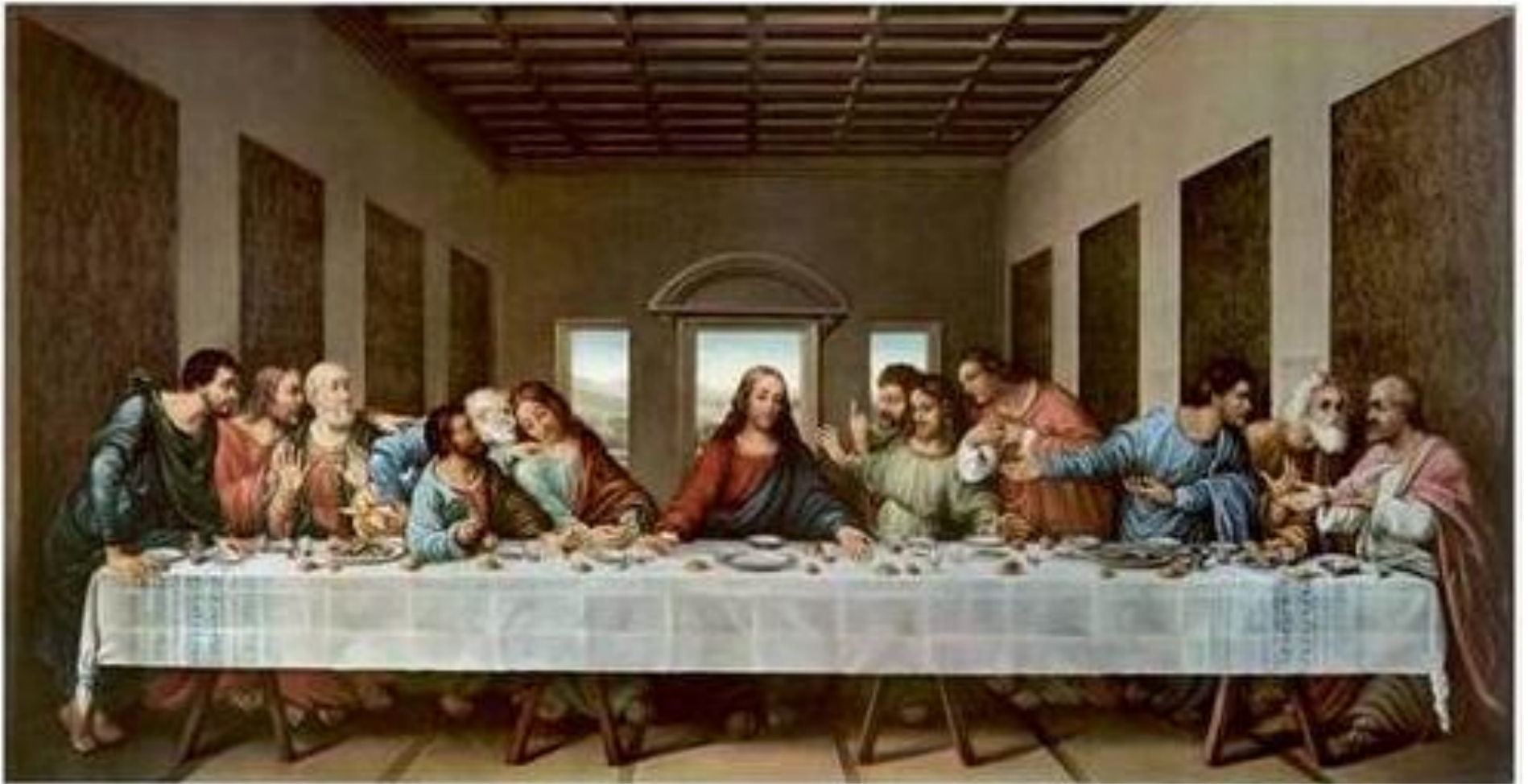


Deciphering the Da Vinci Code



Why A Seminar on the Da Vinci Code?

Why A Seminar on the Da Vinci Code?

- The book is a novel with a captivating story that has sold millions of copies
- The movie will be a blockbuster and thus greatly expand the influence of the basic ideas contained in the novel
- Although it is fiction, Dan Brown claims certain things in the novel are factual



Why A Seminar on the Da Vinci Code?

- Dan Brown has consistently stated that he believes the information presented in the novel is true and accurate. (Example: Good Morning America and the ABC Special Jesus, Mary, and Da Vinci, both on November 3, 2003).
- Many people have begun to ask questions regarding the true nature of Christ and early Christianity, and to doubt the veracity of the New Testament and historic Christian orthodoxy.



My Qualifications

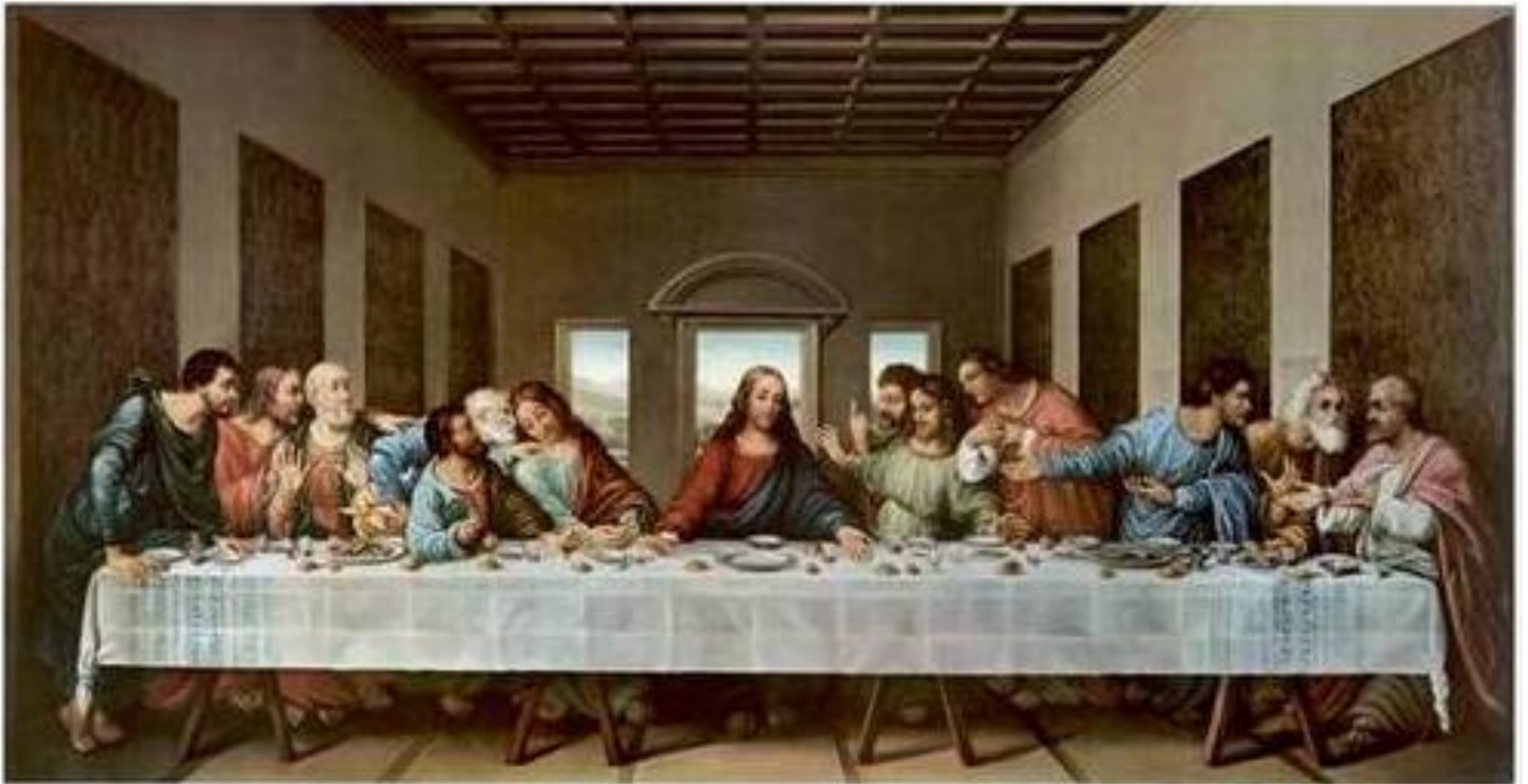
- I received a B.S. degree in history from the US Naval Academy
- My masters degree from seminary included significant study in the areas of theology and early church history
- I will restrict my comments to the areas of the history and theology of the early church



My Methodology

- Focus on history and theology of the early church
- Focus on *The Da Vinci Code* – not *Holy Blood Holy Grail*
- Page references
- Necessity of some redundancy





A Brief Overview of the Da Vinci Code

The Role of Constantine in Early Christianity





*Was Constantine A
Christian or A Pagan?*

Da Vinci Code (DVC) – Constantine Was A Lifelong Pagan

“I thought Constantine was a Christian,” Sophie said. “Hardly,” Teabing scoffed. “He was a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed, too weak to protest.”

Page 232



The Actual Story of Constantine

- Diocletian and the Great Persecution (c. 300AD)
- Empire split into 4 parts by Diocletian at retirement
- Milvian Bridge – 27 October 312 – “By This Sign Conquer”
- Constantine is now emperor in the West



The Actual Story of Constantine



- Constantine issues Edict of Toleration in 313
- In 321 Constantine outlawed labor on Sunday, as it was the Lord's Day
- Licinius, Emperor in the East begins persecuting Christians again, so Constantine attacks him, wins and becomes sole Emperor in 324
- Called Council of Nicea in 325
- He was baptized shortly before death – a common custom in that day



*Did Constantine Determine
the Day of Worship?*

DVC – Constantine Changed Worship To Sunday to Honor Sun God

“Even Christianity’s weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans.” “What do you mean?” “Originally,” Langdon said, “Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan’s veneration day of the sun.” He paused, grinning. “To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god’s weekly tribute-Sunday.”

(Pages 232-233)





*Reality – Christians Worshipped On
Sunday More Than 200 Years Prior to
Constantine*

New Testament – Worship On Sunday

¹ Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2



New Testament – Worship On Sunday

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

Acts 20:7



Apostolic Fathers – Worship On Sunday

No longer observing the Sabbath,
but living in the observance of the
Lord's Day, on which also our life
has sprung up again by Him.

Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians*, 9

(c. 117 AD)



Apostolic Fathers – Worship On Sunday

On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks.

Didache, 14
(c. early 2nd century AD)



Apostolic Fathers – Worship On Sunday

We keep the eighth day with
joyfulness, the day also on which
Jesus rose again from the dead.

Epistle of Barnabas, 15
(c. early 2nd century AD)



Apostolic Fathers – Worship On Sunday

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.

Justin Martyr, *Apology I*, Chapter 67
(c. 165 AD)





*Constantine and the Development of the
Christian Canon*

DVC – Constantine Determined the NT Books – And Burned Others

“From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history.”

Teabing paused, eyeing Sophie.

“Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that made him (Jesus) godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”



DVC – Constantine Determined the NT Books – And Burned Others

“More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.” “Who chose which gospels to include?” Sophie asked. “Aha!” Teabing burst in with enthusiasm. “The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.”

(page 231)





*Reality – Constantine Had Nothing to Do
With the Formation of the Canon*

Constantine Not Involved At All

The historical reality is that the Emperor Constantine had nothing to do with the formation of the canon of Scripture: he did not choose which books to include or exclude, and he did not order the destruction of the Gospels that were left out of the canon (there were no imperial book burnings).




Constantine Not Involved At All

The formation of the New Testament canon was instead a long and drawn-out process that began centuries before Constantine and did not conclude until long after he was dead. So far as we know, based on our historical record, the emperor was not involved in the process.

Bart Ehrman

Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code, page 74





Gospel of Luke Called Scripture By Paul

¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

1 Timothy 5:17-18


Quoting Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7



Muratorian Fragment: Four Gospels

The third book of the Gospel: according to Luke....The fourth gospel is by John, one of the disciples...

Muratorian Fragment
c. Late 2nd century AD



Irenaeus: Exactly Four Gospels

It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the "pillar and ground" of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life;



Irenaeus: Exactly Four Gospels

it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. From which fact, it is evident that the Word... has given us the Gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8
c. 180 AD



Tertullian: Four Apostolic Gospels

Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us; whilst of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards.

Tertullian
Against Marcion, Book 4, Chapter 2
c. 160-225 AD



Origen: Four Indisputable Gospels

Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that first was written that according to Matthew...Secondly, that according to Mark...and thirdly, that according to Luke...after them all, that according to John.



NT Canon Essentially Formed Long Before Constantine

Despite the claims of Leigh Teabing, almost everyone in the orthodox church agreed that the four Gospels, the Acts, the thirteen Pauline Epistles, 1 Peter, and 1 John should be included.

Bart Ehrman

Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code, page 74




NT Canon Essentially Formed Long Before Constantine

So the canon was not finalized even by Constantine's day, even though it was agreed among all 'orthodox' Christians that the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were canonical scripture. Constantine had nothing to do with that decision.

Bart Ehrman

Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code, page 90

A scroll with a quill pen and a lit candle on a wooden desk.

Athanasius' Paschal Letter of 367

First list to contain NT exactly as we have it – no more, no less

This was 30 years after Constantine's death!



Conclusion

The Real Constantine of History

- Constantine was a Christian convert – not a lifelong pagan.
- Constantine did not radically alter Christian practices. Remember the persecutions!
- Constantine played no role in the development of the New Testament canon.

