

## The Da Vinci Code and the Dead Sea Scrolls

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In 1947, a number of ancient documents were found (by accident) in a cave on the north-west side of the Dead Sea. This collection of documents, which has become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, was comprised of old leather and papyrus scrolls and fragments that had been rolled up in earthen jars for centuries. From 1949 to 1956, hundreds of Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts and a few Greek fragments were found in surrounding caves, and are believed by scholars to have been written between 200 B.C. and the first half of the first century A.D. Some of the manuscripts were of Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings (e.g., 1 Enoch, Tobit, and Jubilees); others are often grouped together as “ascetic” writings (miscellaneous books of rules, poetry, commentary, etc.). The most notable group of documents found in the caves of Qumran near the Dead Sea is the collection of Old Testament books. Every book from the Hebrew Bible was accounted for among the scrolls, except the book of Esther.

The Dead Sea Scrolls make up one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all times. Jews and Christians often point to these scrolls as evidence for the integrity of the Old Testament text. Prior to 1947, the earliest known Old Testament manuscripts only went back to about A.D. 1000. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Bible scholars have been able to compare the present day text with the text from more than 2,000 years ago. What they have found are copies of Old Testament books separated in time by more than a millennium that are amazingly similar. Indeed, the Old Testament text had been transmitted faithfully through the centuries. As Rene Paché concluded: “Since it can be demonstrated that the text of the Old Testament was accurately transmitted for the last 2,000 years, one may reasonably suppose that it had been so transmitted from the beginning” (1971, p. 191).

So what does all of this have to do with *The Da Vinci Code*? According to Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, **documents**, and secret rituals in this novel **are accurate**” (2003a, p. 1, emp. added). Yet notice how Brown uses one of his main fictional characters (Leigh Teabing) in the book. In an attempt to disparage the

New Testament documents, Teabing alleged the following about them and their relationship to the Dead Sea Scrolls:

“[S]ome 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” (Brown, 2003a, p. 234).

“These are photocopies of the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea Scrolls, which I mentioned earlier,” Teabing said. “The earliest Christian records. Troublingly, they do not match up with the gospels in the Bible” (p. 244).

Although Brown asserted on the very first page of his book that “[a]ll descriptions of...documents...in this novel are **accurate**” (emp. added), and even though he claimed “absolutely all” of his book is based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred (see Brown, 2003b), among the many **inaccurate** statements he made in his book are those quoted above regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Simply put, the Dead Sea Scrolls are not in any way “Christian records;” they are Jewish writings from a Jewish religious sect, most of which predate the time of Christ (and thus Christianity) by several decades, and in some cases one or two centuries. These scrolls contain no “gospels.” In fact, Jesus of Nazareth is never even mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Such a reckless use of one of the greatest biblical archaeological discoveries ever should cause readers to see *The Da Vinci Code* for what it really is—a fictional novel bent on raising unnecessary suspicion about the trustworthiness of the Bible. Interestingly, the “documents” Brown used in hopes of casting doubt on Christianity, are, in actuality, some of the greatest pieces of evidence for the reliability of the Old Testament. What’s more, the Old Testament was “the Bible” of the early church. It is from these “Scriptures” that first-century Christians gleaned a greater understanding about Jesus, Who, as taught in the Old Testament, was the Christ, the prophesied Messiah (Acts 8:32-35; 17:10-11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). In that sense, the Hebrew Scriptures contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls collection marvelously “match up with the gospels in the Bible.”

### REFERENCES

- Brown, Dan (2003a), *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday).
- Brown, Dan (2003b), “Today,” *NBC*, Interview with Matt Lauer, June 9.
- Paché, Rene (1971), *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).



# R&R RESOURCES

**Q** What effect is culture having on religion in America?

**A** In the midst of heated discussion and hot debate, the Episcopalian Church met in Columbus, Ohio to consider, among other things, whether the organization should ban gays and lesbians from being bishops. In the media attention surrounding the Episcopal General Convention, Katharine Schori, the first female presiding Bishop in the denomination's history, had much to say about her beliefs regarding homosexuality. She stated: "I am fully committed to the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Christians in this church" (Clark, 2006). Ironically, Asian and African Anglican bishops are so appalled at the stance of their American counterparts that they have cried out: "Don't you believe the Bible you gave us?"

With such sentiments expressed by the prominent leader of the group, it is no surprise that the denomination did not pass the measure to ban homosexuals from being bishops. They did, however, institute a quasi-reversal of the non-ban and suggested that churches should "exercise restraint" in selecting openly gay bishops" (Clark, 2006). Such a policy would make it more difficult for homosexuals to be bishops, but not impossible.

The troubling thing about such news is the way in which decisions are being made by those who profess to be Christians. The Bible explains that Christ is the head of the church, His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). Scriptures further explain that anything done by His Church should be done in accordance with His revealed will, by His authority (Colossians 3:17,23-24). It has never been the prerogative of any group that supposedly follows Christ to vote on whether an action is a

sin or not. Furthermore, if someone is openly committing sin, it certainly is not the prerogative of "the body" to overrule "the head" and appoint such sinful individuals to leadership positions.

Inspired Scripture explains that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. In the litany of activities that would be considered unrighteous, homosexuality is conspicuously and repeatedly included (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:26-28). Not only should openly homosexual individuals be banned from becoming bishops, they should be publicly marked and withdrawn from (along with adulterers, fornicators, thieves, etc.) until they repent of their sins and stop committing homosexual acts (1 Corinthians 5). Any group that presumes to vote on such issues and thinks that such a vote alters the way Heaven views sin is sadly mistaken. The church that Jesus died to save has no earthly headquarters, finds unity only through obedience to the New Testament, and is to function as an obedient body of Christ. All religious organizations that refuse to recognize the authority of Christ as revealed in the New Testament (Matthew 28:18) will hear these sad words spoken by Christ on the Day of Judgment: "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23).

**Kyle Butt**

## REFERENCE

Clark, Stephen (2006), "Episcopalians Curb Policy on Gays," *LA Times*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-episcopal22jun22,1,1257035.story?coll=la-headlines-nation>.

## IN THE NEWS

By a whopping 81%, the people of the state of Alabama have joined the ranks of 19 other states in voting overwhelmingly to define marriage biblically, i.e., one man for one woman. Only Mississippi exceeds Alabama in the percentage of voters (86%) that passed the amendment (Wetzstein, 2006). Other states that have already passed a state constitutional amendment have done so with an average of 71 percent of the vote. These states include Alaska and Hawaii (in 1998), Nebraska (in 2000), Nevada (in 2002), Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah (all in 2004), Kansas and Texas (in 2005). States that are scheduled to vote on state constitutional marriage amendments in November are Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin (Garris, 2006).

The country is in a literal life/death struggle over whether the moral principles of Chris-

tianity will continue to characterize American civilization. The outcome of this struggle will determine national survival (Jeremiah 18:7-10; Daniel 4:17). Christians must "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12), "wage the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18), and "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

**Dave Miller**

## REFERENCES

Garris, Carolyn (2006), "Marriage in the 50 States," *The Heritage Foundation*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/Marriage50/Marriage50States.cfm>.  
Wetzstein, Cheryl (2006), "Alabama OKs Marriage Measure," *The Washington Times*, June 8, [On-line], URL: <http://washingtontimes.com/national/20060607-104125-7876r.htm>.