

“Sacred Femininity & Feminine Genius”

Presented by
Jan Hardy

May 23, 2006
Bonfils Hall

(Greetings)

Isn't it wonderful we live in such an age of enlightenment? The Da Vinci Code, a best selling novel, now movie, challenges readers to seek the truth...and it does so with such an engaging...and at times mind blowing dialogue. In this age of me, the sacred "I", the idea of sacred feminine is very appealing.

The very first page of the book lists supposed facts, including the statement and I quote, "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." So why should we question it...this is the era where we trust every word reported on television, every story written in newspapers, and printed in magazines.

Media has become our god and an alarming percentage of our population has lost the ability to think critically and have become too lazy to research and investigate truth on their own. It's too easy to believe another's version of the truth and in the absence of truth ...anything at all. Let us give thanks for the Da Vinci code because it gives us a motive, as the movie proclaims, to actually seek the truth.

Dan Brown, the author, is skillful, masterful in fact, at spinning the truth. Like the serpent in the Garden of Eden he takes truth then tweaks, adds, embellishes, omits, or alters it altogether. But he always retains some grain of vague truth and then uses an air of superiority so that he can confuse and convince us of the veracity of his story.

The hero he uses is a famous symbologist from Harvard University, Professor Robert Langdon, along with an equally impressive colleague, British historian and Grail expert, Leigh Teabing. Together they educate the major female character, Sophie, and us about the many lies and vast Vatican cover-ups known for centuries only by an enlightened few. Aren't we privileged? Especially since there is no academic discipline known as symbology at Harvard or for that matter anywhere else.

The Da Vinci Code not only attacks the Catholic Church but the very roots of Christianity by challenging the divinity of Jesus, the role of the 12 apostles, the validity of the New Covenant, and the role of His church in it. The novel insists that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that she was the head apostle not Peter.

Brown claims Leonardo da Vinci was one of the enlightened ones who knew this and cleverly depicted Mary Magdalene as the beloved apostle to Jesus' right in his famous painting of the last supper. He further claims that the lack of a cup in front of Jesus cryptically signals Mary Magdalene as the Holy Grail, the very vessel containing the blood of Jesus in the form of a child.

It's a shame Brown doesn't know his Renaissance art. John the beloved was the youngest apostle and sits to Jesus' right in the famous painting. As with all Renaissance art, male youths are depicted with feminine beardless faces and masculine bodies. So it is in the Last Supper. Furthermore, if you bother to count the cups on the table, there are 13 corresponding to Jesus and his twelve disciples.

According to Brown, Da Vinci was a grand master in a secret organization known as the Priory of Scion organized in 1099 by a military order that conquered Jerusalem during the first crusades. They were known as the Knights of Templar.

The Priory supposedly excavated the Temple Mount and stumbled upon the shocking truth that Jesus had married Mary Magdalene and after his death she bore his child. There was no resurrection. She went to France where the bloodline she founded eventually became a line of French Kings known as the Merovingians.

So we ask where is the grain of truth in this distortion that perhaps lends a semblance of credibility. Truth - the priory of Scion was founded in 1099; however, the last members joined the Jesuits in 1617 and the Priory ceased to exist at that point. Due to the timeline there is serious doubt Leonardo da Vinci was a member, much less Sir Isaac Newton or Victor Hugo as cited in the book. Additionally there were no grand masters; the head of the priory was simply called a prior.

Teabing continues to lecture to wide eyed Sophie, patting her on the head, referring to her as "dear girl" while he repeatedly reiterates his mantra "scholars have known this for ages." Meantime we wide eyed readers, not experts in history, archaeology, art, Leonardo da Vinci, or our faith, are humbled into buying into this newly revealed truth to avoid feeling like suckers or at the very least shaken to the core with questions and doubts.

When I first read the book about two years ago I admit, I too had many questions especially when so many of the physicians, learned men and women that I worked with, were buying into it lock, stock, and barrel.

In the book, Sophie turns out to be a descendant of Jesus, the Gospel is a Fraud, and the Catholic Church is Murder Incorporated. We the readers or in the case of

the movie, viewers, are now the chosen few along with Sophie and Langdon who are privileged to see the blinding truth of the glory of the sacred feminine and the promise of a return to the feminine aspect of worship.

The major theme of the novel is this call to a recovery of the Sacred Feminine and a revitalized worship of a goddess or goddesses.

In the Da Vinci Code Sophie reveals how she once walked in on her grandfather, Sauniere, engaging in a ritual sexual act. Langdon explains Sauniere must have been a deeply spiritual man evidenced by his keeping the true flame alive by preserving this sacred sexual rite in memory of the marriage of the sacred masculine, Jesus, to the sacred feminine, Mary Magdalene. Langdon says Sauniere was then murdered by the evil Catholic Church because it is bent on stamping out all connection between the feminine and divine.

How could he even suggest this considering the immense role of the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout church history, not counting several doctors of the faith such as St. Teresa of Avila, and the many female saints including St. Mary Magdalene? Furthermore, Christians do believe the sacramental union of a man and woman consummated in the marital act of sex **is** sacred, consecrated, and holy.

Our challenge as humans is to make good use of the sexual urge and harness the energy it provides to serve a love that is genuine and true. A love that merely excites the senses but does not unite the two persons in a true interpersonal union is a love that squanders this natural energy. True, enduring love, of necessity, must remain exclusive.

Thus couples, while intensely cultivating the passions that draw them close must also endeavor to achieve objectivity. Each must put the other before self. Your spouse should be the one person who helps you most to become the best you can be; the one who is most able to help you reach heaven.

Brown's idea of goddess worship is essentially pagan and worship centers on creatures or earthly things. Sacred Sex is a sensual public act before spectators. The participants are stripped of their individuality and become icons through which worshipers participate in an abstraction called the sacred feminine and the sacred masculine. The movie Mists of Avalon and Eyes Wide Shut depict this. The interest in the goddess or as Brown calls it, sacred feminism, is nothing more than a renewed interest in Wicca, New Age practices, neo-paganism, and radical feminism.

Brown's claims for the marriage of Mary Magdalene and Jesus are based on the Gnostic Gospel of Philip part of the Nag Hammadi Scrolls found in 1945 in Egypt. They were written in the late second, third, and fourth centuries AD long after the authoritative New Testament gospels and writings had been established. The

New Testament books were written under the inspiration of God during the first and second centuries by the apostles or those early church fathers that walked with the chosen twelve. They constitute the most reputable and accurate books of antiquity. All the writings of the early church fathers are published by Jurgen and the Nag Hammadi writings can be found on the internet.

Since much of the Da Vinci code focuses on Mary Magdalene let's take a moment to focus on her especially since there has been so much confusion as to whether she was a prostitute. This stems from a sermon preached in 591 AD by St Gregory the Great in which he identified as one person the New Testament figures of 1) the unnamed, penitent woman who anointed Jesus' feet and washed them with her tears, 2) Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and 3) Mary Magdalene. The Greek orthodox church has always maintained 3 separate Mary's; but the Latin church identified Mary Magdalene as the repentant sinful woman and her feast day of July 22 was known as Mary Magdalene, penitent.

In 1969 with the reform of the Roman missal and calendar, the gospel changed and the reading for her feast day comes from the gospel of John, Chapter 20 versus 1,2, and 11 though 18. The first part tells of her coming to the tomb of Jesus and finding it empty and the second part reflects her role as apostle to the apostles when she announces His resurrection to his followers "I have seen the Lord"

The Catholic Church celebrates that Jesus chose to reveal his resurrection first to a woman, Mary Magdalene, and she is an honored saint for the role she played in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Apart from the Virgin Mary, few women are more highly esteemed.

Pope Gregory meant no discredit to Mary Magdalene when he referred to the 3 Mary's as one. Jesus cast 7 demons from her which could refer to the 7 deadly sins of pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth. It could also have been a chronic or violent nervous disorder.

Pope Gregory was simply using a spiritual allegorical interpretation of the unnamed sinful woman in Luke 7 with Mary Magdalene in Luke 8 to inspire Christians to follow a noble example of repentance, love, devotion, and virtue. Any vice can be turned into a virtue through repentance and following Christ.

ENDOW, Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women, teaches us... that throughout Jesus' life and even after his resurrection, he lovingly restored dignity to all women he encountered. There are many instances in the New Testament where Jesus reveals himself to women, affirming, healing, and forgiving their sins whatever they may be. Is this and political cover-ups like Watergate why so many find it easy to believe religious cover-ups and the sacred femininity Brown touts?

To answer this we must turn to Pope John Paul's "Letter to Women" which is the foundational study of the ENDOW movement. In this country we women take for granted so many rights and privileges that are not known in other regions of the world and forget that many of these rights and freedoms are new in the panorama of history.

In the initial American constitution, women were not officially considered by law as being a person and a slave was 2/3 a person. That had to be amended to bring our constitution into line to what we know is correct. It wasn't until 1920, first wave feminists such as Susan B Anthony, fought and won the right to vote. By the way, Susan B Anthony was pro-life.

In the 60's feminism found it's hey day with French extensionalist writer and philosopher Simone Beauvoir who blamed women's bodies for their oppression. She was followed by Margaret Sanger who believed women's liberation would come from literally controlling births. Sanger was a strong proponent of birth control and founded Planned Parenthood which is now the leading provider of abortions worldwide.

Prior to this time neither Protestants nor Catholics believed in artificial birth control; however, both have always believed in responsible parenthood.

All of this so called liberation of the responsibility for sex essentially objectified the female body as in paganism and spawned the sexual revolution. Rights and freedoms were separated from the responsibilities that must go hand in hand with them, without which we open the door for every person on the planet to be a tool for manipulation.

When rights are reduced to self centered demands, inevitably this complete freedom from any responsibility de-humanizes the person and leads to the growth of pornography, prostitution, same sex unions, and abortion all in the name of women's rights.

Those of you who are my age remember hearing of partner swapping, orgies, and free sex where both women and men used each other for temporary sensual gratification. Much of this continues today. This is when the culture of death took root and it spawned a generation who lost their dignity and the ability to say no.

I grew up in Louisiana and remember the New Orleans abortion mills where abortions were performed as a form of birth control. I also remember the first time I saw the movie 'The Silent Scream'.

From this early callousness about the value of life, I have lived to see a woman starved to death on national television, Terry Shivo. Euthanasia is discussed for those deemed worthless to society.

Humans have been denigrated to objects valued not for who they are but for what they do, what they produce, how much money they earn, or their position in government or society. And how many of us are truly happy? How many of us are still asking ourselves what is our real mission in this life?

Through ENDOW and the study of the writings of Pope John Paul II, I and many like me have come to know our purpose and have found peace. In his Letter to Women, Pope John Paul II recognized and called out the abuses heaped on women since the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden and he apologizes for the church's part in it.

Pope John Paul II says that through Mary of Nazareth, "The church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable; the self offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; and the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement."

By making ourselves a sincere gift to another we imitate the divine reckless exchange of love that is the essence of the Holy Trinity exemplified in Mary. Thus the vocation of every Christian is holiness through self giving love. Truly a woman can only find herself by giving her self out of love to others.

The female genius is the gift of being able to empathize and touch hearts... sometimes with words that open the soul to the joy of the Lord. Biologically there is an intense integration between a woman's mind and heart and when we know something we know it with everything that we are. Our capacity for empathy is enormous. We hurt with others; we rejoice with others, we literally walk in their shoes. In doing so, we give of ourselves continually and this affirmation of the other gives birth to that person affirming his or her existence and the value of his/her experience.

Regardless of whether we are married or celibate we empower people with an identity so that they too now have the capacity to give of themselves. Why are we alive? We have all been born to give birth to others in all that we do whether it is spiritual or physical birth. ENDOW teaches us in the words of Henry Nouwen to ask Jesus to take us, bless us, break us, and give us.

Pope John Paul II further states, "The church sees in Mary the highest expression of the feminine genius" and finds in her a source of constant inspiration. This takes us back to this idea of sacred femininity.

When God made his covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David he was gradually inviting a wider circle of people into His family: first a couple, then a family, then a nation, and eventually the world. God remained faithful to His covenants yet in every covenant we are the ones who failed.

Thus for the new and everlasting covenant, God became man in Jesus Christ and established a covenant by which we become part of His family, the family of God. God is Father, Son, and Spirit of Love and Christians are drawn up into that family through baptism. But no family is complete without a loving mother and we must examine the full role of motherhood in the New Covenant.

Jesus' mother, Mary, at the wedding feast in Cana, senses the wine is running out and hopes to prevent any embarrassment for the young couple. She goes to her son stating, "They have no wine." His response is odd if we don't understand typology. Jesus says, "Oh Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His Mother confidently responds telling the servants to do as Jesus asks.

When Jesus addressed Mary as Woman, not as mother or even Mary, he is addressing her as Eve to the New Adam, a fact which heightens the significance of the miracle at Cana.

Woman is the name Adam gave to the original Eve and she was called Mother to all the living. Mary as the New Eve is mother to all who have new life in Baptism.

We might ask how Mary could be bride to Jesus if she is his mother yet it fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the coming salvation of Israel: "You shall no more be termed Forsaken....you shall be called My Delight is In Her, and your land Married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

Delving deeper into the mystical meaning of this compact verse we see Mary's virginal motherhood, her miraculous conception, and her mystical marriage to God. The mystery of the divine maternity runs deep - because the mystery of the Trinity runs **still deeper**.

Jesus again calls Mary Woman as He hangs upon the cross. As we move forward to images in Revelation we see this New Eve who gave birth to a male child who would rule all the nations. That child could only be Jesus and so the woman must be His mother, Mary.

In revelation what John saw as the Ark of the Covenant in the heavenly temple was far greater than the Ark of the Old Covenant. The first ark contained the word of God in Stone; Mary's body contained the word of God enfleshed. Mary's body contained the very bread of Life that conquers death forever and the pangs

of childbirth seen in Revelations were but a foreshadowing of the spiritual suffering that was the price of Mary's motherhood.

Jewish history is cyclical. The Old Testament foreshadows the New. The New Testament fulfills the Old. The Gospel of Luke fulfills the Old Testament especially in the second book of Samuel which records David's travels as he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

The story begins as David arose and went. In Luke we see that those same words "arose and went" were applied to Mary when she went to visit Elizabeth. In both narratives, David and Mary went to the hill country of Judah.

David verbalizes how unworthy he feels when he says, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" Almost verbatim, Elizabeth greets Mary, "Why is this granted me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? If we substituted ark the greeting would virtually be the same.

Next we see how David danced for joy in the presence of the ark. In Luke, we see how the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped at the approach of Mary. Finally the ark stayed in the hill country three months, the same amount of time Mary spent with Elizabeth.

Called Woman at least twice by Jesus, we see Mary prefigured in Eve, the mother of all the living; again in Sarah, Abraham's wife, who conceived her child miraculously; and again as the queen mother of Israel's monarchy who interceded with the king on behalf of the people. Let me explain.

In the ancient Near East most nations were ruled by monarchs who practiced polygamy. This posed several problems...who would be queen and whose son should receive the right of succession to the throne. A single custom solved this twin problem. The woman honored as queen was the mother...not the wife...of the king. This was just since it was often the persuasive or seductive power of the mother who won the throne for her son.

This form of Kingship is also Old Testament typology. Remember Israel had not always been a monarchy. In God's plan God was to be their king but the people begged the prophet Daniel to give them an earthly king because they wanted to be like all the other nations. God allowed the people to have their way but for the purpose of His glory. Israel's monarchy would providentially foreshadow the kingship of His own son.

Thus following the neighboring lands, Israel established a dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, a legal system, a royal court, and a queen mother. David's first successor Solomon reigns with his mother, Bathsheba, at his right hand. To the end of the history of this monarchy, Israel had a queen mother, called gebirah, meaning great lady. Gebirah was not simply a title; it was an office of real authority.

We see this during Solomon's reign when Bathsheba went to him to intercede on behalf of Adonijah. Solomon rose to meet her, bowed down to her, then sat on his throne and had a seat brought for her to his immediate right. This short passage conveys volumes about Israel's protocol and power structure.

Because Solomon not only rises but bows when Bathsheba enters the room, she is unique among **all** royal subjects including the *King's wives and children*. They were no different than any of Solomon's other subjects who had to rise and bow when he entered a room. The queen mother also sits in the place of honor to the king's right, not vice versa. Solomon's power and authority are in no way threatened by her.

And just as in other Near Eastern cultures, Bathsheba, as the queen mother, is an intercessor or advocate for her people. Adonijah knew this when he begged Bathsheba to go to King Solomon stating...he will not refuse you. Clearly Solomon will honor her requests, not out of any legally binding obligation to obedience but simply out of love.

Proverbs shows us just how seriously a king took the queen mother's counsel; he relied on her as his chief counselor to advise and instruct him in a way few others would have had the courage to do.

Mary, as the mystical New Eve, assumes a triune role as daughter of God the Father, spouse of the Holy Spirit, and mother - queen mother - of Jesus, her son, who is Christ the King. What's more and I quote Scott Hahn, "By baptism we have become sons of the Son."

The ancient Christians dared to call this action "divinization." Saint Athanasius said, "The Son of God became a son of man so that sons of men might become sons of God." Not only are we forgiven all our sins, we are adopted by God as sons and daughters. We are children of God; by grace, adopted into His sacred family.

Theologians call this truth divine filiation. Salvation then, is not only **from** sin, but **for** sonship – divine sonship in Christ. Saint Augustine goes on to explain that identified with Christ, we share his threefold mission as priest, prophet, and king.

Furthermore in a mystical and spiritual fashion we are all children of Mary, and she is Mother of us all. And as queen mother we go to her to intercede for us with Christ the King.

Isn't this awesome? How many of us truly realize what it means to be sons and daughters of the almighty omniscient God... joint heirs of the kingdom of heaven? How many realize just how precious it is to have such a loving queen

mother as advocate and intercessor? No wonder early Christians so easily chose martyrdom than deny this New Covenant.

Through ENDOW we come to understand New Feminism which recognizes and affirms the true genius of women. Far from being oppressed as in paganism we are empowered to respond to our culture's desperate need for the presence of authentic feminine nature in every aspect of life and society.

By saying yes to God and emptying ourselves out in service to others we are enabled to begin the work of transforming this culture of death into one that supports life and overcomes discrimination, violence, and exploitation.

Through the constant inspiration of the highest expression of our feminine genius, Mary, the New Eve, we deliberately and lovingly choose obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This can be especially hard because times have changed; and unfortunately God, His truth, and His commandments haven't. Sometimes we fail but the more we educate ourselves and strive to obey Him, the easier it is to say yes to Him in every situation and on every occasion.

Because Mary is the essence of the feminine genius **and** our role model as the New Eve, we too must pick up the yoke and through selfless love strive to become as her, Eves of a New Humanity. Because God loved us so much He died for us and because of this precious gift it is our duty and responsibility to preserve in all aspects the sacred masculine and feminine nature of all His adopted children...adoption paid in full with the price of Jesus' own blood.

Back to the Da Vinci Code...clearly this is not truth. It offers mystical crystals - quartz, when we have diamonds. I considered seeing the movie and decided it was a waste of money. I'm extremely disappointed in Tom Hanks and Ron Howard for having anything to do with it. Whether this movie is a blockbuster or not, Satan has won and the damage has been done as it will most certainly plant seeds of subconscious doubt.

As a former broadcast journalist I have always called myself a doubting Thomas and on a visit to Rome a few years back, I stumbled into a small church that housed the relic of Thomas's phalanx, his finger. Coming from Houston I laughed thinking God was shooting me the finger...I used to see it in traffic all the time so it was no big deal...much better than a gun.

But upon deeper reflection I realized that God invites our questions just as He invited Thomas's fingers to probe the wound in His side.

Long ago, a wise friend told me doubt can be the first sign of deep faith if we actually do the work it takes to find truth. I leave you with these last remarks especially on the subject of the Da Vinci code and its debauchery of sacred femininity...

Open your eyes, by all means ask questions, do your homework, pray diligently, and above all seek the truth. Pope John Paul II spoke 8 languages fluently but God knows them all.

If you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him. Whatever questions you may have, ask Him to answer in the language you understand - for me that's English - and He will do so. It may not be the answer you want but it will be the answer you need. Thank you.

###