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Since Dan Brown published *The DaVinci Code* in 2003, it has become a huge hit earning millions of dollars and spawning a movie which will be released this coming May. And all of this is not without cause. *The DaVinci Code* is a very good book. It is extremely well written, very engaging and keeps the reader hooked to the end. However, even though the book is published as fiction, one of the very first pages states that the story is built upon facts that are undeniably true. This leaves the reader wondering how much of Dan Brown's historical detail is real and how much is fiction.

Chapter fifty-five of *The DaVinci Code* is the pivotal center of the book where the reader discovers along with Sophie, one of the two main characters, what the holy grail is and the secret history behind it. Throughout this chapter Dan Brown makes some very bold claims and he has publicly stated that these "facts" are true and can be substantiated by research. A few of his "facts" include: that Emperor Constantine never genuinely converted to Christianity but was only a "very good businessman;" that all Christian symbols and holidays had pagan origins; and that the followers of Jesus saw him as only a mortal prophet until his divinity was voted upon at Nicea. What is deceptive in most of his statements is that he uses just enough truth to make his "facts" seem genuine; but then he fills them with an abundance of fiction to serve his literary and personal agendas. He summarizes his own viewpoint by stating "that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (235).

However out of all of his fictions, Dan Brown's biggest attack is on the authority of the Bible itself. He writes that the "modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda...to solidify their own power base" (234) and that "the Bible did not arrive by fax

from heaven...[it] is a product of man” (231). His statements have caused many Christians to question the validity and authority of the Scriptures and for that reason his statements deserve a response.

A look at the Bible for Christians must begin with the person of Christ. The Bible is not the focus of the Christian faith, Christ is. Jesus is the son of God and our faith is centered upon him. Therefore the purpose of the Scriptures is to point to Christ; and those writings which faithfully witness to God working with creation through Jesus prove to be the very Word of God. In regards to the books of the Old Testament, we believe them to be the Word of God because Jesus accepted them as authoritative and divine. In John 5:39, Jesus explains to the Pharisees the purpose of the Old Testament, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” The Old Testament is the promise of God for a savior and Jesus accepted them as divine because they pointed to his life and ministry. So in the same way we accept the books of the Old Testament as Holy Scripture.

Since the New Testament was written after Christ’s ascension, its validity and authority as the Word of God are established in two different ways. First, the books of the New Testament are authoritative because they were written by the apostles who were given authority directly from Christ to spread his gospel. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives his authority to the disciples saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Again in John 20:21 Jesus says, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” By Christ’s authority, the apostles were to make

disciples from all the nations by teaching everything that Jesus had taught them. Therefore, it is by the very command and authority of Christ that the New Testament books were written.

Second, the validity and authority of the New Testament books comes through their faithful witness to the words and deeds of Jesus. Just because a book was written by the apostles does not mean that it is Scriptural. Paul states in Galatians 1:8, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” Dan Brown says that there were over eighty books that chronicled the life of Christ and Elaine Pagels in her book *Beyond Belief* states that there are more than fifty other early Christian texts beyond what is presented in the Bible. Some of these could possibly have even been written by one of the apostles, such as the *Gospel According to Thomas*. The difference between what is Scriptural and what is not is that the books in the New Testament have Jesus and his work of salvation as their focus and foundation. Just as the Old Testament was the promise of Christ, the New Testament faithfully shows the fulfillment of that promise.

Finally, the books of the New Testament were included in the Biblical canon when their authority was recognized by Christians and the church. The Bible was not collected by men seeking power or pushing a political agenda as Dan Brown emphasizes. The authority of the Scriptural books comes solely from God. Yet these books were collected into a single volume when Christians, firmly established within the apostolic faith and tradition, recognized their authority. The first set of books, primarily the four gospels and the letters of Paul, were in circulation throughout Christian communities for several centuries and their authority was widely recognized. These books have become the core of the New Testament and most clearly convey the gospel message. However, there were other volumes which were less known and not as well circulated by all Christians. Some of these books including Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation were also canonized while others were not. These books were added to the Bible

because their focus is clearly on the work and words of Jesus, yet at the time the canon was established these books were not as widely well known and so there was some disagreement about their authenticity.

Regardless of the current popular fiction, the Bible is the sure Word of God because Christ is its authority and subject. Christians need not question the Scriptures or their faith when their focus remains on Christ. The writer of Hebrews probably said it best when he instructed “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”