

8) Nothing new under the sun?

Early Christians died rather than deny the Trinity, or the fact that God came in human flesh in Jesus Christ (read some lives of the early saints and see for yourself). Eastern mystical religions offered people a chance to buy into some, all, or none of Christian beliefs, avoiding persecutions, and being able to believe what you like, as a bonus. Today, the same kind of thing happens, except now it's better advertised, often taking the form of popular books made into high profit movies.

9) Did Dan Brown lose his atlas?

The early Church didn't centre around Italy. Most early missionary work happened far away from Europe, in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Near East. So why is the Vatican, and Italy so important to Brown? Because he confuses modern Roman Catholicism with the early, historical Church, and he's really interested in going after the Catholic Popes. Why aren't other ancient patriarchs, like Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem a major part of the "plot" Brown has uncovered? Because books that attack the Orthodox Church don't sell as well as those that attack Roman Catholics.

10) Opus Dei and the Crusades aren't big news in Church history.

The DaVinci Code spends a lot of its time trying to link the modern Roman Catholic organization called Opus Dei and the Crusaders who sacked Jerusalem to some kind of plot to snuff out the "real" Christianity. What's the problem? To most eastern Christians who met the Crusaders, the Crusaders were foreign visitors, not an army of their own faith. Neither group was around in ancient times to create such a plot.

So, why use them in the book? Because both groups are seen as "traditional" Christianity, which the book is attacking, in order to create a fictional "historical" Christianity.

The fact is, such a historical Christianity already existed in ancient times, and continues to exist today:

It's the Orthodox Church, whose unbroken confession of Jesus Christ, ancient Christian practices, morality, and doctrine have suffered through twenty centuries of martyrdom and persecution, and continue to witness to Christ today.

If you are interested in reading more about the authentic Christian Church, check out the book and website list below.

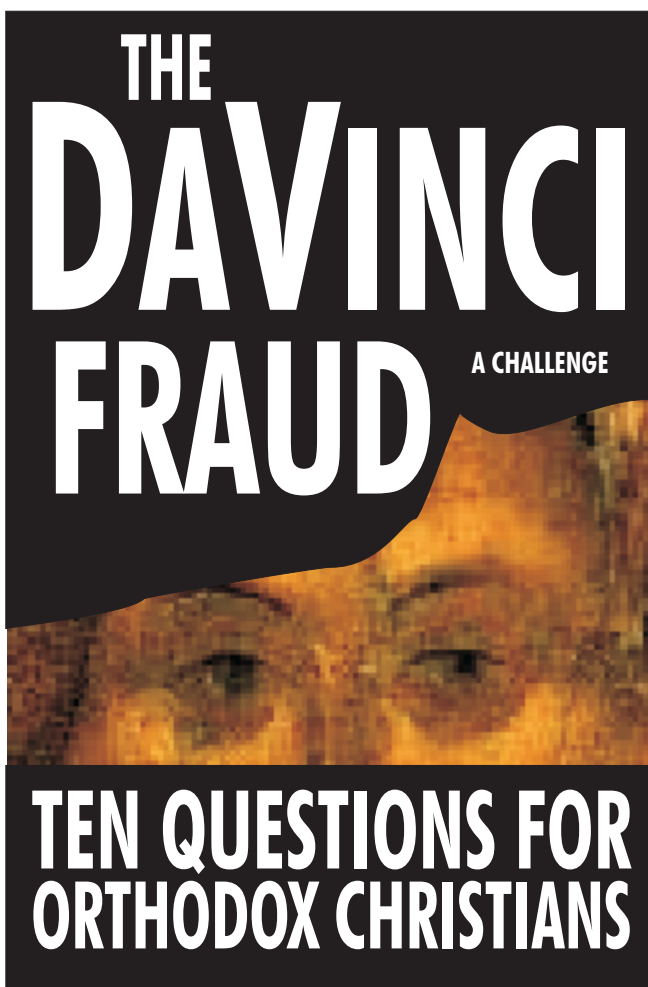
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When the popular novel The DaVinci Code was first released, many people believed it provided a challenge to historic Christian beliefs and morality. Packaged in an interesting story, the book set out to prove the historic Christian faith was a big fraud, created by power-hungry men over ten centuries. From the point of view of historic Christianity

and the Orthodox Church today, the DaVinci Code is fiction, plain and simple. For faithful Christians who might be unsettled by the claims of the book, twenty centuries of saints and martyrs for Christ should give us pause, and no cause to panic. Instead, we should offer the following ten questions and points to the author and fans of The DaVinci Code:

1) No time.

Where would early Christians find the time to oppress women?

The early Church experienced intense persecution on and off for three centuries. In between running from certain torture and death at the hands of the Roman authorities, early Christians also had to contend with break away groups and outsiders who taught things about Jesus never believed by Christians. Where on earth would an early Christian (who had to keep his or her identity secret, for their personal safety) find the time or the authority to worry about oppressing Christian women? One word to the authorities, and they were as good as dead. (You can read the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, or the Martyrdom of Polycarp to get a glimpse of this).

2) Fringe Sources.

When most people today are looking for true news reporting, they don't look for it at the supermarket check-out. Why? Because people today know that certain papers are fringe news sources, which try to grab attention by reporting outrageous things. The "historical Sources" in the DaVinci Code (like the so-called "Gospel of PHILIP - CHECK REF) are just that sort of news source - entertaining, but way out in left field.

3) Whoops - we missed Mary.

Why would a book that has so much to say about women in the early Church miss talking about the Virgin Mary? Since she is the basis for



Christians understanding that Christ was fully God and fully human (she was His very human mother), Mary is critical in understanding Who Jesus is. The earliest tradition of the Church tells us the Virgin Mary lived an incredibly holy life, and thus became a model for a life of devotion to God - the reason all Christians respected her so much for the first 1400 years of Christianity.

4) Truth can't be buried forever.

The Church survived persecution by the Romans, Ottoman Muslims, Communists, and fascists. Why did it survive? Because it had something to offer the world: the fullness of Truth. If other sects - like those in the DaVinci Code - had something to offer, why did they dissolve into the dust of time? Even pagan traditions survived relatively intact. Why didn't the stuff in the fictional DaVinci Code? The reason: it's made up.

5) Why skip 1000 years?

Orthodox Christianity existed for 1000 years before the Roman Papacy (the culprits in the DaVinci Code) seized control of the Church in

western Europe in the 11th century. Orthodoxy Christianity continues to exist in huge numbers to this day in Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia.

Did Dan Brown just skip that part? Did he forget it?

6) Give 'em what they want.

How come Brown's version of history looks so much like our present day? Sexual immorality, relativism, individuals doing their own thing, apart from the unity of the Church - all these are presented in the DaVinci Code as normal, and even good. The trouble is, they weren't seen as normal or good, even 50 years ago. So why does Brown present them this way? Perhaps it's because people like to be told that they can behave any way they like, and God says it's all okay - and it's worthy paying \$30 for a fictional novel to make you feel you're right about it all.

7) What do you get when you beat up on the Pope?

It's fun to expose the hypocrisy of a parent or teacher, especially if it allows you to behave as badly as they did. While Orthodox Christians have never accepted the idea that the Pope had authority over the whole Church, order in moral and spiritual life among Christians existed in the form of bishops from the first century. So what do you do if you want to follow a different morality, and still call yourself a Christian? Attack the biggest target of authority. It's not about freedom - it's about license to do whatever you want, because we live in adolescent times.