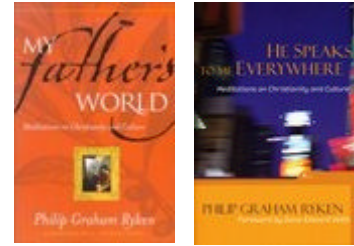


Window on the World

Window on the World is our weekly opportunity to examine our culture from the vantage point of biblical Christianity. Here you will find the text from Dr. Ryken's "Window on the World" talks from Tenth Presbyterian Church's evening service. If you missed one or wanted to send a copy to a friend, you will be able to find them here. Please note: there is no "Window on the World" on third Sundays, selected other Sundays, or in July and August.

Windows on the World before September 2005 are available in an older format. [Click here](#). Many of these are now published in [My Father's World: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2002) and in [He Speaks to Me Everywhere: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2004) by Philip Graham Ryken.



The Da Vinci Deception

Dr. Philip Ryken



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General

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Having sold some 50 million copies, Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) is one of the runaway bestsellers of all time. In all likelihood, the movie based on the book will turn out to be one of the all time biggest blockbusters. What accounts for the extraordinary popularity of these historical fictions?

To begin with, the story itself is an entertaining one, full of suspense and intrigue. Most of the book's readers have found it to be a real page-turner. Once they get into the story, their inquisitive minds are so eager to break the code that they won't put it down until the murder mystery is solved. *The Da Vinci Code* is also popular because it delves into the genius mind and masterpiece work of one of the world's greatest artists: Leonardo Da Vinci. This gives the story an aura of intellectual importance. Furthermore, the plot revolves around a conspiracy theory, which always provokes people's curiosity.

Nevertheless, *The Da Vinci Code* would not have achieved its stunning success unless it also happened to be a sustained and pernicious attack on biblical Christianity. More than the story itself, or its connection to Leonardo, it is the book's reinterpretation of Jesus Christ and its revision of Christian history that make it so popular. And so dangerously deceptive.

Here is a brief list of claims *The Da Vinci Code* makes about the Bible, Jesus, and Christianity, followed by a short statement of the truth as it has been revealed by God and always believed by the church:

- *The Da Vinci Code* claims that "the Bible is a product of man, not of God" (p. 231), and that more than 80 legitimate gospels have been left out of the Bible because they have been suppressed by the church. But the only genuine gospels are the ones we have in our Bibles. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not merely the words of men, but the words of God the Holy

Spirit (see 2 Pet. 1:21). They also happen to be the only first-century eyewitness accounts that tell the gospel story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. None of the other so-called gospels meet the basic criteria for even being a gospel.

- *The Da Vinci Code* claims that Jesus of Nazareth was regarded as nothing more than a mortal man until the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, when he gained his deity in “a relatively close vote” of church leaders (p. 233). In fact, the vote was 316 to 2, which isn’t that close. But more to the point, the biblical gospels proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ on nearly every page. Jesus Christ the Son of God “is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).
- *The Da Vinci Code* claims that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene (p. 245), and that the couple had a daughter, even though neither the Bible nor any other ancient document has ever claimed that Jesus was married. The book also claims that the true children of God today are the physical descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, who is herself the Holy Grail (p. 244). But the Bible says that it is only those who believe in Jesus who have the right to be called the children of God (John 1:12).
- *The Da Vinci Code* claims that “almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false” (p. 235). To be more specific, Jesus died a normal, natural death and was never raised from the dead. But all the gospels agree that Jesus was crucified, and that he rose again from the dead. This is the very gospel: that Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day (see 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

What makes *The Da Vinci Code* especially deceptive is not simply the errors it makes, but also its claim—on the very first page!—that “all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” To be blunt, this claim is outrageously false. The book is riddled with errors—not just biblical and theological ones, although there are plenty of those—but also artistic and historical ones. Dan Brown’s claim of facticity also seems out of place for a work of historical fiction. If the work is intended to be fictional, then why does the author continue to claim that it is factual? We can only conclude that his book’s deceptions are deliberate. Sadly, these deceptions will be widely believed. With the creative energy of director Ron Howard, the unassuming credibility of actor Tom Hanks, and a budget of more than a hundred million dollars, people undoubtedly will find the movie as believable as the book. What they will believe—unless they are well informed about the history and authority of the Bible and the person and work of Jesus Christ—is that the Bible is a hoax, Christians have suppressed the truth, and Jesus Christ was just another man.

Some Christians are saying that *The Da Vinci Code*—both the book and the movie—will give Christians a fresh opportunity to share their faith. That may be true in some cases, and we should be ready, as always, to give a reason for the hope that we have in Jesus. But the main effect of the *Da Vinci* deception will be to spread the kind of spiritual misinformation that destroys people’s souls. My fear is that for years to come, many people will have false ideas about Christianity that come from the falsehoods they have read in Dan Brown’s book and seen in the movie based on it.

The real hoax is *The Da Vinci Code* itself. The real conspiracy is the devil’s old plot against Jesus Christ as the Son

of God and Savior of the world. And the really good story is the one Dan Brown is trying to suppress: the page-turner the Bible tells about the one and only divine Son of God becoming a man, dying on a cross, and rising again with life for the world. You don't have to be a code-breaker to figure it out, either. You just have to believe the facts that God has put right in his Word for everyone to see.