



Lawyers' Christian Fellowship Newsletter

www.lawyerschristianfellowship.org

MAY 2006



Law for the Long Haul

Spiritual Care through Life and Career Stages

**THURSDAY
3 AUGUST 2006**

Dr Carlos Raimundo
psychiatrist, corporate relations consultant
author of Relational Capital

**Green Room, Wesley Centre
200 Pitt Street Sydney
6pm-9pm**

This seminar is conducted jointly with MCSI
Cost
\$95.00

Practitioners admitted under 3 years \$75.00
Students \$25.00.

Please contact the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute (MCSI) on 9850 6133 for a brochure or download it from the LCF website



**Breakfast Function
31st May 2006**

Mark Mullins LCF UK

The Christian Lawyer in the Public Square

SEE FORM ON BACK

What to do with THE DA VINCI CODE

Yes the long awaited movie version of the best selling Da Vinci code is upon us. I must admit that when I first saw this book on the stands I was determined not to read it. When it first climbed to the top of the best seller list I thought here we go again another flash in the pan book that takes a swipe at orthodox Christianity – it will come and go and never be heard of again. Three years later it is still in the best sellers lists and the movie version is about to open. There has even been a front page English High Court Chancery Division court case and a judgment which allegedly contains its own code and secret message.

I must admit I still find the popularity of this book remarkable. How can readers suspend belief that a six foot four albino monk in a habit could go anywhere inconspicuously and how can people empathise with a character (the main character Robert Langdon) who has repeated flash backs of lectures he gave to his students. Then there is the “factual” information given in the book. Not only does it present a highly prejudicial view of early Christianity that is intellectually unsustainable. The obvious retort is - what do you expect, it is fiction. I would not mind if this was a fantasy book, or a book set in another world or dimension but it has far greater pretensions than this – how many fiction books contain tran-

31st May Mark Mullins UK LCF

Mark Mullins is an English barrister and a member of the UK Lawyers Christian Fellowship organising council. He is an editor of the LCF UK magazine—The Christian Lawyer and the London regional chair. As chair of the LCF UK public policy unit he has been leading the LCF UK’s recent campaign against the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill and the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill. Together with Roger Winter-Smith (part time law firm litigation manager and pastor) Mark is speaking at the NSW Parliament Theatre on Wednesday 31st May from 2-4pm. (\$5.00 for afternoon tea).



Mark Mullins - The Most High Ruleth in the Kingdom of Men (Daniel 4:7)

Roger Winter-Smith - If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3)

RSVP to Judy Russell 02 9230 2478

Mark and Roger have also agreed to address the LCF at a breakfast function on 31st May 2006. Time will be 7.15am eating at 7.30am.

The Christian Lawyer in the Public Square - engaging with public policy.

City Tattersalls Club \$25.00 for hot breakfast—see form on back page.

scripts of lectures and quote other books and authors. How many fiction books commence with the words "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."

At his recent lecture on the topic of the Da Vinci Code given at Macquarie University Tom Wright, a former Canon of the same Westminster Abbey that features in the Da Vinci code, noted a series of misdescriptions of the architecture of Westminster Abbey which he believed could have been rectified by having a junior research assistant walk around the abbey for ten minutes "with his eyes open". (Tom Wright's thoughts on the Da Vinci code are available at <http://www.spu.edu/depts/uc/response/summer2k5/features/davincicode.asp>)

The Da Vinci Code quite deliberately and very didactically presents a view of early Christianity which can be summarised as follows:

- Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene;
- Mary was the mother of Jesus' children;
- Mary was the holy grail because she bore the children of Jesus—she was the receptacle of Jesus' seed (his blood line);
- Jesus wanted Mary to be the leader of the Church after his death;
- The "patriarchal" church (i.e. the other apostles) resented Mary and sought to exclude her and her followers.
- The "patriarchal" church suppressed her gospel and created a myth about her being a prostitute to discredit her.
- The Gospels in the bible were written to minimise her importance and promoted by her rivals.
- Mary was persecuted and effectively went into hiding (to what is now France) and her children were pursued by the "patriarchal" church.
- The secret of who are the descendents of Jesus is kept by a secret society called the priory of Sion.
- Leaders of the priory of Sion included – Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle and Victor Hugo.
- The Catholic organisation Opus Dei is dedicated to suppressing the "truth" about Mary and her offspring.

A number of big statements (which are wrong) are made about Christianity including:

- "more than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament" p.313. The most anyone has come up with ever existing (including references in other works) is 47.

- "the bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great" p.313

The books that constitute the bible were largely settled before the Council of Nicea in 325AD. (see the Muratorian Canon, and Irenaeus's Against Heresy which both provide lists of books accepted by the Church). Most of the material that is contrary to the Da Vinci Code's thesis is contained in the gospels which were attested to and written at an early date.

- "Christians and pagans began warring and the conflict grew to such proportions that it threatened to rend Rome in two" p.313.

It is hard to reconcile this assertion with the fact that Diocletian in 303AD had engaged in an active persecution of the Christians. There was no offensive taken by Christians against pagans. The empire was torn, but it was by rival generals and their armies, not pagans versus Christians.

- Speaking of the period prior to the Council of Nicea he says "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."

This is impossible to reconcile with Paul's reference to Jesus as Lord in Phil 2:9-11 and Heb 1:1-13 and statements by early Christians regarding Jesus divinity.

- The vote at the Council of Nicea on the divinity of Christ was a close vote.

The vote was almost unanimous with only two bishops voting against.

- Mary Magdalene was one of the apostles at the last supper. The evidence presented for this is the effeminate portrayal of the disciple of John in Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper (see p.328)

This is premised on Leonardo having some knowledge of Mary's true relationship to Jesus as spouse. There is nothing reported in his works that supports that he had this view. All references to the disciple in question refer to that disciple John. The style is typical of the portrayal of a young man of the time though to today's audience it may seem a little effeminate. The gospel of Philip was not discovered at the time Leonardo was painting. There is no evidence of Leonardo being a member of the priory of Sion. That organisation appears to have had its origins in the last century, though an original catholic priory by that name did exist until 1617 when it was absorbed into the Jesuit order.

- There was a power struggle after Jesus death and Mary lost out in the leadership battle for the early church and fled with her unborn child

p.342-343”.

There is no evidence for this. Even the Gnostic gospels quoted in the Da Vinci code do not provide any evidence of this.

- Mary was married to Jesus.

There is great reliance placed on the references to Mary in the Gospel of Philip. In particular to Philip 63:33 where it is asserted that the text says that Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth. Because it would be unusual at that time to kiss a woman who was not your wife on the mouth it is concluded that Mary and Jesus must be married. The manuscript however is damaged and the word “mouth” is not actually in the text as there is a gap at that point. It is more probable that the kiss was one of fellowship as in Philip 58-59. This is hardly scintillating stuff but it underlines the importance of checking what Brown says.

The number of just straight factual errors that could have been resolved with just a little research (eg consulting the Britannica encyclopedia) are depressing. For example Brown asserts that the Olympics were held to honour Aphrodite and that the rings were symbolic of her. The Olympics were held in honour of Zeus and the rings a creation of the modern Olympics. The Nag Hammadi and the Dead Sea Scrolls are described collectively as “the earliest Christian record”. The Dead Sea Scrolls were Jewish documents. For this writer these inaccuracies were just frustrating as they did not even relate to the more controversial aspects of the book

So what do we do with the Da Vinci Code – suffer and read it. Why? – because it will enable you to have a dialogue with those who have. A discussion of the book will present us with the opportunity to discuss who Jesus really is and challenge the reader with the Jesus Christ of the bible. A number of people we will be talking with will also believe everything that Dan Brown says about Christianity largely because it will reinforce their existing prejudices and they do not read critically. For others Dan Brown will be writing on a blank slate because the reader really has no understanding of Christianity or knowledge that there are even two testaments in the bible.

To quote Dan Brown, from his website, in response to a question asking for his thoughts on the Christian books critiquing the ideas in his book:

The dialogue is wonderful. These authors and I obviously disagree, but the debate that is being generated is a positive powerful force. The more vigorously we debate these topics, the better our understanding of our own spirituality. Controversy and dialogue are healthy for religion as a whole. Religion has only one true enemy--apathy--and passionate debate is a superb antidote.

It is also an opportunity to better understand the his-

torical foundations of Christianity so that you can give a reason for the faith that is in us.

As well as reading the Da Vinci code you will probably need to bone up on your understanding of how the books that make up our bible were chosen and the historical reliability of the Gospels and by comparison the weaknesses of the Gnostic gospels. This information is probably best accessed through one of the various books critiquing the Da Vinci code from a Christian perspective such as:

Breaking the Da Vinci Code by Darrell L. Bock.

The Gospel Code by Ben Witherington III.

The Da Vinci Hoax by Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel.

Exploring the Da Vinci Code by Lee Strobel and Garry Poole.

Da Vinci— A Broken Code by Brian H. Edwards

Is it worth believing—the spiritual challenge of the Da Vinci Code? By Greg Clarke (published by Matthias Media)

Olson and Miesel's book is the more comprehensive and was fortunately seen in a major book seller on the same stand as copies of the Da Vinci Code. The Edward's book is more a booklet and at \$3.00 is a good quick introduction and cheap give away.

Other books which seem to indicate in their title that they are critiquing the Da Vinci Code often on closer examination are collections of materials supporting the various theses in the Da Vinci Code.

An excellent seminar on the issues, involving Darrell L. Bock can be listened to at <http://www.nbctexas.org/media/davinci.htm>

Friends and colleagues can also be directed to the website www.challengingdavinci.com and www.JesusandDavinci.com

It will be interesting to see how Ron Howard works the text into a movie. Aside from the didactic attack on orthodox Christianity the book is at its heart a thriller - will the falsely accused Langdon be able to stay free long enough to clear his name of murder. I suspect that flashbacks to lectures will not make good cinema and the movie may well be much better than the book. We can only pray that it provides further opportunities to discuss who Jesus really is and that the viewers of the film will, in the words of the trailer – “Seek the Truth” because as we know “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32)

If you have not heard—the movie opens on May 18.

Lawyers' Christian Fellowship



invites you to join us
for Breakfast

Wednesday 31st May 2006

our speaker will be

Mark Mullins

Barrister, Chair LCF UK Public Policy Unit

The Christian Lawyer in the Public Square

Where: City Tattersalls Club 198-204 Pitt Street, Sydney (nearest cross street, Market and Pitt St)

When: 7.15am (for 7.30am) finishing 8.45am.

Cost: \$25.00 for a cooked breakfast. Students \$15.00.

I

will be attending together with:

Attached is my cheque/payment for \$
(\$25.00 per head / \$15.00 per head for students)

PLEASE RSVP BY 26 May 2006 AS WE NEED TO ADVISE NUMBERS

Return to Steven
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