

# Sacred Feminine

*'The power of the female and her ability to produce life was once very sacred but it posed a threat to the rise of the predominantly male Church, and so the sacred feminine was demonised and called unclean. ... Women, once the sacred giver of life, was now the enemy.'* Teabing, p. 321-322

## What does the Da Vinci Code say?

The Church has oppressed women for two thousand years, mainly stemming from the time of Constantine. The Church has become a masculine institution and denies women were an important part of the early Church. Before this time, women were revered and played an essential role in society.

## What are the facts?

### Women in different cultures

Robert Langdon describes pagan beliefs as holding women sacred for two main reasons: their ability to give birth, and their part in the act of sexual union. There is a discrepancy in this idea. While the women may have been seen as sacred, they were definitely not equal. The act of Hieros Gamos, a pivotal point in *The Da Vinci Code*, seems to imply that women are merely a means to an end, by which men can obtain that second of true clarity that brings them in contact with God. Instead of the male and female being in balance, another major theme recurrent in the novel, the male uses the female as a conduit to God. The male is the one who communes with God, seemingly to the exclusion of the female partner.

Throughout history, the role of women in society has been questioned. Dan Brown's assumption that the subjection of women was on the premise of the Catholic Church wanting to confirm their dominion over society is a theory with very little basis in fact. In many different cultures, long before the advent of Christianity, men have been elevated above women.

- 2400 – 1200 BC Babylonians: Women were considered inferior, it was illegal for them to engage in business, and the general practice was that women were unable to own property. (Greer, p. 24.)
- 3100 – 30 BC Egyptians: Women held subordinate positions, but had a greater freedom within marriage. (Greer, p. 29.)

In present society, the oppression of women in many different cultures continues, giving us ample evidence that the subjection of women did not originate from the Catholic Church. Examples of inequality are the practice of female circumcision and polygamy. The oppression of women encompasses all cultures in some way, shape or form, and cannot be ascribed to any particular religion or faith.

The Gospel of Thomas seriously degrades women, showing why it was originally excluded from the New Testament.

Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life."  
Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven." **Gospel of Thomas 114**

This very surprising verse reveals a common notion in the ancient world - women were basically less developed than men. Women lacked the important attributes of men and so were perceived as weaker and perhaps even subordinate to men. The world was viewed as containing a continuum of perfection. This started from inanimate objects and moved up through plants, animals, women, men and then the gods. Men were one step from perfection, but women were two (Ehrman p 69).

## Conclusion:

The oppression of women was not something begun by the Church. In fact there is evidence that the Gnostics looked down on women.

### Further Reading:

"A Brief History of the Western World", 7th Edition, Thomas H Greer and Gavin Lewis

Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code - Bart D. Ehrman

*For more details, check out the posters on Jesus, the Bible, Constantine and the Gnostic Gospels.*

*All page references to "The Da Vinci Code" are from the Corgi Books paperback.*

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*'For the early Church, mankind's use of sex to commune directly with God posed a serious threat to the Catholic power base. It left the Church out of the loop, undermining their self-proclaimed status as the sole conduit to God. For obvious reasons, they worked hard to demonise sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act.'* Teabing, p. 411

## What does the Da Vinci Code say?

The Church has become a masculine institution, denying women were an important part of the early Church. Also, Eve is blamed for causing sin to enter the world.

Ancient Jews had ritualistic sex in the Temple. Christians later on distorted sex and made it out to be a disgusting, sinful act that should be avoided (p 411).

## What are the facts?

### What does the Bible say concerning Women?

In the Old Testament, one of the most direct accounts of the behaviour of women is Proverbs 31:10-31 'The Wife of Noble Character.' This woman is independent, has her own money and business and has the freedom to make her own decisions.

Present in the Old and New Testament are frequent examples of the respected and important roles that women held. Deborah is an excellent example of the power and ability that women could have in the Old Testament. Deborah led the Israelite army to victory, she was a prophetess, a wife and mother, and her wisdom guided the people (Judges 4, 5). Women held important and pivotal roles in the early church as well, with frequent examples in the New Testament. Philip the Evangelist had four daughters that prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). Phoebe, Priscilla, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Mary and Junias are just a few examples of prominent women in the church, whom Paul held in high esteem (Romans 16).



### What does the Bible say about sex?

Dan Brown uses the example of Temple prostitution as evidence to support his Constantine theory, unfortunately, not all of the statements written in the novel are correct. Dan Brown states that the practice of prostitution in the Temple was an early Jewish custom. This is not the case. The Old Testament clearly rejects prostitution, 'No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or a male prostitute into the house of the Lord your God to pay any vow, because the Lord your God detests them both. (Deut 23:13) Prostitution did occur near altars dedicated to God, but these prostitutes were promoting other Gods such as Ashera, Astarte and Anath (Hosea 4) (The New Bible Dictionary, p. 977). Men were prostitutes too, offering access to the divine, which runs counter to the Da Vinci Code's claims.

In the Da Vinci Code, Eve is the scapegoat for the Catholic Church's degradation of the feminine goddess. It was Eve's fault that sin came into the world. The Bible places responsibility in a different way. Both Eve and Adam were held responsible, and were punished (Genesis 3:16-24). In the New Testament, Paul focuses on the responsibility that Adam had (Romans 5:12). Sex was not the first sin, it was rebellion against God (Genesis 3). In fact, sex is a good gift from God and is to be used responsibly within marriage (Genesis 1:28, 4:1, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 7:2-5).

### Jesus and Women

Jesus had women disciples and women were even the first witnesses to the resurrection (John 20). It is completely true that Jesus desired equality, but Jesus was concerned about equality in faith. Jesus demanded the same standards of living in the faith for both sexes and we see in the New Testament that Jesus' disciples continued the message. 'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ' (Gal 3:26-28).

## Conclusion:

The Bible speaks positively of women and Jesus had women followers. Sex is not in itself bad, but it can be misused, such as in temple prostitution!

### Further Reading:

"Pure Sex" Tony Payne and Phillip Jensen

New Bible Dictionary, Inter Varsity Press

"Biblical Foundations for Manhood & Womanhood" Edited by Wayne Grudem. (Wheaton, IL: Crossways Books. 2002)

"Disciplines of a Godly Woman" Barbara Hughes, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2001

*For more details, check out the posters on Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the Bible.*

*All page references to "The Da Vinci Code" are from the Corgi Books paperback.*