "All I Believe." Also in 1994, while on holiday in Tahiti, he read Sydney Sheldon's novel *The Doomsday Conspiracy*, and decided that he could do better. He started work on *Digital Fortress* and also co-wrote a humor book with his wife, "187 men to Avoid: A guide for the romantically frustrated Woman," under the pseudonym

"Danielle Brown". The books author profile read "Danielle Brown Currently lives in New England teaching school, writing books and avoiding men. The book sold a few thousand copies before going out of print.

In 1996, Brown quit teaching to become a full-time writer. *Digital Fortress* was published in 1998. Blythe did much of the book's promotion, writing press releases, booking Brown on talk shows, and setting up press interviews. A few months later, Brown and his wife released, *The Bald Book*, other humor book. It was officially credited to his wife, though a representative of the publisher said that it was primarily written by Brown.

Brown's first three novels, *The Digital Fortress*, *Deception Point* and *The Angles and Demons* had little success, with fewer than ten thousand copies in each of their first printings. But the fourth novels, *The Da Vinci Code*, become a runaway best seller to the top of the New York Times best seller list during its first week of release in 2003. It is now credited with being one of the most popular books of all time, with 60 million copies sold worldwide as of 2006. Its success has helped push sales of Brown's earlier books. In 2004, all four of his novels were on the New York Times list in the same week, and in 2005, he made Time Magazine's list of the 100 most influential people of the year. Forbes Magazine placed Brown at # 12 on their 2005 "Celebrity 100" list, and estimated his annual income at US\$ 76.5 million.

In October 2004, Brown and his siblings donated US\$ 2.2 million to Philips Exeter Academy in honor of their father, to set up the "Richard G. Brown Technology Endowment" to help provide computers and high tech equipment for students in need.

Brown is interested in cryptography, keys and codes which are a recurring theme in his stories, currently his novels have been translated into more than 40 languages.

In 2006, Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* was released as a film by Columbia pictures, with director Ron Howard. The film starred Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, Audrey Tautou as Sophie Neveu and Sir Ian McKellen as Leigh Teabing, Brown was listed as one of the executive producers of the film *The Da Vinci Code*, and also created additional codes for the film. One of his songs, "Piano," which Brown wrote and performed, was listed as part of the film's soundtrack.

### **Historical Background**

Controversy did not occur overnight. There have been a number of issues and movements cultivating and poisoning the soil for many years. Otherwise there is no explanation for the widespread acceptance of Dan Brown's revisionist "Christianity" or doubts toward historical Christianity, generated by Brown's work of "historical fiction," despite the equally widespread criticisms and reaction.

Some of the earlier movement that have polluted the stream and laid the foundation of *The Da Vinci Code* are as following; Theological liberalism, which began as a German theology, based on the rationalism of social Darwinism and the Enlightenment period of the 1800's, denying the super natural and thus the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. It dominated seminaries and alike caused conservative splits in denominations and Seminaries alike. Neo-orthodoxy was another movement which came in reaction to the sterility of liberalism. Karl Barth and others developed a system positing the belief that the Bible is not inerrant but becomes the true Word of God for the readers as it inspires positive spiritual change in him. This provided a

foundation and reinforcement for post modern relativism. The other movement, Gnostic gospels and New Age Movement, was revival of ancient mysticism and Gnosticism which had significant growth in the 1960's. It currently expressed itself in many ways such as transcendental meditation, yoga, Goddess worship, witchcraft etc. The basis of this philosophy was that there is no distinction ultimately between God and creation. Matter is either an illusion or bad. The concept of God is one of universal energy or force which is man's true nature. The New Age Movement is really a new phase of a very old, pagan, occult philosophy, which is diametrically opposed to the revelation of the Bible. The late New Age mythologist Joseph Campbell claimed that the Western world is entering a new paradigm, and its contours necessitate a make over of Christianity. The so called quest for the historical Jesus has been going on for some time. In 1985, a group of extremely liberal men and women formed The Jesus Seminar. They all began their studies and assessments based on an prior enlightenment rationalism that excluded any possibility of the miraculous or supernatural. They also wanted to bring their message to a popular level for the general public and the media was all too willing to give them feature stories every time they opened their mouths. They denied the deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the miracles, Resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, and they embraced the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas as being authentic.

The debate over the biasness of the mainstream liberal media against conservatism and especially evangelical Christianity has been noted for years. The late Peter Jennings had produced an ABC 2- hour Primetime Special on the search for Jesus. He went to the scholars, and of the five scholars interviewed for the segment three were fellows of the Jesus Seminar, one was liberal and only one was respected conservative scholar, N.T. Wright of Oxford. Even with Dr. Wright's comments, they

edited it to make it appear he was agreeing with the radical liberals. A 2004 Pew Research survey mirrored a similar survey done years ago that the vast majority of those employed in the national and local media leaned far to the liberal side of the scale. 91% of the national media affirmed that belief in God is not necessary for a person to be moral.

All of these position added credibility and momentum to works like, *The Da Vinci Code*. These media enhanced movements and people have significantly contributed to the huge interest and acceptance of the agenda of Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*.

### **Critical Response to *The Da Vinci Code***

*The Da Vinci Code* is a popular, brain teasing mysterious thriller by Dan Brown which has drawn the attention of numerous critics since first publication in 2003. After the study of the novel Carl Olson, the editor of envoy magazine, claims:

It's a work of fiction but many readers think that they are finding "truth" in Dan Brown's. *The Da Vinci Code*. Ironically, if this text does anything, it cuts out the very heart of any assertion about Mary and Jesus being wed. It does so by adhering to one of the basis tenets of ancient Gnosticism, which declared that all physical matter was inherently evil. Consequently, sexual relationships were intrinsically debasing. The Gospel of Philip goes so far and to say that marital relation defile woman. (41)

*The Da Vinci Code* is a classic whodunit which centers on a global conspiracy surrounding the Holy Grail mythology and places heavy emphasis on symbols and

cryptography. The book mixes art history with methodology, which has proved gripping to million of readers around the world.

British reviewer Mark Lawson has described it as "irritatingly gripping tosh." Some of the critics have decoded the novel and have gone behind the scene to separate fact from fiction. Richard Abanes writes:

Thanks to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci code*, countless of fiction fans are now rather confused about Christianity's origins and techniques. My hope is to clear away this confusion by revealing the truth behind the so called fact discussed in Brown's book. (58)

Shawn Adler examines the novel in the light of the historical record. He says:

*The Da Vinci Code* is over wrought, underwritten and boring. It may be beautiful to look at, but like the Louver pyramid, it fails at its most basic and fundamental purpose. It hides the Holy Grail, so that by the time we stand above it we have waited so long, we have stopped caring. (N.pag.)

But if the novel has been widely criticized there is no doubt that it has been widely appreciated as well. Harlan Coben appreciates the book in this way, "*The Da Vinci Code* is a fascinating absorbing read. Perfect for history buffs, conspiracy nuts puzzle lovers or anyone who appreciated great, riveting read. Dan Brown is my new must-read I loved this book" (12). Marissa Ain in a review writes, "Brown presents a credible account of history gone astray in his thrilling tale. The book's publicity hints darkly that the novel uncovers the greatest conspiracy of the past 2000 years" (454).

In this way, the novel is observed from various perspectives by different reviewers and critics in terms of history, Biblical Christianity, fact and fiction of the

text. However, this research will show fictionalization of history by dismantling *The Da Vinci Code*. The research will analyze the fictional history that relates to the reality. And the attempt will be directed toward justifying those established codes that have been subverted in *The Da Vinci Code*. Therefore, the researcher's endeavor in this work will be to uncover the hidden agenda of the author who is prepared to concede that even history itself is a conspiracy. To interpret this novel from the perspective of historiography, various ideas will be critically analyzed in the succeeding chapters.



## II. Historiography: History as Fiction and Fiction as History

This research is an inquiry into Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*. So, while analyzing the novel, the researcher's attempt in this research work is to show how history has been fictionalized. For doing so, this study will specify on the ideas deployed by Hayden White, a historian by training, who has been a central figure in literary debates about the nature of history.

In the essay entitled, "Literary Theory and Historical Writing" which is probably the essay that attracts the most interest from the philosophers of history, Hayden White advances the view that history does not have a distinctive method, but rather is a distinctive kind of written discourse. On his view, "the language of a historian is not a transparent container, nor is the historian's use of tropes a neutral, dispensable form of ornamentation that can be paraphrased away without remainder" (399). Tropes contribute to the content of historical writing and White believes that tropes have content because he associates them with narrative structures which are of the order of comedy, tragedy, romance, satire, epic and so on. Since it makes an integral difference to the content (the meaning) of a piece of historical writing whether it emplots a sequence of events as a tragedy or as a farce, then tropes contribute to the content of historical narratives.

Another suggestion that White makes is that the special kind of truth that pertains to the tropological content of historical narratives might be understood on the model of fictional truth. That is, we typically believe that fictions can disclose truths about the world, though not literal truths since fictions are made up. But at the same time, historical writing and fictional writing share many of the same tropological and narrative structures and in the virtue of these shared devices we might say that history has a fictional dimension-that the distinction between literal history and fiction is not

implacable and that histories, as well as being, in part, literally true, are also in part fictionally true, that is, true in the way that fictions are true of the world. Here, White does not attempt to deconstruct the boundary between the literal and fictional with respect to historical writing, though he does suggest that historical writing has an inexpugnable fictional dimension in virtue of its tropic structures, whose content is best assessed in the way that we assess what might be called fictional truth. White appears to assume that since historical writing and fictional writing share tropological devices and narrative structures, one is entitled to say that history writing is fictional. For example, the same point-of-view, editing structure, used in narrative fiction films can be used in a documentary film without compromising the nonfiction status of the documentary film. Throughout Whites writings, he seems to presuppose that all the plot structures or narrative connectives used in historical writing are figurative; that is why he attributes a metaphorical and/or fictional aspect to history writing, alleging that it is not straight forwardly reducible to assessment in terms of literal truth. He not only argues that history writing is already literary, but they should become self-consciously literary and avail themselves energetically of the strategies of modernist fiction writers since modernist writing blurs the distinction between fiction and fact.

In the essay entitled "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," a key assumption that has sustained historical inquiry according to Hayden White is the belief that history (Judged by its correspondence to reality) and literature (judged as fiction) are two distinct, dramatically opposed, activities, a presupposition shared by practitioners in both disciplines. On the contrary to these practitioners, White argues, "because history, like literature, is a verbal structure and the historian, first and foremost, is a writer, the tools that have served literary critics, the tools that compose the linguistic and rhetorical structures of a text, serve the historian as well" (1710).

The language in which history is written cannot be dismissed as window dressing, as most historians are tempted to do, nor does it disappear to allow the pure truth of history to emerge. Therefore, in White's view, historical narratives are verbal fictions with invented contexts, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have those in the sciences.

White is well aware of the fact that the insistence on the fictive element in all historical narratives is certain to arouse the ire of historians who believe that they are doing something fundamentally different from the novelist, as by virtue of the fact that they deal with "real" while the novelist deals with "imagined" events. He assumes that historians may not like to think of their works as translation of facts into fiction whereas this is one of the effects of their works. In his opinion, the recognition of the fictive element in the narratives by the historians would not mean the degradation of historiography to the status of ideology or propaganda. In fact, this recognition would serve as a potent antidote to the tendency of historians to become captive of ideological preconceptions which they do not recognize as such but honor as the correct perception of the way things really are. He says if we recognize the literary or fictive element in every historical account we would be able to move the teaching of history into a higher level of self consciousness than it currently occupies.

According to White, the older distinction between fiction and history, in which fiction is conceived as the representation of the imaginable and history as the representation of the actual, must give place to the recognition that we can only know the actual by contrasting it with or likening it to the imaginable. Historical narratives are conceived as complex structures in which a world of experience is imagined to exist under at least two modes, one is encoded as "real" and the other is revealed to

have been "illusory" in the course of the narrative. It is fiction of the historians that the various state of affairs which he constitutes as the beginning, the middle, and the end of a course of development are all "actual" and "real" and that he has merely recorded "what happened" in the transition from the inaugural to the terminal phase. In White's view, we experience the "fictionalization" of history as an "explanation" for the same reason that we experience great fiction as an illumination of a world that we inhabit along with the author. In both we recognize the forms by which consciousness both constitutes and colonizes the world it seeks to inhabit comfortably.

White describes the construction of historical narratives as a process through which facts become fiction. He further says that the historians may not like to think of their works as translations of "fact" into "fiction". He substantiates this claim by demonstrating how the selection of the material and the imposition of narrative form, as well as the closure that such form entails, leads to an account in which the original elements are themselves necessarily transformed. Any structure, therefore, is ultimately an imposition of the historians own values on the material uses. That is why his impositionalist argument, the central point of which is that since we have no access to the past and thus no recourse to the actual truth, any explanation we attempt to supply linking facts together is an imposition, has generally been seen as firmly advocating the "evaporation" of the borderline between fact and fiction and between history and literature. This is undeniably a position that White sometimes occupies, and it is from this perspective that White's argument is perhaps most appealing since the significance of historiography is returned through pointing out its creative or artistic capacity for effective change.

Chris Lorenz points out that according to the traditional idealist argument history cannot become a science, but is a form of art, a form of ideology, a branch of literature, and so on. He believes that White and Ankersmit, another theorist, both argue that because historical narratives do not represent the past reality directly, they do not refer to reality at all, therefore they are self-referential and can be analyzed as a purely linguistic universe in which the problems of truth has disappeared. Here, Lorenz feels two objections to be made to this characterization: first, that White's argument is not that historical narratives do not refer to reality but that their representation of reality is not truthful, and second even granting that they did not refer to reality, historical narratives would not in White's definition be self-referential since he openly espouses a textualist autonomy and according to which texts consist of reference to other texts even if not to reality. Thus, Lorenz feels that both of these points of confusion are partly due to the fact that White often refers to the imaginative structuring of historical events in terms of the fictionalization of the historical narrative. He says, "there is no immanent characteristic that would help us distinguish between fictional and non-fictional texts. Thus, the difference between them is a product of our conceptions of their respective functions" (311).

White has indeed meant his demands for the fictionalization of historical narratives to be taken as an obliteration of the distinction between fact and fiction. This would, in effect, be a demand for us to move 'the ontological dividing line' that separate fact from fiction to the other side of historical narratives, thus including them in the category of the fictional.

White says that, in an essay on Droysen's "Historik," the "plausible", which is a socially given category, is quite different from the "possible" revealed to us by science and the "imaginary" revealed to us by literature and art. He further argues,

"this 'plausible' is the result of the 'imaginary' being restrained by social values and emphasizes that because it is a product of individual desire it is much more convincing than the scientific possible" (35). Hence, from this it can be seen that White's main contention is in fact that the historical narrative is, to an extent, an imaginative construction in the same way as art.

According to Kalle Pihlainen in his article "Narrative Objectivity Versus Fiction" the function of emphasizing the fictionalization inherent in narrativizing is, then, to direct attention to the literary conventions that the historian inevitably utilizes. Despite White's apparent unambiguity in describing the construction of narratives as a fictionalization of facts, he has attempted to show that the 'fictionalization' can be seen as a metaphor used with the intention of making historians more aware of their own role and not simply as a description of the 'distortive' nature of the historical narration itself. He further argues, "thus, it seems that the increased moral impact provided by a fictionalized form of historical narration as well as the responsibility that this brings are something we should all consider in relating facts" (19).

The book, *The Content of the Form* which is perhaps the richest and most profoundly argued book of Hayden White, insists that linguistic form is the primary carrier of content in historical writing and indeed in historical knowledge. More than any other theorist, White has brought the historians to acknowledge the relevance of literary critical concepts and rhetoric to their work and has given the linguistic medium of history intellectual visibility it never had before. Partner says, "as a historian, writing to historians, White has provoked a more immediate attention and widespread reaction than any literary critic or philosopher could have commanded" (171). The rhetorical analysis of metahistory and the subtler tropological and narrative moves of his writings following that book made the larger argument for textual

intention as the locus of meaning for history as well as fiction. Thus, Hayden White has done so much to teach us the primacy of textual intention over authorial intention.

Dirk Moses believes that White thinks that the historical profession has already become a parlor game. It has become so divorced from those great existential questions posed by time, aging, absence, loss, violence and death. White also thinks that the public has to resort to sources like the History channel and the military and biography sections of bookshops to gain its historical bearings. His solution which he has urged for forty year is to recapture history's practical rather than theoretical application by posing and answering these kinds of questions. The solution would entail turning 'to the intimate relationship that history had with art, poetry, rhetorical and ethnical reflection prior to professionalization and embarkation on the possible task of becoming scientific in the modern sense of the term. Moses says, "many historians think that White's moral relativism, epistemological skepticism and failure to distinguish myths from history will expose him to the danger of seduction by a dubious politics"(340). White takes this failure as a point of honor that he has tried to expose the extent to which this distinction was never earned in historical studies. Historians have reacted to White's vision of their profession by not appreciating the purpose of his voluminous writings. He is seen faulted for those very things in which White sees a point of honor. White also accepts Moses charge that he thinks history-writing is more about meaning than about knowledge and what we need to help us divine their meanings are imagination and poetic insight.

Writers such as Roland Barthes denied that there was any distinction between truth and fiction. History was not a science, it was essentially a form of literature. George Iggers repudiates this view. In his book entitled as *Historiography In the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*,

historical narrative are not, he insists, what Hayden White at one point described them as being, namely "more invented than found." In Iggers view, "every historical account is a construct, but a construct arising from a dialog between the historian and the past or rather, perhaps one should say, the remains the past has left behind" (81).

Igger adopts a straightforward approach to telling the story of historical writing. He tells it like it was, and he tells it in chronological order. On his book, He notes:

The "scientific" orientation since Leopold Von Ranke shared three basic assumptions with the literary tradition of Thucydides to Gibbon" (1) They accepted a correspondence theory of truth holding that history portrays people who really existed and actions that really took place. (2) They presupposed that human actions mirror the intentions of the actors and that it is the task of the historian to comprehend these intentions in order to construct a coherent historical story. (3) They operated with a one-dimensional, diachronical conception of time, in which later events follow earlier ones in a coherent sequence.

Iggers, thus, emphasizes that this approach goes far beyond a tradition of historical thought that, from Herodotus to Natalie Davis, recognized both the literary aspects of historical accounts and the role of imagination in constructing them, but nevertheless maintained a faith that these accounts offered insights into a real past involving real human beings. The impact of radical post modernism, the basic idea of which is the denial that historical writing refers to an actual historical past, has thus been limited, if only because its implication is that we should cease writing history altogether, and that clearly has not happened at all if anything. More people are writing and reading history at the beginning of the twenty-first century than at any time during the previous hundred years that are the subject of this book.



A belief which takes history as a distinctive form of inquiry aiming at a distinctive kind of knowledge had now been threatened by the post modern assumption that there is no legitimate foundation for believing in a unified, total history either as actuality or as a subjective enterprise. Notions of historical unity, totality and coherence can now only be entertained ironically, or strategically, as heuristic or regulating principles. In a book *A New Philosophy of History* there are ten essays which are organized under four headings. In "Argument" by Allan Megill and Robert F. Berkhofer, Megill's argument is "it should not be claimed that there is no coherence either in the historical object or the historical method and that therefore the historiographical profession and the historical method must be considered bankrupt and dissolved" (244). He believes that to make such a claim would be to fall into dogmatic and metaphysical beliefs that assume the universal knowledge which is being denied.

Nancy Partner in her "Historicity in an Age of Reality--Fictions" sees a different state of affairs inside and outside of the academy. She finds that in popular or mass culture, in the production of history in journalism, film, television, and best-selling novels, the post-structuralist theory of the construction of the past and the porous boundaries between fiction and historical representation have become "pandemic". He further argues, "the linguistic, "fictional" construction of the past which was resisted, ignored or discarded within the academy has become the primary mode of the production of history outside the academy" (168). Partner implies that without academic policy this constructionism has become completely irresponsible, with no convincing, widely accepted, protocols to guide it in the uses of fiction for the construction of historical "truths". This allows partner to focus her essay on the theoretical problem of the status of fictions in historical writing. For Partner, the

linguistic turn defines a cultural project in the present which would free professionalized history from a rigidly narrow code regarding the relation between empirical actuality, fictional invention and historical truth. But the linguistic turn should also rescue the production of history outside the academy from a dangerous confusion of the issues and from the erasure of boundaries which has produced a perception that all fictional constructions of the past are equally true. The dilemma that Partner raises here is that the need or desire among the non-academic members of civic and cultural communities for history is a need for truths to live by, for meanings which will share up and sustain identities, maintain narrative continuity, provide a sense of participating in a public story. Therefore, such truths must be disciplined by the "reality principle", and there must be commonly accepted rules for accomodating historical truth to historical actualities in such a way that the desire for history does not result in an affirmation of fantasy. Kellner also seems to agree with Partner's implied claim that, at least in part, this fault in creating such possibilities has not so much with the theorists who have pointed out the fictional component of the historical constructions, as with the historians who continue to create incommensurable histories without thinking through the foundations of their narratives.

Two other early reviewers, John Clive and Peter Burke, added a count to historian's indictments of White: Obscurity. Burke had asserted that for White the historical work was essentially the same as a work of fiction, in that it is a verbal structure which represents reality. Clive warned against too rash a rejection of the books principal thesis, that what is crucial to works of history, no less than works of fiction, is the mode of 'emplotment' chosen by the author.

Alfred Louch argued for the existence of historical "facts" independent of any discourse or theory about them or of any narrative presentation of them. For Louch,

White is a consistent believer that historical "facts" are shaped by the structure of historical discourse and thus historical writing is not to be judged by its representation but by its "form of execution". For White, the importance of the tropes is that through them the historians "prefigure the historical field" and decides what shall count as facts. But, Louch objects, this is to conclude that facts are theory-dependent because our theory makes it clear what counts as relevant evidence. He illustrates the point as, "if we are working on a murder and have a theory about the gun involved and then find the gun, it counts as evidence because of the theory, but doesn't exist because of the theory" (154).

In "Historical Pluralism" (1986) White sketches a pantextualist pluralist position in which the whole problem of truth is set aside in favor of a view of historical representation which leaves it virtually indistinguishable from fiction. White says, "I have never abandoned the view that the contents of the historical narratives are as much invented as formed" (157). Therefore White's discussion of the refrentiality of historical narratives led some readers to concur with Gabrielle Spiegel that he, like Barthes and Frank Kermode sees historical narrative as intrinsically no different then fictional narrative except in its pretense to objectivity and refrentiality.

Historians and philosopher have tended to be irritated by White's bracketing of questions of historical epistemology, some have accused him of effacing the line between fiction and history while White's numerous literary readers have generally applauded his tendencies in this direction. F.R. Ankersmit in his essay entitled "Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians" attempts to show how misguided the traditional criticism of White actually is. For it is historians who too easily take the truth of their accounts of the past for granted, whereas White's theoretical writings can be shown to express a full awareness of the kind of problem encountered in the effort

to tell the truth about historical reality. Hence, He says, "White's writings, rather than those by historians criticizing white, testify to the respect that we owe to historical reality itself" (247). He believes that since the publication of White's *Metahistory*, historians—from Gertrude Himmelfarb at one end to Carlo Ginzburg at the opposite end of the spectrum of historical writing—have fulminated against White and condemned his views as a dangerous and irresponsible caricature of what historical writing actually is.

Arthur Marwick, professor of history at the British Open University wrote an essay in the *Journal of Contemporary History* in 1995. What is of the interest in Marwick's essay is already suggested by its peculiar title: "Two Approaches to Historical Study: The Metaphysical and the Historical." The title makes it clear that Marwick considers White, whom he considers to be a postmodernist, to be the true heir to speculative philosophers of history, who believed they had discovered the metaphysical essence of the past. Marwick severely castigates this metaphysical excess of certainty about the nature of the past. He further argues, "for all that we can know about the past results from the historians painstaking and laborious work on the documentary evidence that the past has left us" (185). Therefore, it is to the historian as Marwick assures and not to the idle speculations of White and of his noisy and obscurantist postmodernist gang, that one should turn to if one wishes to know about the past.

White is attacked for his tropological relativism, for his rejection of the notion of the historical truth, and for his claim that historians cherish naïve and untenable views about historical truth and about how truth can be validated. Obviously, according to Ankersmit, from this perspective Hayden White's historical theory is a harsh denial of all that historians have always striven for and thought to be both the

nature and the only legitimate goal of their enterprise. He says, "I would not wish to deny that there is at least some truth in this kind of criticism of White's views, nor that especially the introduction and the conclusion to *Metahistory* may rightly invite this kind of reading of White's work" (186). For Marwick, the book can be read and interpreted in two ways that are fundamentally opposed. Indeed, it can be read as the unmasking of the historian's effort to get hold of historical reality and historical truth. But the book can also be interpreted as follows: By focusing on and by problematizing the historian's language, White demonstrates not the impossibility of getting hold of past reality, but the naiveté of the kind of positivist intuition customarily cherished in the discipline for how to achieve the goal. He further says that what these positivist intimations proudly present as historical reality is a mere spectral illusion that is created by the historical discipline itself. Surely there is a historical reality which is, in principle, accessible to the historian according to him. But historians have forgotten about this historical reality and mistaken the product of their tropological encoding of the past for the past itself. Therefore, Marwick believes that within this reading, White, rather than the practicing historian criticizing White, is the realist who reminds us of the difference between reality itself and what mere intellectual construction is. Here, regarding Marwick's criticism of White, what Ankersmit writes is, "it is Marwick rather than White who is insensitive to the challenges of how to get hold of past reality, it is Marwick rather than White who compromises the discipline" (192). He says what White tells again and again according to the discipline and his exploration is that we must not cowardly shun its boundaries, but always courageously probe and explore the area where the discipline begins to lose its grasp for it is there that past reality is encountered and all that is truly new and interesting can be found. In this way, Ankersmit supports White by

claiming that historical reality is encountered only in our attempts to define our relationship to our past, in our attempt to "write ourselves" by writing history. This historical reality, for him, which is not a positivist given but a permanent challenge to the historical discipline as a whole, is the historical reality lying at the end of the Odyssey of Hayden's White's historical thought since *Metahistory*.

If Hayden White has been criticized by many historians and theorists, there is also no doubt that many other theorists have applauded and welcomed his theory regarding fact as fiction and fiction as fact.

### **III. Dismantling the Code in *The Da Vinci Code***

The main focus of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* is to present Jesus as a mere mortal and that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a daughter, whose descendents are now living in France. In the novel, the author has represented Christianity as a false religion. Brown's novel raises many troubling questions about the people and events involved in the birth to Church. Because historical facts are woven into *The Da Vinci Code*, facts frequently slide undetected into the fiction. As concepts are presented in quick motion, it is tough to know whether something presented was generated from history or from the writer's imagination. Questions can be raised here that why this book has caught the attention of the world? Why it has achieved notoriety amongst certain circles? Why it has spawned a host of explanatory guides, articles and web sites? The novel has generated a lot of controversy and confusion. Although a work of fiction it is being touted by many as a historically accurate, factual portrayal of early Christianity and the Catholic Church.

The novel seems to support the claims made by Hayden White that 'history is fiction and fiction is history'. White has indeed meant that his demands for fictionalization of historical narratives should be taken as an obliteration of the distinction between fact and fictions. He further says that the historians may not like to think of their work as translation of "fact" into fiction but this is one of the effects of their work. White's impositionalist argument can be seen as firmly advocating the evaporation of the borderline between fact and fiction and history and literature.

In the same way as Hayden White, what Dan Brown is trying to do in *The Da Vinci Code* is, blurring the distinction between fact and fiction. He is here, supporting the ideas of White by making bold claims that Bible did not arrive by fax from the Heaven and by implying that almost everything that our fathers taught us about Christ

is false. Brown has indeed made an appeal to the readers to take the history forwarded by him, regarding the bloodline, descent and morality of Christ as the factual and that the earlier history of Church and immortality of Christ as a fictional one. The front page in the novel entitled as "FACT" strengthens this point.

White has never abandoned that the contents of the historical narratives are as much invented as found. Brown too holds the same kind of views as White does. He holds the beliefs that the Bible is the product of man and not of God that Bible did not fall magically from the clouds, that man created it as historical record of tumultuous times, and that it has developed through countless translations, additions and revisions. According to him, history has never had a definitive version of the book. He also opines that, what the Catholic Church and Bible have done is, they have furnished and ornamented the simple life of ordinary mortal Jesus Christ as a deity and son of God. Here Brown puts forward a view that Jesus' establishment as the son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the council of Nicaea and until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed as moral prophet, a great and powerful man by his followers.

White believes that the recognition of fictive element in the historical narratives would not mean the degradation of history to the stage of ideology or propaganda. Rather, this recognition in every historical account would serve to move the teaching of history into a higher level of self consciousness Brown himself might have wanted to generate awareness among the people regarding the history and religion through his fictions. While being questioned in an interview Brown had replied that his hope in writing the novel was that to serve the story as a catalyst and a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of faith, religion and history. Opinions by the people have been divided regarding this issue as some say that this



fiction is Satan's answer to the passion of the Christ, whereas some other see this as a divine opportunity to talk about Jesus and set the record straight.

Like White, Brown too has criticized the historians who believe that they are doing something fundamentally different as they deal with the "real." By criticizing the Bible and early church history, Brown has in a way, criticized the historians as well. Due to this kind of criticism of Brown, many historians and professor have shown their reaction through different books and essays just as the historians who had reacted to White's vision of their profession.

Although Brown claims that the book is filled with truths, the reader must keep in mind that this claim is included in the first paragraphs of a "fiction" book. Even claims that something is true, when found in a fiction book, are still fiction. A point to be noted here is that if Brown had truly wanted to enlighten the world about his true nature of Jesus and the Catholic Church, he would have done so in a non-fiction setting. Why then did Brown assert in interviews that the information contained within his book was true? In 2003, while promoting his novel, he was asked in interviews what parts of the history in his novel actually happened. He replied "Absolutely all of it". In a 2003 interview with CNN's Martin Savidge he was again asked how much of the historical background was true. He replied, "99 percent is true.....the background is all true." Asked by Elizabeth Vargas in an ABC News Special if the book would have been different if he had written it as non-fiction he replied, "I don't think it would have." Despite the substantial academic criticism of Brown's claims, he has never retracted any of his earlier assertions that the history in the novel is accurate. Brown further states:

Obviously, Robert Langdon is fictional, but all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies, - all of that is historical fact. I began as a

skeptic. As I started researching *The Da Vinci Code*, I really thought I would disprove a lot of this theory about Mary Magdalene and the Holy Blood and all of that. I became a believer. ( N.pag.)

While listening to many interviews with well-known authors of fiction; they hold fast to the notion that their worlds bizarre and even otherworldly are true. Many authors do this to conjure interest in their books to increase sales. Others do this because to them the worlds they have created do exist inside their minds. So, much of this book is filled with fallacy which can be argued upon.

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is a radical rethinking on Christianity and life of Jesus Christ. Bible is re-versioned by Brown in this novel. The re-imagining is done in this novel through three major characters: Robert Langdon, a Harvard Professor and a Symbologist, Sophie Neveu, a gifted French Cryptologist and a British Royal Historian Sir Leigh Teabing. Brown turns the story, myth and characters and disrupts the notion of truth.

Brown dismantles the myth of Christianity. The novel is acclaimed by much criticism since its first publication in 2003, March. It has sold more than 40 million copies worldwide, and has been on the New York Times best seller list for more than two years. A movie version of the novel was released in May 2006.

The novel begins with the brutal murder of the elderly curator of the Louvre museum in Paris, Jacques Sauniere. Harvard Professor Robert Langdon receives an urgent late-night phone call while on business in Paris so that he could help the French Police to solve the murder mystery. Alongside the body, police have found a series of baffling codes. As Langdon and Sophie Neveu, begin to sort through the bizarre riddles, they are stunned to find a trail that leads to the works of Leonardo Da

Vinci- and suggests the answer to the mystery that stretches deep into the vault of history. The mystery leads to the idea that Leonardo Da Vinci along with Sir Isaac Newton, Jean Cocteau was a member of an ancient secret society called the “Priory of Sion” (POS) dedicated to preserving “truths” that before his death on the cross Jesus designated Mary Magdalene as His successor, that His message was about the celebration of the “Sacred feminine”, that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married , a union that had produced offspring and that the Holy Grail of legend and lore is really Mary Magdalene , the vessel who carried Jesus’ children. The novel also declared that Leonardo Da Vinci inserted coded references to the truth protected by the POS into many of his most famous works, and it is these codes that launch our heroes on their quest.

Now a lot of this material is not necessarily new to fortune tellers having been the subject of a great many books over the years, but to the general public, who don’t necessarily read the same books, it all appears to be Earth – shattering. This research is to see how the already created structure is disrupted and what kind of effect that disruption has brought in the mind of the people.

Brown begins with the so called historical facts and continues them through fictionalization and such a blending of fact and fiction has given a kind of realistic touch to the novel. The degree of facts comes decreasing in the course of the development of the novel. Thus, the novel can be viewed as a good blending of the real events and real people with fictional events and fictional characters. In this way, Brown has bridged the dichotomy between fact and fiction. Even though the novel is not written in the first person narrative yet we can see the attachment of the author with the characters, especially the character of Sir Leigh Teabing, who is the major mouthpiece of the author. In fact, the major claims of the novel begin when the hero

and the heroine meet Teabing in his estate Chateau Villette. On the way to Chateau Villette Robert tells Sophie what the Grail means to Teabing. In his word, “The Grail has been Teabing’s life and hearing the story of the Holy Grail from Leigh Teabing will be like hearing the theory of relativity from Einstein himself” (297). Teabing gets interested when Robert mentions about the Priory of Sion and guesses that it is indeed about the Grail that they have come to meet him unannounced on the middle of the night. When Robert tells him about Sophie’s unawareness regarding the true nature of the Holy Grail, Teabing begins, “To fully understand the Grail, we must first understand the Bible. How well do you know about the New Testament” (311).

He asks Langdon to bring a book *La Storia di Leonardo* from the bottom of the shelf and flips open the heavy cover, points inside the rear cover to a series of quotations. He indicates two quotes and gives them to read to Sophie. The quotes say,

"Many have made the false trade of delusions  
and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude" (312).

- LEONARDO DA VINCI

Another one reads:

"Blinding ignorance does mislead us.  
O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes."

- LEONARDO DA VINCI

Teabing explains, “Leonardo’s feelings about the Bible relate directly to the Holy Grail. In fact, Da Vinci painted the true Grail, which I will show you in a moment, but first we must speak of the Bible” (312).

And there begins the author's fictionalization of history through Teabing and Robert Langdon who are willing to enlighten Sophie about Bible, Christianity and history. In fact, Sophie can be taken as the representative of the readers who don't know anything about the truth. The so-called truth of the novel is that Jesus Christ was not the son of God but a mere mortal who had married Mary Magdalene and bore a daughter named Sarah and that the Holy Grail is none other than Mary Magdalene herself, the "Sacred feminine" but still the outcast one, who was the vessel who carried Jesus children. In order to prove this point Brown puts the characters into a mystery chase, the race across France and United Kingdom.

Inside the so called truth regarding Bible and Christianity, Brown has brilliantly woven a heart touching story. On her mystery chase, Sophie Neveu, the granddaughter of the murdered curator Jacques Saunier, discovers that while seeking the way to escape from her past, she has not only misunderstood but also misused the past. After witnessing unwillingly a two-thousand-year-old sacred ceremony, a sex rite in her grandfather's Normandy Chateau, Sophie is convinced that her grandfather is in a secret society. This upsets her so much that she leaves him at once. When on her quest, Langdon explains to her what she had exactly seen and what it exactly meant, she feels a new regret within her as she realizes how she had misunderstood her grandfather. Langdon explains the ceremony to her:

It's called Hieros Gamos. It dates back more than two thousand years. Egyptian priests and priestesses performed it regularly to celebrate the reproductive power of female. And if you witnessed Hieros Gamos without being properly prepared to understand its meaning, I imagine it would be pretty shocking. (409)

According to Langdon, the ritual was not a perversion but a deeply sacrosanct ceremony. After Langdon explains Sophie about the sacred ritual Sophie feels remorse as she had shunned her grandfather for almost ten years since then. She also pictures the stacks of unopened letters that her grandfather had sent to her and she begins to see him in an entirely different light.

The plot of the novel is both fascinating as well as entertaining. If this fiction had not claimed to be factual, it would have been a wonderful smart suspense novel but since it claims its factuality, the ideas and information provided inside it need to be tested.

*The Da Vinci Code* and the madness that surrounds it is indicative of one thing- the fact that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century mankind is still in the dark about a great many things. We may have sent rockets into space, we may be able to develop different technologies and we can even heat up food with micro-wave radiation, but we are still no closer to the truth about our own religions and the secretive organizations that surround them. The novel has generated wide criticisms since its first publication due to the speculations and misrepresentations of the core aspects of Christianity, the history of the Catholic Church, and descriptions of European art, history and architecture. The book has received mostly negative reviews from Catholic and other Christian communities, as well as historians. Critics accuse Brown of distorting and fabricating history.

For example, Marcia Ford, a contributing writer of faithful Reader.com takes a look at books either on the market or in the works that respond to Dan Brown's bestselling and controversial novel. She focuses on the varying perspectives of the authors, differences in the structures of the books and significant distinctions in content. She writes:

Regardless of whether you agree with Brown's conclusions, it's clear that his history is largely fanciful, which means he and his publisher have violated a long-held if unspoken agreement with the reader: Fiction that purports to present historical facts should be researched as carefully as a nonfiction book would be. (N.pag.)

Richard Abanes in his book *The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code* criticizes the novel in this way:

The most flagrant aspect of *The Da Vinci Code* is not that Dan Brown disagrees with Christianity but that he utterly warps it in order to disagree with it . . . to the point of completely rewriting a vast number of historical events. And making the matter worse has been Brown's willingness to pass off his distortions as 'facts' with which innumerable scholars and historians agree. (27)

Ben Witherington, New Testament professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, concentrates on Brown's mishandling of facts that apply of foundational truth about Jesus, Mary Magdelene, the canon of scripture, and the belief system of the early Church. His interest is clearly in setting the historical and theological record straight without giving a whole lot of ink to either Brown or the novel. He believes that given all the errors, it makes one wonder whether Brown's manuscript ever underwent editorial scrutiny or fact checking. Were this book an automobile or appliance, the manufacturer would doubtless be forced to issue a full recall.

Regarding the whole Priory of Sion – Opus Dei story line, Erwin W. Lutzer, a theologian and pastor of Moody Church in Chicago writes, "As history, it is a house of cards that can be toppled by the slightest breath of truth" (79).

As widely noted in the media, there has been substantial confusion among the readers about whether the book is factual. Numerous works have been published that explain in detail why any claim to accuracy is difficult to substantiate. Dan Brown himself dilutes the suggestion of some of the more controversial aspects being fact on his website:

The 'FACT' page makes no any statement whatsoever about any of the ancient theory discussed by the fictional characters. Interpreting those ideas is left to the reader. These real elements are interpreted and debated by the fictional characters, it is my belief that some of the theories discussed by these characters may have merit and the secret behind *The Da Vinci Code* was too well documented and significant for me to dismiss. (N.pag.)

It is therefore entirely understandable why there would continue to be confusion as to what is the factual content of the book. To enhance the credibility of this claim, Brown includes not only the fictional characters in his plot, but also the real people (from both past and present) that will be readily recognized by the book's audience. Both Brown and the novel sound so confident in their claims that it can rock the faith of those who are not educated with the facts.

Brown has readily admitted in his interviews that most of the ideas in *The Da Vinci Code* are not original to him. The intellectual, ideological and spiritual heritage of the novel can be traced back to many decades, even centuries. But, the novel is hardly as innovative or cutting edge as some readers think it is. Brown has taken the majority of his ideas from a handful of recent, popular books that are filled with conspiracy theories, skewed depictions of Catholic theology and often outlandish and unsubstantiated claims about historical events and persons. That is why, Michael



Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln ( the authors of *The Holy Blood and Holy Grail*,1982) and David Wood ( *Genesis*, 1986) all sued Brown for infringement of their ideas. So, one truth about *The Da Vinci Code* is that, as well as praise, it has attracted a fair bit of notoriety as well.

A question may be raised here, ‘It is just a novel, so why do we care?’ It is simply because the novel is partly based on the books that are claiming to be historical fact, because people often believe that there is some truth to the fictional novels, because Christianity is a message of truth, that Jesus is salvation and we have been entrusted with that truth to evangelize to others. Therefore, any misinformation that effects that message needs to be clarified because the novel itself blurs the line between fact and fiction by claiming that “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate” (15).

In this novel, the plethora of historical fallacies continues throughout. For example, Sir Leigh Teabing says:

To fully understand the Grail, we must first understand the Bible. . .

The Bible did not arrive by fax from the heaven. . . It is the product of men . . . not God . . . and it has evolved through countless translations,

additions and revisions. History never had a definitive version of the

book . . . Jesus Christ was a historical figure of staggering

influence . . . his life was recorded by thousands of followers . . . More

than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament . . . The

Bible, as we know it today was collated by the Pagan Roman emperor

Constantine.(311)

Alex Williams says that it is misleading to say that Jesus Christ was a ‘historical figure of staggering influence whose life was recorded by many followers.’ He was at that time an obscure carpenter who lived and died within walking distance of His birthplace in the backwater of the Roman Empire. His ‘staggering influence’ did not appear until centuries later, as did the numerous false gospels- after all, there is no point in emulating nobody. As for Constantine making the choice of Matthew, Luke and John, the idea is laughable.

The question, ‘Did Jesus actually claim to be God?’ seems to be incontrovertible since almost everything that Jesus said and did points to this direction. For example, if he were trying to avoid being given the label of “God” he would not have said and done things which disclosed him a deity. When his disciples asked him to show them the Father Jesus replied that anyone who had seen him had seen the Father.

In fact, if there was anything ambiguous about what Jesus was asserting, his enemies certainly would not have thought that they were not stoning him for any of these but for the blasphemy, because he, a mere man, claimed to be God.

Teabing declares, “until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet . . . A great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal” (315). This declaration seems hollow as it is extremely clear that the disciples and the early Christians from the very beginning held Christ’s deity as a foundational tenet or article of belief. Jesus is the image of invincible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.... All things were created by him and for him.

Jesus is the image of God and can be identified as the “creator.” According to Jesus, the standard of judgment is the Word He has already spoken to us it logically follows that God have provided a reliable record of that word for us, and true history testifies that it is so.

The other gospels that Teabing mentions were written, in most cases, a full century or two later, primarily a group known as the Gnostics. The so-called “Gospels of Thomas” was written around 140A.D; the “Gospel of Judas” was written around 170 A.D. though using names of the peoples who lived in Jesus’ time, these Gnostics gospels were written long after these people died, and also long after Jesus. *The Da Vinci Code* makes it seem as though the Gnostics did not believe in Jesus’ deity. Therefore, here we have poetic fiction over fact. In historical terms, the Gnostics actually very much believed in Jesus’ deity, but were very imaginative in some of their other theology about Jesus.

The other major claim of Brown through his fictional character Teabing is:

Many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon- the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of Sacraments, and of course, the divinity of Jesus. Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea.  
(315)

This is essential to the plot in the novel because it requires that the readers believe that Constantine replaced the “original” Gnostic writings with what we now call the New Testament. But, the truth is that Constantine could not have a hand in shaping the New Testament for two reasons: He was not born soon enough and he did not live long enough. The Council of Nicaea and Constantine had nothing to do with the

biblical canon. Moreover the novel's claim that the deity of Jesus was debated at the Council of Nicaea is very misleading. Rick James in his *Historical Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code* has argued that the debate at Nicaea was actually whether Christ was coeternal with the Father. In other words, was there ever a time that Jesus "was not" with the Father? No one at the council believed that Jesus was just a man, or even just a prophet. James further says that the Council of Nicaea overwhelmingly concluded that Jesus was in fact coeternal with the Father. The fundamental belief of Christianity, including its message that Jesus was fully man and fully God, that he is the Son of God, that he is divine are part of the historical records that predates the time of Constantine, by centuries.

Moreover, Teabing asserts that the Emperor Constantine, for political reasons, merged paganism with Christianity to bring peace to the Roman Empire. There was a war between pagans and Christians and so Constantine merged some elements of male and female deity together in Christianity according to Teabing. This appears to be the reference to the symbols that Robert explains in this scene: a male phallic symbol being a triangle that points upward, and a female symbol being the reverse, a "chalice" that represents a female's womb. But this is simply a twisted history; something no true historian would take seriously. For example, there was no war, or even battle at the time between pagans and Christians. Instead, in the decades before the Council of Nicaea in A.D.325, there was official Roman persecution of Christianity by the Emperor Diocletian, where many thousand Christians were simply executed and tortured. Hardly a war. The persecution ended when Constantine allowed the legality of Christian worship in A.D 313. And as historians of the period know, declaring that Constantine embraced Christianity merely for political reasons is another serious case of history- twisting. It was hardly advantageous politically for

Constantine to embrace Christianity, since Christians were persecuted minority in the Roman Empire. Further, there is no evidence that any sort of paganism was merged with Christianity in the third or fourth century as the novel suggests. Christianity, because its root in Judaism (all the first Christians were devout Jews including Jesus and his disciples), was fiercely monotheistic and they believed in one God only. Many Christians had already been executed because they refused to worship the Roman emperor and they separated themselves from pagan ritual. Why would they suddenly allow Constantine to merge pagan symbols and deities with Christianity? While the novel claims that many Christians beliefs borrowed ideas from pagan myth, the evidence shows the opposite: pagan religions borrowed ideas from Christianity.

The Bible testifies of itself that it is indeed God breathed. Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoken from God and Jesus said 'heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.' Neither has its meaning been lost or corrupted through countless translations. The original languages were Hebrew and Greek, modern English versions, for example are based on meticulously prepared composites of ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, of which thousands are extant. The Dead Sea Scrolls showed that copies of OT book from the first century B.C were almost identical to the previously earliest Hebrew manuscripts from a thousand year later, so copying errors have not been a significant problem.

We have to understand that the canon was not the result of a series of contests involving Church politics. The canon is the list of authoritative books more than it is an authoritative list of books. These documents did not derive their authority from being selected: each one was authoritative before anyone gathered them together.

For the more knowledgeable the story really falls apart when Brown claims the Gospels of Mary Magdelene to be an 'unaltered' and therefore true account of

these events. Yet even the words he quotes from it betray its fraudulence. However their Gnostics 'gospel' is known only from their fragmentary manuscripts and dates from the middle of the second century at the earliest. Before this or any other Gnostic gospel was written, the Church had far and wide recognized the authority of the four canonical gospels. But the less knowledgeable soul may be easily duped.

But surely other fictional books have made equally ignoble historical blunders- why worry about this one? Well, its because this one puts together a conspiracy theory with the help of some very powerful and almost believable real life players- Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Issac Newton, Mary Magdelene, Opus Dei and Modern Goddess worshipping 'historians' who prefer the faked gospels to the real thing. The Holy Grail turns out not to be a chalice but a person. The Holy Grail is a woman, Mary Magdalene who married and bore children to Jesus and there she, is for all the world to see, in Leonardo's famous painting of the last supper in the place of honor, at Jesus' right hand. Brown uses his skill in fiction to weave an enticing tale about Jesus' humanity, which allegedly necessarily includes marriage and thus, they claim, denial of His deity and there follows a fancy reconstruction of Christianity history to explain why the original 'true' Christianity which they say was a goddess cult was displaced by the 'misogynist patriarchal' version we have today.

Perhaps the most controversial event of *The Da Vinci Code* is the fictional scenario in which Jesus is married to Mary Magdelene and has a daughter named Sarah, whose descendents are now living in France. One of the major characters in the novel, Sir Leigh Teabing claims, "I shan't bore you with the countless references to Jesus and Mary Magdelene's union . . . the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdelene is part of historical record" (329).

To support the claims that there are “countless records” alluding to a marriage involving Jesus and that the marriage was a matter of “historical record” the novel generically refers to the so-called Gnostic gospels and specifically to the so-called Gospel of Philip. But none of these writings mention any marriage or engagement involving Jesus.

Robert Langdon, the protagonist of the novel, who is also a symbologist says:

Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard and biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor . . . because Jesus was a Jew and the social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried. If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible’s gospel would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelor hood. (330)

Despite this claim some of the ancient Israel’s most pious men were celibate and Jewish law allowed for exceptions and delays to marriage. The prophet Jeremiah, for example, was called by God not to take a wife or have children. Jeremiah lived about six hundred years before the time of Jesus. Paul, the evangelist, speaks of the wisdom of celibacy for some people and marriage for others.

Teabing points a passage from the Gospel of Philip for Sophie the heroine of the novel, to read. The passage reads:

And the compassion of the Savior is Mary Magdelene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciple were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, why you love more than all of us. (331)

The Philip text is a non-Christian document that was among the Gnostic writing discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, in Egypt. In the Philip text, there is a Gnostic version of Jesus and Mary Magdelene who are described as having a relationship that was different than the relationship that he shared with other disciples. But according to Erwin W. Lutzer, the author of *The Da Vinci Deception*, despite the novel's translation of the key passage from the Philip text the word "mouth" doesn't actually appear in the original document. Because of the poor quality of papyrus a word or two is missing in the original document. The text reads 'Jesus kissed her often on the (blank). So scholars fill in the blank with the word mouth, face or forehead. Actually, the text might have said 'the hand' or even 'the cheek' since the statement implies that he also kissed his other students presumably on the cheek as is still done in the Middle East.

Regarding the fictionalization of history in the novel, Dan Burstein in his *Secrets of the Code* opines:

The book has a sensational kind of success, which worries scholars such as myself who are trying to stick with the facts. I think there is certain built-in problem of this book being a novel, and therefore saying it is fiction, at the same time, using enough facts, well-known names, and things like the Nag Hammadi discovery to give it a semblance of factual accuracy. It is hard for the lay public to distinguish where one begins and the other leaves off. So, strictly from that point of view, it is very misleading. (97)

The novel claims seriously:



Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian god Mithras – called the Son of God and the Light of the World- was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 was also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus. The new born Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense and myrrh. (314)

Regarding this claim what Amy Welborn has to say in her book *De-Coding Da Vinci* is:

Mithras was a God with many forms. By the centuries after Christ, his cult was primarily a mystery religion, popular among men, especially soldiers. Mithraic Studies do not find any attribution of the titles 'Son of God' or 'Light of the World' as Brown Claims. There is also no mention of a death resurrection motif in Mithraic mythology. Brown seems to have picked this up from a discredited nineteenth century historian, who provided no documentation for his assertion. The same historian is the source for the Krishna connection to which Brown alludes. There is not single story in actual Hindu mythology of Krishna being presented with gold frankincense and myrrh at his birth. (87)

The primary theological problems with the novel is that the novel is based on a variety of esoteric, neo-Gnostic and feminist beliefs that are in direct opposition to Christianity. Much has been made of the novel's claim that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface are belief systems teaching that Christianity is a violent and bloody lie, that the Catholic Church is a sinister and misogynist institution, and that truth is ultimately the creation and product of each person.

In the end, what Brown has accomplished is the creation of a popular myth that distills and presents statements of belief in a way that is not demanding, but entertaining and attracting. It is a sad irony that some Catholics think that the novel is a wonderful work of art and literature that can help them to explore and understand their faith better. But the novel is based on the belief that Jesus was a mere man, that Christianity is a despicable shame and that all claims to objective religious truth are to be avoided.

Despite the widespread criticism of Brown's claim in the novel, there are equally wide spread acceptance of his claims which is rather amazing, especially since many of them won't even pass what we call the "desk encyclopedia test." The danger is that many readers are apparently taking the novel's claims as substantiated fact and believe they have discovered the church's Achilles' heel. This becomes even more difficult when those people won't even consider rebuttals or answers to *The Da Vinci Code*.

While being asked why so many people, including Christians are attracted to this book, Olson the author of *The Da Vinci Hoax* says:

The novel mixes together elements that are quite appealing within a post-modern culture. A relativistic attitude and religion, conspiracy based claims, radical feminism, dislike for religious authority and the implicit belief that reality is malleable and can be customized, so to speak to each person's wishes. There is an overwhelming emphasis on the character's emotions. So, while the novel contains claims that might be strange to readers, it maintains a comfort level as well. (N. pag.)

Brown has both used and challenged past texts. Received histories and time honored narrative structures are placed in a new context and made to speak in our age to a new audience, with startlingly different connotations. For Brown this parody is never a devaluation of past beliefs, but more a change in point of view so that perspectives are textualized previously.

The plot of the novel is very complicated with a lot of cleverly used historical knowledge. As Teabing declares, "Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false. As are the stories of the Holy Grail" (348).

It is indeed a very bold declaration to be made and while thinking about the reason behind the bold claims of the novel such as when history is written, murders become heroes, we can put that the message that Brown is trying to bring across is that even organized religion (like Church) is also subject to power games. Power is everywhere. As Teabing says:

It was all about power. Christ as messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early church literally stole Jesus from his original followers, hijacking his human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power. (316)

While taking Opus Dei and the Priori of Sion to be exactly as portrayed in the novel, than the novel is just about power. One side fights on the side of Vatican, secretly trying to destroy the Holy Grail just so that there will be no challenge to Church authority, even if the church is against it, whereas the other side is dedicated to protecting the identity of Jesus' blood heritage 'no matter what; until the time is ripe for his/her to reveal his/her identity. let us imagine the repercussions of someone

claiming the blood right of Jesus Christ for the church. Suddenly everything which was attributed to Jesus chaste, purity, single, immortal etc.- would all seen as an illusion. Jesus would than be a human, an extraordinary human nonetheless, but still human, neither immortal nor God.

To this end, a lot of ancient history and history of the middle ages are twisted, and must be taken with a pinch of salt and a dash of pepper. Obviously even if we believe the blade and chalice theory but the idea that the Knights Templar were originally founded to protect the Holy Grail and that only they had access to Mary Magdalene's grave is hard to believe because the Knights Templar was founded in the aftermath of the first crusade, circa 1096 A.D. to protect the many European immigrants who migrated to Jerusalem after it was conquered by the crusaders. It was not a warrior order of the priori of sion founded to guard that grail. It is equally unlikely that they had access to Mary Magdalene's Sarcophagus, even if the Knights Templar grew to become exceedingly rich.

It shouldn't take an advanced degree or decades of study to recognize the factual and logical problems that are strewn throughout *The Da Vinci Code*. Good catechesis will go a long way in inoculating Catholics to error and provide them with an understanding of Church doctrine, practice and history.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Dan Brown, while writing this novel sticks with the ideas deployed by Hayden White that there is no distinction between fact and fiction and that historical narratives are verbal fictions with invented contexts, the content of which are as much invented as found. But the objective of this research is to support the earlier history and Bible whereas to expose the author's beliefs which are intolerable towards historic, biblical Christianity which drives the author's agenda.

The line spoken by Teabing who is the mouth piece of the author in the novel, 'which side of story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration,' which is a kind of appeal of the author to the readers may sound believable on the surface, but is really not a rational position. The implication here is that religious belief is a matter of taste or opinion, having nothing to do with facts, which is a popular notion today. But believing something can not and will not make it true, no matter how strongly it is believed. A person may believe that he can fly, but if he jumps off a building, gravity will work on him just as it will on anyone else. And while this statement may appear to be more tolerant of religious people, it is quite insulting to devout believers of any religion. Anyone who takes their beliefs seriously will believe them literally, and believe that if something is true it is true for everyone. In fact, whenever a person makes a statement that "X is true", it doesn't matter to what X refers; the person is making a truth claim that requires a rational basis and excludes contradictory statements. A more respectful approach to a person's religious beliefs would be to investigate them to see if they are really true.

The novel is filled with enough discussions and arguments among the characters in order to prove the mortality of Jesus Christ. But even though Dan Brown has made many bold claims in the novel, those claims could not be taken seriously as

facts because in order to take things seriously there need to be serious proofs regarding those claims. But the novel is hardly as innovative of cutting edge as some readers think it is. Brown has taken the majority of his ideas from a handful of recent, popular books that are filled with conspiracy theories, skewed depictions of Catholic theology and often outlandish and unsubstantiated claims about historical events and person. In this way *The Da Vinci Code* fails to satisfy the very demand that truth asks for. Therefore, the novel seems like ‘high sounding words but empty language’. Though on the surface level the book sounds very promising, yet on the deeper level it is very hollow as it fails to provide sound proofs.

The gathering of the New Testament Paul referred to Luke’s Gospel as ‘Scripture’. Peter recognized that Paul’s writings were ‘Scripture.’ He refers to them as authoritative and then refers to ‘the other scriptures’ and he warns his readers to be beware of those who twist the meanings to their own destruction. The New Testament writers believed in the divinity of Jesus, and that he died on the cross to save them from their sins. The Apostle Peter has said that they did not follow cleverly invented stories when they told others about the power and coming of their Lord Jesus Christ, but they were eye witness of his majesty. Here Peter has based his belief in Christ firmly on what he saw with his own eyes. And Luke, the physician who wrote Luke and Acts, declares he carefully investigated everything from the beginning from those who were from the first eye witnesses. This, at the very least, means that Luke believed literally in the historical basis for Christian faith, and believed he was writing history. Therefore, the notion in the novel that faith is what you make it, that believing is more important than the facts, really does not add up. Facts are more important and facts take Jesus as a deity not a mere mortal. Moreover, Jesus himself took the same name as God’s name in the Old Testament scriptures. When Moses asked what name

he should use in referring to God, God told Moses, “I AM” sent you. And that makes sense—God has always existed, exists now, and will always exist. So, “I AM” summarizes it pretty well. And Jesus made the same claim. Therefore, what we believe in any matter religion include, should be based on historical evidence. Since the writers of the New Testament made historical claims, the truth or falsity of Christianity really lies within the realm of the historian, not simply with what one chooses to believe. Therefore, the story of *The Da Vinci Code* contains very poor history indeed.

One of the reasons behind the author in writing this novel seems to show the power of power, to show that power is everywhere. Brown has dedicated plenty of pages to prove this point. Teabing has said that history is always written by winners. By this he means that those who are powerful always win and make history. Teabing talks of power game when he says how Church worked to suppress the reality of Christ’s bloodline because a child of Jesus would have undermined the critical notion of Christ’s divinity. The other reason of the author could be to generate awareness among the people as Brown himself has said that his hope in writing this novel was that the story would serve as a catalyst and a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of faith, religion and history.

Whatever may be the purpose of the author behind writing, what is ensures us is that *The Da Vinci Code* is full of dismantling elements that dismantle the Christian myth and Bible. And the purpose of this research is to dismantle those very dismantling elements in return. Even though the issues of power and gender discrimination that Brown has put forwarding the novel seems quite remarkable and true yet the point, to which they have been brought, to prove is unacceptable. On the name of “true history” what the noel has spread is only confusion, controversy and

chaos among the common people. But still there has to be recognition that novel such as this one are not “just fiction” but they are also the means for conveying ideas and beliefs to large group of people, sometimes often without the readers fully appreciating what they are consuming. Therefore, we need to analyze and carefully assess what it is saying and to consider why it was written. *The Da Vinci Code* is a fiction and even if Brown’s statement about the veracity of his book is a fiction too, it is still one of those texts that, ultimately, has helped produce a whole new bunch of potential fortune-tellers- free thinkers and seekers after the truth.