

## DID DAN BROWN BREAK OR REPAIR THE TABOOS IN *THE DA VINCI CODE*? AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF HIS DIALECTICAL STYLE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code(2003) –henceforth DVC -has acquired a matchless reputation and it has been privileged with incomparable studies which have reached the utmost scope of controversy since it was supposed to rock the foundations of Christianity because of Jesus Christ's marriage and to none other Mary Magdalene<sup>(1)</sup>, the uprightness of the Holy Bible, and the deity of Jesus, which, the three topics, lie behind Jesus Christ's and Mary Magdalene's marriage. Such a controversy has led the researcher to investigate a number of expert historians' and documentary studies to shed light on the backbone of the present study: Did Brown break or repair taboos in his novel? Or, let us ask, what is his real purpose as regards the above three tabooed topics?*

*The researcher has intended to analyze a number of extracts taken from the novel focusing on those related to the deity/humanity of Jesus and His alleged marriage to Magdalene. The analysis will be based upon the information, which is, as Brown claims, taken from pieces of "fact-based historical and scientific evidence". These pieces are related to the sexuality of Christ and the assertions of His marriage to Magdalene. Thus, the study aims at answering the question whether Brown broke or repaired the three tabooed topics mentioned above. To answer these questions, the researcher has analyzed his, Brown's, pieces of evidence which he claims are "accurate, true and well- researched" for they are completely taken from actual documents and sources. The analysis will be linguistic-religious. It aims to ascertain whether this evidence is accurate or erroneous, and subsequently, to judge whether Brown had broken or repaired the taboos in his novel.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Christ's and Magdalene Marriage, Taboo, the Six Step Attitudinal Change Plan*

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### **Article History**

**Received: 03 May 2018 | Revised: 25 May 2018 | Accepted: 31 May 2018**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Taboos in the *Da Vinci Code***

In simple terms, the word 'taboo' refers to any linguistic and/or verbal socio-cultural, religious, sexual and political subversion refused and prohibited by the society. Such a forbidden and/or sacred activity is based on religious beliefs or morals. Breaking a taboo is extremely objectionable in society as a whole. Though such a phenomenon is different from one culture to another, there are certain words and topics which are considered taboos in all societies –they are not to be used, or at least not in a polite group or company, or in an apparently irrational manner. As doing a taboo is

something forbidden, talking about it is also forbidden. In this regard, Fromkin *et al* (2003:476) state that the word taboo refers to acts that are forbidden or to be avoided. So, when an act is taboo, the reference to this act may also become taboo. In other words, " first you are forbidden to do something; then you are forbidden to talk about it."

During an interview about the novel and the crucial topics it had dealt with, Dan Brown was asked :

"Why do you think your novel has touched such a nerve?" His answer was :

"The mysteries of spirituality, of the origins of our religions, are topics that resonate at a very deep level, at the very core of the human psyche. Whether you agree or not, the topics are now on the table and we are talking about them, topics which for centuries have been taboos."(cited in <http://www.cuttingedge.org/>).

Tentatively, this interview shows that the novel hides a number of taboos. Brown reinforces them by the proofs and the pieces of evidence he had gathered and claimed they are taken from 'accurate documents'. The researcher hypothesizes that those proofs and evidence did not prove Brown's propositions, and subsequently, theories related to those taboos all of which flow in the domain of the three 'tabooed' topics mentioned above. Consequently, the researcher hypothesizes that since "there are taboos" related to the central point of the novel, i.e. Jesus' and Magdalene's marriage, it is expected that Brown had either broken them or repaired them. In other words, he must have done one of the two antonymous ends, breakage or repair. This is what will be investigated and then answered in this study.

## **THE EVIDENCE OF JESUS' AND MARY MAGDALENE'S MARRIAGE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Before stating the heated debates, controversial studies and reviews set to the novel as regards the inaccuracies of the core aspects of Christianity and the history of the Catholic Church, which lie behind the question of the alleged marriage of Christ and Magdalene, let us shed light on the plot of the novel in brief.

The whole plot of DVC is concerned with the alleged marriage of Christ and Magdalene, her role in the history of Christianity, and their bloodline which subsequently led to their descendants, i.e. the Merovingian kings of France. It states that there has been a mysterious murder. So, Louvre curator and Priory of a Sion Grand Master Jacques Saunière is lethally shot one night at the museum by a leprous man, named Silas, who is working according to the instructions of someone known only as the Teacher named Teabing, a disappeared instigator who is the main moving character behind the location and the secret of the Holy Grail<sup>(2)</sup>. Because of the amazing religious symbols left at the scene of the crime, drawn by Saunière himself before his death and his body is discovered in the pose of the Vitruvian Man<sup>(3)</sup> Professor Robert Langdon, who is a master of religious symbols at Harvard is called in to investigate the event, i.e. to decode the cryptic message left by Saunière. A number of Langdon's and Sophie Neveu's, the police cryptographer's chases happen to get the place of the safe deposit box which contains the keystone 'a cryptex' which solves the riddle of the Holy Grail which reveals the sacred feminine, Magdalene, the alleged Christ's wife, and the historical documents related to it.

In the light of many heated debates, controversial studies and reviews set to the novel as regards the inaccuracies of the core aspects of Christianity and the history of the Catholic Church, the researcher has intended to shed light on a number of different authors' and expert historians' statements, and subsequently, the evidence implied in their studies to reach to the required answer of the thorny question implied in this study: Did Brown break or repair the taboos in his novel?

Such a question, in turn, elicits the main two-part crucial question, i.e. was Christ married? And to none other Magdalene? This requires us to scrutinize those people's statements to answer these questions.

It is important to mention that through Brown's character's speech, Teabing's, the main sources are his main and immediate source, Baignet, Leigh and Lincoln (1982); Starbird (a1993); (b1993); Picknett and Prince (1997); Nag Hammadi texts; the Dead Sea Scrolls, to a large extent the Gnostic<sup>(4)</sup> gospels: *the Gospel of Philip* and to some extent *the Gospel of Mary Magdalene*. Depending on these sources and prefacing -before the prologue- his novel with a page entitled "FACT", Brown affirms that "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in his novel are accurate." What is important to say is that he believes completely in the truthfulness of his work. This can be observed in a number of interviews done with him about DVC. Let us examine some of them:

- In the interview of *CNN Sunday Morning* on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2003, he says that almost the whole work, the novel, is "accurate and well-researched":

**Martin Savidge:** When we talk about da[sic] Vinci and your book, how much is true and how much is fabricated in your storyline?

**Dan Brown:** 99 percent of it is true. All of the architecture, the art, the secret rituals, the history, all of that is true, the Gnostic gospels. All of that is...all that is fiction, of course, is that there's a Harvard symbol gist [sic] named Robert Langdon, and all of his action is fictionalized. But the background is all true.

- In the interview of *NBC Today* on 3rd June 2003, he affirms that all of the books is based on reality :

**Matt Lauer:** How much of this is based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred?

**Dan Brown:** Absolutely all of it. Obviously, there are – Robert Langdon is fictional, but all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies, all of that is historical fact.

Added to these, in an interview run by Charlie Gibson on *Good Morning America* in December 2003, he asserts that the theories of the Priory of Sion, Opus Dei, the Holy Grail, the alternative Gospels, i.e. *the Gospel of Philip* and *the Gospel of Mary*, *The Last Supper* and Magdalene as she is portrayed in DVC are true. He adds that if the book had been non-fiction, these theories would not have been different.

As it has been mentioned above, the immediate source is *the Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, which in turn, is drawn from the misreading of *the Gospel of Philip* and *the Gospel of Mary*. So, in addition to a number of factual errors stated in his novel, he insisted on choosing and subsequently stating from the sources above, the texts that imply erroneous information to prove his theories about that marriage. Consequently, it can be inferred that he has followed the dialectical style in writing his novel. Such a style is based on what is called "the Six Step Attitudinal Change Plan." This plan is defined as the method that "gives New World Order Planners the ability to silently, almost invisibly, change the attitudes and values of the entire population of a people." (<http://www.cuttingedge.org>). Let us list the six steps of this plan (<http://www.cuttingedge.org>) :

**Step 1:** Some practices so offensive that it can scarcely be discussed in public is advocated by a respected expert in a respected forum.

**Step 2:** At first, the public is shocked, then irritated.

**Step 3:** But, the very fact that such a thing could be publicly debated becomes the subject of the debate.

**Step 4:** In the process, sheer repetition of the shocking subject under discussion gradually lazing away its effect.

**Step 5:** People then are no longer shocked by the subject.

**Step 6:** No longer irritated, people begin to argue for positions to moderate the extreme; or, they accept the premise, challenging, instead, the means to achieve it.

Now, it is time to examine the long discussion between Sir Leigh Teabing and the detective Sophie Neveu. It took place in Teabing's luxurious room which contains a variety of projectors, scientific and electronic machines and artwork including Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. It, the discussion, is supposed to imply pieces of 'evidence' of Christ's and Magdalene's relationship and their alleged marriage. The following sections are devoted to examining these pieces :

### **Confirming Jesus Christ's and Mary Magdalene's Marriage by a Historical Record**

Let us consider the following extract to comment on such a statement :

**Teabing:** "As I said earlier, the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record." (Chapter 58. P.265)

It has been mentioned previously that Brown asserts, according to the sources he depended on and the interviews that the information mentioned in the novel are completely based on reality "in terms of things that actually occurred." So, in the extract above he tries to convince us that Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene is " part of the historical record". Let us survey what expert historians, scholars and authors declare about the veracity of this statement.

Burger ([www.newmediaministries.org](http://www.newmediaministries.org)) affirms that there is absolutely no evidence of such a marriage. So, he says

That real historians, the liberal and the conservative, refuse this statement. Then, he affirms that by saying that "There is absolutely, I repeat, absolutely no historical record or even slightest valid inference of a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The source of this idea is a group of legends the origin of which no one really knows." In addition to that, Phipps (1986: 1-6) clarifies that there have been some historical scholars (as opposed to novelists or "independent researchers") who have claimed that Jesus was married. Nevertheless, it has been found that there are forcing reasons and justifications that led the majority of scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity to reach the opposite conclusions.

When a survey has been made for the four canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and all other Gospels, the writings of Paul, the Gnostic Gospels of Philip, Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Judas; the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Nazarenes, the Gospel of Egyptians and the Gospel of the Ebonite, it has been found that there is no indication to Jesus' marriage or to his wife. In this regard, the well-known biblical scholar and expert historian Ehrman (2004: 152) affirms that the most significant fact which cannot be overlooked or underestimated is that "in *none* of our early Christian sources is there any reference to Jesus' marriage or to his wife. This is true not only of the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John but of all our other Gospels and all of our other early Christian writings put together."

### **Jesus as a Married not a Bachelor and the Sabbath Day**

Now, let us go back to Teabing's and Sophie's discussion: "Moreover, Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor" (Chapter 58, P. 265).

In the survey mentioned above, it has been discovered that there is no indication to portray Him as a married man. To the contrary, all of the Gospels focus on His indications of teachings, exorcisms, prophecies, walking on water, crucifixion, burial, resurrection and His miracles of touching people to heal them of pains and diseases like epilepsy, leprosy, rickets, blindness, bleeding, dumbness, His vision, the indications of His grave's guard by Magdalene, and the apostles' acts. He has absolutely far from the lifestyle related to marriage and family for He saw them dispensable as "He denounced using the usual worldly strategies for attaining and perpetuating political power (e.g. Matthew 20: 20-8), which would surely include nepotism." (Burger, 2005). He does not want even his followers to become a state power. Thus, it is reasonable to reverse what Brown declares and say: Jesus as a bachelor man makes infinitely more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a married man. And when Sophie asked about the reason for accounting him married more than bachelors, Langdon said, taking over while Teabing searched for his book that at that time the Jewish father must find a good wife for his son according to Jewish custom and "celibacy was condemned". And because Jesus was a Jew, then he was definitely married. So, why there is not any indication for "his unnatural state of bachelorhood" at least in one of the gospels of the Bible if he was a bachelor!(265).

It is clear that Langdon's assertion of Christ's being a married man reveals Brown's deliberate attribution of Jesus Christ to Judaism which contradicts what the New Testament states. This is clear in Matthew (12:1-8) when once His disciples plucked the ears, crushed and ate them on the Sabbath day for they were hungry and He stretched out a man's hand also in that day. The Pharisee Faction protested since doing any action, except worship, in this day is considered a taboo and the leaders of that fiction decided to put Him to death since He broke the Sabbath taboo. So, if He is a Jew, then how is it possible for a prophet to break the Jewish religious taboo, mentioned previously, which states that all actions are prohibited on the Sabbath except worship and ease!

### **Emperor Constantine's Shift of Christian Worship Day**

It is worth mentioning that Brown committed another error, chronological, when he declared on Langdon's tongue that Emperor Constantine shifted the day of Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday. So, he says:

Originally...Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan's veneration day of the sun...To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday mornings with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god's weekly tribute-*Sunday*.(P.252)

This is what Sietsema (2002:3) advocates in a study revealing the chronological errors in the novel. So, he declares that Brown commits a chronological error when he states that Emperor Constantine, as an immortal pagan, changed the day of Christian worship from Saturday to 'Sunday' which by its role proves" Constantine's unstinting allegiance to *Sol Invictus*, the Sun god." Then, he, Sietsema comments and says that here lies a problem, i.e. in the two languages, Greek and Latin, the name of the first day of the week does not relate to the sun at all. Besides, he asserts that the Anglo-Saxons were calling the first day of the week 'Sunday' long before the first Christian missionaries ever found them.

In this respect, Lyons (2006) says that "One of the many wild assertions in Brown's book is his criticism of the day on which Christians assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper and worship God." Besides, if Jesus' qualifications, mentioned previously, are portrayed to make Him as Israel's Messiah/King like its, Israel's authority with which He taught, His miracles, His exorcism, His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and His resurrection; if all those are put together with His Marriage which is also accounted as one of the qualifications of leadership, then why it is not mentioned in the

Gospels of the New Testament, at least in an implied way? In this regard, Harrison (1971) adds that celibacy was excused because of piety since most Jewish men were married. The Essenes, the Jewish sect of Jesus' time practiced celibacy. This group was in existence during that time. So, some of the Essen people chose celibacy for " they saw themselves as holy warriors analogous to those in the time of Moses and Joshua." That was their first aim. They did not want to be attracted by the prerequisites of the family.

Besides, it is noteworthy that like Jesus, the apostle Paul, a Jewish man, chose celibacy to minister and serve more people without involving in the prerequisites of life. Here, Harrison (as cited in 1 Corinthians, 7-7) says that other apostles and even Jesus' brother married, citing marriage as a right. Such a fact means that it was up to the Jewish man to get married or remain celibate. Thus, it can be inferred that both Jews and Christians do not condemn celibacy and do not see it as a disqualifier for a spiritual relationship at the same time. It was accounted useful at certain times.

### **The Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea Scrolls as the Earliest Christian Records**

Now, let us continue Teabing's and Sophie's discussion. So, he says that the photocopies he mentioned earlier are those of the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea Scrolls. He affirms that they are the earliest Christian records but the trouble is that they do not equilibrate the Gospels in the Bible (266).

Before we state what the expert historians and scholars say about Brown's claim above, let us consider the extract that is uttered earlier on Teabing's tongue as regards those records:

Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. In addition to telling the true Grail story, these documents speak of Christ's ministry in the very human terms. Of course, the Vatican, in keeping with their tradition of misinformation, tried very hard to suppress the release of these scrolls. (254)

What is interesting is that Teabing says "Fortunately for historians some of the Gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive," referring in these words to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi documents which are "the earliest Christian records." So, he tries to convince us that since these Gospels managed to survive- after they had been doomed to eradicate, they will tell us the truths of the Grail story and Christ's humanity.

Ehrman (2004: 26) directly reverses what Teabing says, by saying:"Unfortunately, much of what Teabing says is historically inaccurate." As an expert historian, he affirms that Constantine did not attempt to eradicate any of the earlier Gospels; the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain any Gospels or documents that talks about Christ or Christianity at all; they are Jewish; the Coptic documents at Nag Hammadi were in a book form; they were not scrolls; neither Nag Hammadi documents nor the Dead Sea Scrolls ever speak of the Holy Grail and Jesus' ministry "in very human terms." Besides, the date of the discovery is erroneous. So, he advocates that "the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s" and the Coptic Scrolls at Nag Hammadi in 1945.

What is important to know is that the initial discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was in 1947, not the 1950s (Ehrman, 2004: 26). A pastor at the Presbyterian Church, 2006 (cited in Moore, 2009: 123-41) affirms such a fact by saying:"...the [Da Vinci Code] is filled with inaccuracies. It maintains that the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the 1950s. They were actually discovered in 1947."

Olson and Miesel (2004) add more with respect to this affair. They claim that the assertion that the Dead Sea

Scrolls discovered in 1947- not the 1950s as Brown predicates- contain lost or hidden Gospels is false. They, Olson and Miesel, show that "The scrolls contain books of the Hebrew Scriptures, apocryphal and pseudoeigraphic books, and manuals used by the Jewish community at Qumran. No definite Christian documents –orthodox, Gnostic, or otherwise- have been found at this site." As regards the discovery of "the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi," it is found that, as is mentioned above, Ehrman asserts that the Coptic documents at Nag Hammadi were not scrolls; they were in a book form.

Having mentioned the evidence that proves Brown's inaccuracies in accounting the two, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi documents, as Christian and the initial discovery of the first, it is time to go back to Teabing's and Sophie's discussion :

### **The Mention of Kissing and *the Gospel of Philip***

The following extract reveals the evidence of Jesus' kissing of Mary Magdalene, which is mentioned in *the Gospel of Philip* :

Flipping toward the middle of the book, Teabing pointed to a passage. "The Gospel of Philip is always a good place to start." Sophie read the passage: And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The word surprised Sophie, and yet they hardly seemed conclusive."It says nothing of marriage." "*Au contraire.*" Teabing smiled pointing to the first line."As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*. Langdon concurred with a nod. Sophie read the first line again. *And the companion of the savior is Mary Magdalene.* Teabing flipped through the book and pointed out several other passages that, to Sophie's surprise, clearly suggested Magdalene and Jesus had a romantic relationship...Sir Leigh Teabing was still talking. "I shan't bore you with the countless references to Jesus and Magdalene's union. That has been explored ad nauseam by modern historians(266-7).

It is clear that Brown chose the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* more than the other three Gospels, i.e. the Gospels of Mary Magdalene, Thomas and Judas since it, of Philip, serves his purpose of convincing us that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene were married, following the Six Step Attitudinal Change Plan. He tries to build a terraced framework upon these pieces he collected from the sources that serve his aims though there are other ones that refute what he claims and subsequently these pieces. So, Sophie's sentence "It says nothing of marriage" shows his dexterity in the very short time between Sophie's words of surprise and Teabing's response represented by the explanations that followed mentioned sentence to arouse the reader's suspense and eagerness to know what is hidden. In addition to that, the historians' attitudes towards this advocacy imply that since *the Gospel of Philip* is not completely close to Christ's life for it was almost written in the second half of the third century, i.e. 250-300 A.D., it cannot be deemed reliable. For example, Ehrman (2004: 174-9) affirms that *the Gospel of Philip* is the second Gnostic text used in the DVC. The Gospel "was almost completely unknown until discovered in 1945 as one of the documents in the Nag Hammadi Library." It had been recognized approximately in the early third century; nevertheless, it is difficult to understand in detail. Such a difficulty stems from its composition, i.e. 'mystical reflections' since it includes a variety of subjects. And, these reflections are given in relative isolation, without any actual narrative context. For this reason, they are difficult to interpret.

Lunn, the expert historian states that *the Gospel of Philip* had been written in the second or third century

(2004: 135). So, he affirms that *the Gospel of Philip* is one of the Gospels ascribed to the twelve apostles. It was found in the Codices of the Nag Hammadi papyri. The latter is "a collection of thirteen codices of Gnostic Scriptures and commentaries written in the second or third century."

Burger (2005:3) also asserts that "it is not close enough to Jesus' life to be deemed reliable. It was written at least 230 years after Jesus died.." Calvert-Koyzis (2006:10) supports the above three, clarifying that "*the Gospel of Philip* is from Nag Hammadi, written in the second or possibly the early third century."

Clearly, this Gospel cannot be considered an authorized document or "a good place to start". So, in the first piece of evidence, Teabing affirms that 'the companion' in the sentence "And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene," means the 'spouse' or 'wife'. When Sophie said that the words "hardly seemed conclusive," Teabing replied, "As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*." (266). In the second piece of evidence he, Teabing, affirms that Jesus "used to kiss her often on her mouth."

Here lies a question : Are these two pieces of evidence decisive proofs on their marriage?

As regards the first piece of evidence, it is inferred that, on one hand, *the Gospel of Philip* is written in Coptic, not in Aramaic as Teabing states and, on the other hand, the word 'companion' does not mean 'wife'. So, Craig (2004) advocates that "there is no Aramaic or Hebrew word for 'companion' that normally means spouse." Olson and Miesel (2004) also assert that when they say that a line of *the Gospel of Philip* is quoted and uttered on Teabing's tongue, referring to Magdalene as Christ's companion. The latter, according to the Aramaic scholars, means 'wife'. In addition to that, they, Olson and Miesel, add that 'companion' was not necessarily a sex-related term as James M. Robinson, an authority on the Gnostic Gospels, points out.

Burger (2005: 3) reinforces such a fact by saying that the only text of *the Gospel of Philip* we have is in Coptic, not in Aramaic. So, this Gospel, like other Gospels, would have been in Greek, not Aramaic if it existed before that in another language. The Nag Hammadi scholar, Schenke (1997: 182) supports what the above scholars advocate by confirming that "the copy of *the Gospel of Philip* that has come down to us is in Coptic and that this probably represents a translation from Greek." So, it is clear that there is no word in the text for Aramaic scholars to consider. Added to these, Marjanen (1996:151) gives a detailed explanation concerning the word 'companion', *koinonos* in Greek and *hotre* in Coptic. He says that such a word '*koinonos*' is known by most of the Greek students. It is used in different manners, scopes and writing, including the New Testament. It refers to "a person engaged in fellowship or sharing with someone or in something." Then, he clarifies the meaning of *koinonos* by saying that what a *koinonos* "can share with his or her partner can take many forms, ranging from a common enterprise or experience to a shared business."

As regards the second piece of evidence, i.e. the mention of kissing, Brown mentions "Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth" thinking that he would completely convince the reader that this indication proves that Christ and Magdalene were married since such a mark happens between the married people. And, here lies my, the researcher's, rhetorical question: Are these two sentences accurate? Has Brown copied them as they are? Let us trace.

Although Lunn (2004: 108) supports what Brown advocates when he, Lunn, comments on the dialogue between Teabing and Sophie, by saying "kissing on the mouth was a practice reserved exclusively for those who were married." What Mr. Brown does not mention is that in the Gospel of Thomas, when Peter says "women are not worthy of



life," Jesus responds, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male... For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

What is important to say is that Brown has woven the tale of kissing skillfully since it is considered the most powerful 'evidence' to denote Christ's and Magdalene's marriage. Here, it must be declared that there is a fact concerning the papyrus page where the passage of the above two pieces of evidence appears. Such a fact states that this page has a number of holes. One of them lies after the possessive adjective 'her'. This what many scholars affirm. For example, Burger (2005:4) mentions that one of the problems related to Brown's use and interpretation of this passage is that "the only ancient manuscript scholars have to work with has a lot of holes in it from deterioration. One of these holes happens to be after the word "her." "Then, he reinforces this statement by saying that "The Coptic text actually reads "kiss her often on her (...)." The word that is missing could be "forehead," "cheek," or "hand." Early Christians used kisses on those body parts as greeting just as various cultures do today." It is also affirmed that "The parchment that says Jesus was affectionately kissing Mary Magdalene is damaged. The scroll that says, Jesus was kissing Mary Magdalene on\_ (hole in the parchment). Thus, such a kiss might be on any part of the body, on hand, on foot, on the lips. But whatever He was kissing her "made the disciples jealous."([www.cuttingedge.org](http://www.cuttingedge.org)). Added to these, Lash and Dzumardjin (2014: 6) advocate that the Gnostic scholars who tackle DVC in their studies and documentations," usually cite the Nag Hammadi writing, especially the famous kissing cameo in *the Gospel of Philip*. In fact, the papyrus page where the passage appears (NHC 11,3: 63.35) is damaged right at the line that says *where* Jesus kissed his "companion." Scholars restore the text to read "on the mouth." " Obviously, Brown overlooked all the facts related to the evidence mentioned above to sustain his hypothesis, the proof, and consequently the attainment of the alleged marriage theory he aims to prove.

### **The Secrets of Leonardo Da Vinci's *the Last Supper***

It is observed that the novel had reached its climax in Chapter 58, i.e. **Teabing "Study"** where Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* constitutes its backbone upon which the title of the novel is based. So, Brown claims that it, *The Last Supper* painting, "shouts at the viewer that Jesus and Magdalene were a pair" thinking that he will enforce us to believe this marriage. To convince us that they were married, he had followed the Six Step Attitudinal Change Plan by terracing five marks in a way that let the readers live with breathless attention. He induces them to know the riddles compactly by dragging them to that plan by stating his marks in a geometrical shape that comprises a number of sides in which each side completes the other. Let us examine these marks and judge to what extent Brown's analyses are sufficient and reasonable. These marks are stated in the discussion mentioned previously between Teabing and Sophie.

Throughout their discussion about *The Last Supper*, Sophie's surprise reached its climax when Teabing pointed to the same image she has just been looking at, and because of the mysterious triangle of the Holy Grail, the Sang real and the Chalice and its relation to the woman seated at Christ's right. When she asked Langdon- who was standing beside them- to help her for she is lost, he told her that the Holy Grail was actually present in *The Last Supper* for Da Vinci displayed it clearly in his picture. Then,

after her inquiries about such a riddle and scanning the thirteen figures found in the painting, i.e. Christ in the middle, six apostles on His left and other six on His right, Brown has dexterously woven a successive five-mark series that Teabing states in opposition to Sophie's inquiries to prove Christ's and Magdalene's marriage and affirm that she is the figure on His right.

Before examining the veracity of Brown's marks and proofs mentioned above, it is important to mention the fact

of events happened to the original painting, i.e. Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (1495-98).

It is inferred that the picture had exposed to a number of destructive events. So, the expert historians Lunn (2004: 16-18) and Gardner (2005: 256-70) state that Leonardo first began to paint it in 1495 and finished it in 1498. He seats the twelve apostles in four groups of three at the table with Christ central. The king of France ordered to ship the wall on which it was painted in France. It has remained where the picture was originally painted because of the logistical problems. After a period of time it became "in a bad state of repair" for "the chromatic colors which were used were unsuitable for a painting onto a wall." After that, it damaged quickly. In 1796, the Napoleonic troops took over the refectory wall - where the painting is found - as a stable and "although Napoleon forbade any damage to the painting, the troops threw clay at the apostles." In 1800, a flood covered the painting with a green mould. In 1943, an allied attacked on the church and destroyed the refectory roof. The painting was badly damaged though it was protected by sand bags. A complete restoration with the utmost painstaking detail carried out and finished in 1954. However, Lunn (2004: 17) advocates that it was impossible to keep "the original paint and the original expression on the apostles' faces, although "the outlines of the figures were visible during restoration."

It is clear then that, on one hand, there are many paintings and restored details of *The Last Supper* because of the above events. On the other hand, the last supper is a Divine incident drawn by numerous famous painters before and after Da Vinci's painting (1495-98). Thus, those painters can be divided into two groups. The first group represents only Da Vinci's<sup>(5)</sup> on which Brown completely depended in his novel, while the second represents those by famous painters before and after Da Vinci's painting.

Now it is time to examine Brown's five-mark evidence stated by Teabing. The first mark that **the figure on Christ's right is a female**, namely Mary Magdalene, not the apostle John, and "Leonardo was skilled at painting the differences between the sexes" lead us to say that, on one hand, painting the differences between the sexes is not Leonardo's uniqueness. It is a fact beyond dispute that all painters are able to paint these differences since it is a part, or let us say, one of the prerequisites of their profession. And, as Lunn states "the outlines of the figures could be seen during restoration." This means that the outline of the figure on the Christ right in the restored version and that of the original refer to the same character 'the alleged' Magdalene. On the other hand, all paintings of the second group<sup>(6)</sup> (see Paintings and Images, P.24 -7) show the opposite facts of Brown's claims. First, if there is an M-shape design, it is between Christ and John, not between Christ and Magdalene. Second, there is a woman figure on Christ right; however, **their clothes are not identical and subsequently they are equal to Yin and Yang symbol; thus, the two sides of the equation are not identical**. Third, the figure of Christ left, lap, and in front of Him are the apostle John not Magdalene. Fourth, all the apostles are men. It is important to mention that the marks of the only painting-by an American painter- that shows the figure which seems to be as a woman are also deficient and cannot be proofs on the marriage. So, if we suppose that this painter restored Da Vinci's, again, his painting's marks cannot be proofs. The reason is that it, the figure, has only two features of the figure on Christ's right in Da Vinci's, i.e. the "flowing red hair" and the "delicate folded hands" without the third distinctive feminine feature, "hint of bosom". Furthermore, the flowing red hair can be clearly seen in the apostle on Christ's left and the one who is standing. The latter has delicate hands and face. Most of the apostles have delicate hands. Above all, Christ's and the figure's clothes are not inverted. Instead, they are completely different from each other. Christ wears a red robe and dark leaden cloak; the figure wears an off white robe and brown cloak! So, there are no, even two, identical colors. Thus, **this painting also cannot be a sufficient proof on the marriage**.

Talking about the second and third marks, i.e. those of **the V symbol** and **the M- shape design**, it is important to say that on the part of the looker the peak of the right part of the letter M -Christ in the picture- is clear and it can be seen, while there is no indication for a corresponding one in the left part. The reason behind such a fact is that Leonardo gathered two apostles, Peter and John or 'the alleged' Magdalene, whose hands are aligned since they are busy in a conversation. Consequently, **there is no M- shape design which "stands for Matrimonio or Mary Magdalene"** as Brown claims, and **the V symbol lies between Christ 'the first peak',i.e. the first half of the letter M, and John** talking with Peter and they, John and Peter constitute 'the second peak' which is supposed to be the second part of the mentioned letter, but it does not really represent the second pointed half of the letter M since this half implies two heads. Thus, **the second and third marks are also incorrect or erroneous**. What is important to say is that such a design is clearly seen in some of the second group's paintings which Brown claims, had been painted by "clumsy hands" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for they reveal 'actually' that the two parts of the letter M are Christ and John as is mentioned above in the first mark. An example on the M-shape design and the V symbol is clearly seen between Christ and John in, for example, Philippe-de-Champaign's painting.

Now, it is time to examine **the fourth mark, i.e. the color scheme of the clothes**. So, Brown considers Leonardo's inversion of the colors of Christ's and Magdalene's clothes another proof on their marriage. He says that "Jesus wore a red robe and blue cloak; Mary Magdalene wore a blue robe and red cloak. *Yin and Yang*." (264). Here, it must be clarified that in the original picture, on which Brown depended, 'Magdalene' wore a blue robe and pink cloak, not red. In other words, the colors of their clothes are not inverted to be called *yin and yang*<sup>(7)</sup>. In the Chinese philosophy, *yin and yang* symbol describes "how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world." (Porkert, 1974: www.)He and Hurley (www.) clarify that many dualities like male and female, soft and hard, light and dark, etc. are thought of as physical indications of the duality symbolized by *yin and yang*. *Yin and yang* symbol, as Hurley clarifies, represents a circle that is equally divided into black and white sections by a reverse S- like shape. There is a small circle of white in the black section, and a small circle of black in the white section. Each one of those sections and circles "has a significant meaning, as does the entire yin yang."

It is clear then that the implied meaning of the symbol above shows that there must be a balance between two opposites with a portion of the opposite element in each section. And, the most important feature is that, as Li CL (1974:132-43) states, "If yin and yang become unbalanced, one of the qualities is considered deficient or has vacuity."

Obviously, **the mark above is also incorrect since actually Magdalene's clothes are:** (A blue robe + a pink cloak; while Jesus' clothes are: A red robe + a blue cloak). Naturally 'pink' and 'red' are two different colors. In other words, the two sides of Brown's equation are not equal as in the following table :

**Table 1**

<b>(A) Yin and Yang Symbol</b>	<b>(B) Christ's and Magdalene's Clothes</b>
{ ( A white half + an internal small black circle) +( A black half + an internal small white circle) }	{ ( a <b>red</b> robe + a blue cloak) + ( a blue robe + a <b>pink</b> cloak ) }
<b>(A) ≠</b>	<b>(B)</b>

Thus, it must be declared that since one of the two sides, specifically the right one, includes two unbalanced halves, it will not be equal to the left side as 'yin and yang' implication states. Consequently, **the whole equation will be**

**deficient and cannot be a proof on the marriage.**

It is time now to ascertain **the fifth and last mark of *The Last Supper*, i.e. that of Magdalene's royal descent**, the fusion of her and Christ's' royal bloodlines which led to a birth of a daughter named Sarah. Here, Teabing affirms that Jesus and Magdalene created a "potent political union with the potential of making a legitimate claim on the throne." He shows Sophie that Magdalene "was of the House of Benjamin" and Jesus "was one of the House of David, a descendant of King Solomon- king of the Jews." Their bloodline became the Merovingian lineage of France.

Burger (2006: www.) affirms that "There is absolutely no evidence in any first or second century literature, Gnostic Orthodox or other, that Mary Magdalene was a descendant of Benjamin." In this regard, Olson and Miesel (2004) affirm that historians dispute the claim of being Magdalene as one of the Tribe of Benjamin. Further, they assert that there is not any mention of such information in the Bible or in other ancient sources since Magdalene situated in northern Israel; whereas the tribe of Benjamin lived in the south. Besides, Brown's claim which states that Paris had been founded by the Merovingian (Chapter 55) is erroneous for as they, Olson and Miesel, state that "The Merovingian did not rule in France until the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by which time Paris was at least 800 years old." Beside all the refuted marks mentioned above, Calvert-Koyzis (2006:14) asserts that Brown's advocacy that Jesus and Magdalene are a husband and a wife -who bears his child (ren) - is taken from others' misreading of *the Gospel of Philip* and *the Gospel of Mary*. This misreading, as it has been mentioned previously, relates to Baigent's, Leigh's and Lincoln's *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* on which Brown depended to a large extent. So, the cues that had been taken from this book show that the Holy Grail is not a chalice, but a bloodline resulted from the fusion of Jesus' and Magdalene's blood, i.e. their marital union. Burstein (2006) refutes such advocacy by saying that many textual and historical scholars have affirmed that this advocacy is "without evidence." In this respect, Olson and Miesel (2004) and Gardner (2005: 215) provide us with a useful piece of information which states that the Holy Grail was written as San Graal in Old French. Nevertheless, in DVC, taking hints from *the Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, Brown interprets "The Holy Grail" as "Sang Real" and translated it into "royal blood." In early literature of 'Grail', *grail* refers to 'a large dish for fish', which in turn refers to a Christian religious symbol which obviously removed from the traditional cup. In this regard, Olson and Miesel (2004) add more details by saying that quickly the idea of such a cup developed during the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, under the influence of two categorical stories, i.e. the apocryphal religious stories, like that of Joseph of Arimathea, and pagan ones which involve, for instance, magic containers that produced endless food which in turn is "a useful parallel to the Christian belief of the 'Bread of Life' produced at The Last Supper." For this reason, the cup presented a convenient fusion, like those known stories that relate to the quest for the Holy Grail and King Arthur, of 'albeit apocryphal' Christian teachings and pagan traditions.

It is obvious then that **none** of the previous marks concerning *The Last Supper* can be a sufficient proof on Christ's and Magdalene's marriage.

All in all, it can be said that all marks or pieces of evidence mentioned previously cannot be proofs on Christ's and Magdalene's marriage for the reasons stated within the sections related to these marks. The following section will be devoted to mentioning the conclusions of the study, the researcher has arrived at.

## CONCLUSIONS

The preceding sections of this study are an attempt to answer the two-part question whether Brown had broken or repaired the taboos found, as he claims via interviews, in DVC. The following points illustrate the conclusions the

researcher has reached at throughout the study :

A taboo is something that is forbidden to do or talk about. Breaking a taboo is extremely objectionable in all societies. Thus, we have been confronted with two cases, i.e. **the existence of taboos** in the novel and **talking about them** by the novelist. Thus, he had broken them since he had talked about them. This is the first part of our question. What do you say, dear reader(s), if I, the researcher, say that such a matter is erroneous since there are no taboos at all- in the novel- to be broken.

As for the second part of the question. Suppose that "there are originally taboos" in the novel and Brown's role was just to repair them in the sense that he was a neutral and he did not commit any offense for he had completely depended on "fact-based historical and scientific evidence". Thus, his role was no more than shedding light on it in a fictional style. Here, a question emerges. What do you say, dear reader(s), if I, the researcher, say that his "accurate and true" pieces of evidence" are also erroneous and subsequently, his propositions and then theories that reinforce the existence of taboos are erroneous too for the following reasons:

- That there were eighty Gospels considered for the New Testament is a factual error. So, the four canonical Gospels, i.e. those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the Gnostic ones are the only Gospels that are considered for it.
- To prove that Jesus is married more than being a bachelor is also a factual error.
- His commitment of the chronological error of Emperor Constantine's changing the day of Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday, which proves Constantine's unstinting allegiance to the Sun god.
- Depending on one of the main sources, i.e. *the Gospel of Philip*, which he considered "a good place to start", Brown did not succeed to prove the pieces of evidence in this Gospel for he fabricated the information in the way that serves his purpose.
- The most crucial evidence, i.e. those of Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, upon which the title of the novel is based, is also erroneous for the following reasons :
  - The character or the figure on Christ's right is the apostle John not Mary Magdalene as many paintings of the second group reveal.
  - Some of the second group's paintings display the 'V' symbol and the M-shape design; however, they are clearly seen
  - Between Christ and none other than John.
  - As regards yin and yang symbol 'the left side' and Christ's and Magdalene's clothes 'the right side', it has been found that since one of the latter's qualities is deficient (the difference between **red** and **pink** colors), Christ's and Magdalene's clothes are unbalanced. As a result, the right side is not applicable to the left one to be a proof on their marriage.
  - That the Holy Grail is not merely a chalice, but a woman named Mary Magdalene, who is the bearer of Christ's bloodline which subsequently led her to give birth to a daughter named Sara is a factual error.

In conclusion, the researcher directs rhetorical questions to you, dear reader(s), which, in turn, answer the two-

part question of this study : Don't you think that there are no "topics which for centuries have been taboo" as Brown had declared in the interviews mentioned previously. Is it reasonable to say that world painters whose paintings -found in Paintings and Images of this study- are displayed in the most famous exhibitions, museums, including Louvr, and galleries over the world, deviate the original story of The Last Supper. Don't you think that he had followed a dialectical style basing upon the Six Step Attitudinal Change Plan in his novel to change the attitudes and values of people.

### Notes:

- Mary Magdalene was a Jewish woman who, according to the New Testament, travelled with Jesus Christ as one of His followers. She is the one who witnessed His crucifixion, resurrection, and the empty tomb. Alone or as a member of a group of women, she was the first to witness His resurrection. Within the four canonical Gospels, i.e. of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John she is approximately mentioned twelve times, more than the rest of the apostles. According to the Gospel of Luke, it is stated that seven devils had been cast of her (8:2). According to that of Mark, Jesus had cast seven devils of her (16:9). During the Middle Ages, she was considered in Western Christianity as a repentant prostitute woman. This information is not found in any of the four canonical Gospels.
- The Holy Grail is referred to as two forms. In early documents it is referred to as Sangraal; while the second form is Sangreal, as the author of *Le Morte d' Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory's spelling states. One of these forms is the original. The word can be read in two ways, i.e. San Graal 'Holy Grail' and Sang Real 'Royal Blood' which refers o the bloodline of Jesus Christ (and Mary Magdalene as many sources state) which led to their descendants, i.e. the Merovingian Kings of France. Alternatively, there is the Holy Grail, i.e. the Chalice which had been used by Jesus Christ at *The Last Supper*.
- The Vitruvian Man is a principle set by the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in his work *De Architecture* which implies a fact that good geometric and architectural proportions are based on the proportions of the human body if they, the proportions, are arranged in a specific way in terms of certain measurements. The Renaissance artists tried to apply this idea to a large extent though it clearly was not true and the results always led to distorted human figures. Leonardo Da Vinci avoided distorting the human figure by shifting Vitruvius geometry, i.e. changing the square and the circle in a way that each one of them does not fit the other. So, to be a Vitruvian man, the figure must be human including the square and the circle. Thus, " If saunière had arranged his body within a circle then this does not make this 'a life-sized replica of Leonardo da [sic] Vinci's most famous sketch', since it is missing the key element-the square."(<http://www.historyvirsusthedavincicode.com/>).
- The word *Gnostic* is originally taken from the Greek *gnosis* which literally means knowledge. *Gnosticism* means a principle of the religious duality, i.e. the good and evil powers equally rule the universe. The Gnostic Gospels are written about the apostles but were not by them. They, the Gospels, were included in a list which had been cut down more than one time. Finally, only four of them had been approved, i.e. the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- The first group of painters in this study is represented only by Leonardo Da Vinci and his painting to be compared with the second group of painters and their paintings on which a large portion of analyzing the data is based.
- As regards the second group of painters, among many, a number of paintings by the famous has been chosen to be samples for the analysis, comparing with that of Da Vinci.

- In Chinese Philosophy, **Yin and Yang** symbol represents two forces that are opposing but complementary. One of these forces dominates and then it is replaced by the opposing one. Such a symbol describes how seemingly these forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world. The symbol involves a balance between two opposites with a portion of the opposite element in each section. As it has been mentioned previously, if **Yin and Yang** become unbalanced, one of the qualities is considered deficient or has vacuity (**Yin and Yang**-Wikipedia.mht).

**Paintings and Images**

**The First Group's *The Last Supper* Represented by Leonardo Da Vinci's only 'the Original Painting'**



***The Last Supper* (Restored Detail Showing Figure Relationships of John and Jesus) Leonardo Da Vinci, 1495 (Cited and Illustrated in Gardner 2005)**

**Yin and Yang Symbol**



**Christ's and Magdalene's clothes ≠**

**Yin and Yang symbol**

**The Second Group's *the Last Supper***

**On Christ Right is a Woman Figure but their Clothes are Not Identical**



**(1) By Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli "Giampietrino", 1520**



**(2) By an American Painter**



**(3) By Mariano Salvador Maella,1794**

**On Christ Right, Left, Lap and in Front of Him is the Apostle John Not Mary Magdalene**



**(1) The M-shape Design(between Christ and John by Philippe de Champaigne,16**



**(2) Christ with John Sleeping on the table by Valentine de Boulogne,1625-26**



(3) Christ with John Sleeping on the Table by Bartolomeo Schedoni, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century



(4) Christ with John Leaning his Head Against the Table by Jacopo Bassano, 1546



(5) By Albrecht Dürer, 1510 Christ with young John on his lap



(6) By Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen, 1514-25



(7) Christ with young John on his lap by Willem Van Herp the Elder (n.d.)



(8) The conversation between Peter and John



(9) On Christ left John bowing before Him by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1525 by Benjamin West, 1786

All the apostles are men:



(1) By Nicolas Poussin, 1561



(2) By Peter Paul Rubens, 1630-32



(3) By Jean Baptiste de Champaigne, 1678



(4) By Juan de Juanes (n.d.)



(5) By Girolamo Romani, 153



(6) By Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 1745-47



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### **Paintings and Images**

**Note:** All paintings displayed in the study are available [On-line], <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the->,

### **Except**

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