

# Book Review

Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code*,  
(Doubleday, 2003).  
ISBN 03855042098

—Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Just because we reviewed Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*, which has been on the non-fiction best seller list for over 50 weeks, does not mean that we are forced to review the one book on the fiction list which has been on the best seller list a little longer.

However, the astounding attraction of *The DaVinci Code*, I fear, reports to us an important reality of America today.

First, the book itself. The first fiction novel I have read in at least 20 years, it is most of all a page-turning murder mystery. But curiously, it skillfully mixes a bit of actual (negative) fact in with extrapolations thereof in an all-out attempt to portray a centuries-old campaign by the Roman Catholic church to suppress information which would supposedly destroy the church's historical credibility.

The action takes place mostly in France, and it is loaded in every paragraph with local color, place names, history, etc. In this vein it sounds very credible. Similarly it talks familiarly about many little-known things (facts?) about the history and present character of the Roman Catholic church. The lay order, Opus Dei comes in for very

prominent (and negative) attention. Who knows, the author might have been expelled from the order as a college student and come away with an undying desire for vengeance. It sounds like that.

The reader is presented breathlessly with all kinds of unusual "insights" into Catholic and Knights Templar tradition, all negative. It ends up with so many sudden and unexpected flip flops that it is hard to follow.

So? It has not been on the best seller list for over a year because it is a skillfully written murder mystery. I find it hard to believe that its popularity arises from the credibility (dubious) of all its charges against the Roman church. Rather, it seems more likely that it ominously reflects a major interest in anything that would discredit the Christian tradition in general.

We review it here because you will for the rest of your life find people telling you that Jesus married Mary Magdalene who after his death went with his children to France, etc. They will soberly tell you that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls undermined the validity of canonical scripture. Be prepared. The book is not to be taken lightly. It will not be countered by laughter.

Already a half dozen or so refutations have come off the presses, including *The Da Vinci Deception: Credible Answers to the Questions Millions are Asking about Jesus, The Bible, and the Da Vinci Code* by Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer, theologian and pastor of the famous Moody Church.

The least impressive charge—to missionaries expecting contextualization to take place—is the long list of Roman customs taken over by the Christian faith, as if this "horrifying" evidence is itself all you need to walk away from faith.

Let's face it. Many founders of new sects in American and European history have based their new beginnings on the "discovery" that certain customs (like the Christmas date, Sunday observance, wedding rings, etc.) have pagan origins. Even the word "GOD." Missionaries know that where a cultural artifact came from is not as relevant as how it is used or understood or interpreted.

It is much more specifically anti-Catholic than anti-Protestant. It does not point out that Calvin executed a man who denied the Trinity. But much of its wholesale criticism would apply just as well to Protestantism.

Curiously, the almost fanatic zeal in the marketplace for anti-Christian diatribes (no matter how far fetched) apparently suggests that a whole lot of Americans who in the past have passively rejected the faith are now aroused to opposition precisely due to heightened power and presence of the Gospel!

