



RELIGION AND POLITICS: DECODING THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY AS PRESENTED IN DAN BROWNS THE DAVINCI CODE

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Abstract

This paper proceeds to study the controversial story telling of Dan Brown's The Davinci Code. Dan Brown's The Davinci code presents an alternative understanding of politics involved in Christianity which was considered blasphemous hence making the novel controversial. Brown involves well researched facts on Christian doctrines and institutions in his fiction The Davinci Code. This controversial content of the novel made it a hot-boiling suspense thriller that involved code cracking which triggered the curiosity of the readers thus making it a best controversial popular fiction. This paper attempts to study the historical facts present in this marvellously crafted fiction. This paper adopts a descriptive analytic method to analyse the fiction.

Introduction

What is History but a fable agreed upon? By its very nature history is always one sided account.



- Napoleon

In "The Da Vinci Code," Dan Brown references actual historical subjects such as the Holy Grail Legend, the Priory of Sion, and the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The holy grail is regarded as a sacred item in different literary works, and some Christian traditions make allusions to actual historical subjects such as the Holy Grail, the establishment of the Priory of Sion, and the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD (Williams, 2006). The Holy Grail is a revered artefact that has been associated with many works of literature and certain Christian customs (Burke, 2013). The grail is said to be the vessel, either a cup or plate, that Jesus used during the Last Supper. Additionally, it served as the receptacle for Jesus' blood at the crucifixion. According to Ramsay (2006), the holy grail is thought to possess the ability to cure all injuries, extend lifespan, and bring back the recently departed.

According to Hanegraa and Maier (2004), the Grail is reputed to contain the extraordinary ability to cure any injury and bestow supernatural abilities, including the capacity to extend one's lifespan and resuscitate those who have recently died. For generations, the grail has been sought for by monarchs and knights due to its magical abilities and its link with Christ. The enigmatic nature of the grail has made it a captivating subject of investigation and theological discussion (Gunn, 2006).

Fact in Fiction

The novel The Davinci Code itself begins by listing a few items which the author claims as facts. "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." (Ehrman, 2004). But Brown not only provided the controversial facts but he has cleverly played with facts. Brown has gathered the information about the historical beginnings of Christianity that involves the life of Jesus and the writings of the New Testament (Easley & Ankerberg, 2006).

The Priory of Scion

The Priory of Sion is a secret society cloaked in enigma. Brown in his fiction The Davinci Code claims it as a secret society founded in 1099 and its related documents were found and said to include influential figures like Sir Isaac Newton and Leonardo Davinci. Berenger Sauniere who existed in the eleventh century is rumoured to be one



of the member of this secret society which existed in the eleventh century. Pierre Plantard after collecting information about Sauniere created fake genealogical records that suggested the existence of the royal Merovingian line. These fake manuscripts contained coded messages which were introduced as pseudonyms into the Bibliotheque Nationale in the 1960s. This came to be called as Dossier secrets. But later historians proved it to be fake and forged, as no supporting proofs existed.

The First Council of Nicea

The first council of Nicea was the assembly of the early Christian church that convened in Nicea, which took in 323 AD. Emperor Constantine summoned it and chaired and participated in the deliberations. Approximately three hundred bishops from all across the Roman Empire gathered to talk about the theological and practical matters pertaining to the church and Christianity (Gandolfo, 2007). He hoped the Eastern Church's creation of the Arianism problem would be resolved at the universal council. Arius of Alexandria spread the heresy known as arianism, which held that Christ was merely a made, mortal being rather than a divine entity (Kirkwood, 2006).

Religion and Politics

The formation of this religion which came to be called as Christianity is rooted upon a historically complex clash between the religion, church and politics. Many thinkers have conceived that Christianity supports a particular ideology or philosophy which is always disagreed throughout history (Ramsay, 2006).

Leonardo Davinci

Dan Brown in his novel *The Davinci Code*, portrays Leonardo Davinci as a garish homosexual and a goddess worshipper who studies alchemy and immortality. He encoded pagan symbols secretly in his art in the many assignments he accomplished for the Vatican.

There is no evidence or historical sources available to support the claim that Davinci was homosexual. The influential artists of the art world suggest that there is no hidden pagan symbols or secrets in Davinci's paintings. These secrets exist only in the imagination of the those conceiving it.

The Monalisa

The book, claims that "The Mona Lisa" is a symbol that represents male and female harmony which gives importance to the holy feminine. Monalisa is actually the anagram of Amon and Lisa, the Egyptian God and Goddess worshiped as a symbol of fertility. The picture "The Mona Lisa" suggests that it depicts a man and woman together. According to Giorgio Vasari's biography of Leonardo Da Vinci, Lisa Gherardini the sitter is the wealthy Florentine businessman Francesco del Giocondo's wife. Since Da Vinci did not offer the name Mona Lisa, it is impossible for the name to have any connection to the Egyptian gods. Da Vinci's name for the picture is unknown.

Opus Dei

The very religious Catholic sect known as Opus Dei, which is portrayed in the book as having undergone brainwashing, compulsion, and the risky practice of corporal mortification, has recently been the subject of criticism. Actually, the Opus Dei is a lay Roman Catholic society that places a strong emphasis on piety and charitable deeds. Josemaria Escriva, the organization's founder, was born in Babastro, Spain, in 1902, and instead of emphasizing the spirituality of clergy, she founded Opus Dei to empower lay people. Opus Dei is characterized by self-denial and good deeds performed as sacrifices within the framework of the Roman Catholic Church (De Flon, 2006).

Conclusion

Brown involves historical facts and political controversies that forms an integral part of Christian religion to craft an interesting suspense thriller. Majority of the readers of The Davinci Code, was unable to separate historical facts from literary fiction which led to intense debate which led to reflections on various theories put out in the book. These political controversial facts present in his novels made a great hit upon the curious popular fiction readers. Dan Brown's The Davinci Code took the world by storm through its distinctive amalgamation of fact and fiction making it a controversial treasure trove and an outstanding subject for discourse.

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