

## Lost Gospel or Lost in Gnosticism? (Part One) By Bob Waldrep

On November 12 Pegasus Books released *The Lost Gospel: Decoding the Ancient Text That Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary Magdalene* by Simcha Jacobovic and Barrie Wilson (Jacobovic also made a companion film documentary as part of his *Bible Conspiracies* television series which began airing December 2014 on the Science Channel). As the title indicates, the reader can expect to read some startling assertions about Jesus, but are they new or simply old claims in a new package?

Considering the authors previous work, it is safe to say this isn't the first time they have wandered down this trail. In fact, Wilson, a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religion, teaching religious studies at York University, is probably best known for his book, *How Jesus Became Christian*. In it he argues Jesus was simply a Messiah want-to-be rather than God – a theology he maintains was fabricated by Paul, along with the resurrection story – a view shared by *The Lost Gospel* coauthor, Jacobovic.

Though Jacobovic has a degree in philosophy and politics, based on his previous works, one might think him a trained archaeologist or expert in the study of antiquities. However, he is probably best classified as an investigative journalist, producer, and director. *The Lost Gospel* is not his first attempt to prove Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married.

In a previous work, *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, Jacobovic claimed a tomb discovered in Jerusalem in 1980 contained the bones of Jesus and his family. Concerning these, he wrote, "...in the Talpiot tomb they found ten ossuaries [boxes for bones], six with inscriptions. The inscribed ones include a 'Matthew,' a

'Joseph,' two 'Marys,' and a 'Jesus, son of Joseph.'" <sup>1</sup> Of course, if Jesus were buried here the resurrection is not true.

Despite the fact that the archaeologists who originally cataloged the find had considered and dismissed any possibility this was the tomb of the biblical Jesus (a fact included in his book), Jacobovic resolved it would have to be the biblical Jesus due to, what he considered, the unlikely odds that another Jesus could have been born with a father named Joseph and placed in a tomb with two women named Mary – a fact he believes strengthens his conclusion since Jesus' mother was named Mary. However, even he acknowledges the ossuary identified as Mary does not include "mother of Jesus" or "wife of Joseph" as part of its inscription.

The other Mary is identified on the ossuary inscription as "Mariamne," and despite the fact the inscription does not include "Magdalene," he jumps to the conclusion she is not a blood relation to the Jesus bones and must be Mary Magdalene. Rather than letting the evidence speak for itself, this is an obvious twisting of the evidence to match one's previously held position. Otherwise, why would he have the Jesus and Mariamne bones DNA tested and, based on there being no familial relation, conclude this proves Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married (Interestingly, the tomb also included the bones of a child identified as Judah, son of Jesus, who

Jacobovic says is the child of Jesus and Mary Magdalene – yet he isn't mentioned in *The Lost Gospel*)?

### JUST GOOGLE IT

Given the same facts with no preconceived ideas about Jesus, would one draw the same conclusion? Of course not! So, how did he really connect Mariamne with Mary Magdalene? What evidence did he rely upon? Try Google.

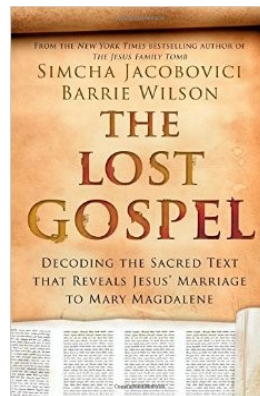
According to Jacobovic, in 2003, he visited a friend and asked him to see if there was a connection between Mary

Magdalene and Mariamne? Describing that conversation, he wrote that his friend replied, "...today we have the Internet. Why don't we look into it right now?" He googled "Mariamne" and then turned slightly pale. "Look, Simcha... According to modern scholarship," he read out loud, "Mary Magdalene's real name was Mariamne."<sup>2</sup>




This is not a finding rooted in the historical record. In fact, a google search of Mariamne will turn up others with this name before connecting it with Mary Magdalene. And, when the name is associated with Mary Magdalene, guess who pops up first? You guessed it – Simcha Jacobovic.

Ignoring the other Mariamnes, Jacobovic and his friend gravitated to the one that fit their own ideas about Mary Magdalene – the Mary Magdalene of the Gnostics. And, as we will see, it is the so-called Gnostic Gospels – not the canonical Gospels of the Bible that play a central role in Jacobovic's works.

Concerning this he and Wilson write, "Gnosis is the Greek word for 'knowledge' or 'insight.' The Gnostics were those Christians who did not follow



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what became known as ‘orthodox’ or ‘catholic’ Christianity...Put differently, in the early phases of Christianity Jesus’ followers had at least two brands of Christianity to choose from – Gnosticism and Paulism.”<sup>3</sup> In describing these two they write, “While for Paul’s followers Jesus was a god, for the Gnostics he was a guide and a teacher sent from the one true God to enlighten humanity and to act as a catalyst for spiritual growth, maturity, and redemption.”<sup>4</sup>

As the record reflects, long before this latest effort, it is clear both Wilson and Jacobovic were committed to the idea that Jesus was just a man – not God. Furthermore, Jacobovic was well acquainted with gnostic literature and the belief that Mary Magdalene and Jesus were married and had children. In reading their book one is hard-pressed not to think they are interpreting their evidence in light of preconceived conclusions about Jesus’ life. To put it another way, if one simply considered the documents presented by these men, it would be difficult not to say their conclusions seem farfetched, at best.

While at times Jacobovic appeals to the “evidence” he claims to have found in the lost tomb of Jesus, this time he bases his conclusions on a document, *Joseph and Aseneth*, which he and Wilson describe as “a centuries old manuscript [found] in a long-forgotten corner of a library.” This intriguing description might cause one to think they have discovered some long lost document; however, immediately before this assertion they write, “...we don’t claim to have excavated a long lost text”<sup>5</sup> So, despite this apparent attempt to make their document different from all other copies, it turns out the difference is primarily in how they interpret it.

#### WHO ARE JOSEPH AND ASENETH

Despite the authors’ claims otherwise, *Joseph and Aseneth* is not new to scholars and many translations and copies of it exist. To use the authors own investigative tool, a quick Google search reveals that much has been written about this document long before *The Lost Gospel*. There is even a scholarly website dedicated to it, created in 1999 ([markgoodacre.org/Aseneth](http://markgoodacre.org/Aseneth)). The majority opinion overwhelmingly interprets

this story as being about the Joseph in Genesis, something that will come as no surprise to anyone reading *Joseph and Aseneth* who is even remotely aware of the Genesis account. Consider the following summation of *Joseph and Aseneth*:

Joseph, a high ranking official in Pharaoh’s court, who worships the God of Israel, is offered Aseneth in marriage. Her father, Pentephres, is the priest of the Egyptian deity Heliopolis. Initially, Joseph refuses to marry her due to her worship of false gods; however, after being rejected by Joseph she casts her idols out, repents, and turns to the God of Israel. An angel then visits her in her bedchamber and affirms her ac-

**“There are really two Christian worlds: the world of the winners (Paul’s followers, which includes all the official Christian groups today) and the world of the losers (those who were banned, burned, ostracized, and driven underground).”**

tions. Afterwards, she and Joseph marry and have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The story also includes a failed attempt by Pharaoh’s son to have Joseph assassinated so he could marry Aseneth.

In the story Joseph is described as one who came to Egypt as a captive – a shepherd’s son from the land of Canaan – sold into slavery by his brothers. He is alleged to have been thrown into prison for having intercourse with his master’s wife and subsequently rescued by Pharaoh for interpreting Pharaoh’s dream. His father was named Jacob/Israel and during a famine he joined Joseph in Egypt along with his other sons who are named in the story: Simeon, Levi, Gad, Dan, Naphtali, Asher, Rueben, Issachar, Zebulon, Judah, and Benjamin.

Almost all of these details correspond with the Genesis account of Joseph, including his marriage to Aseneth. However, *Joseph and Aseneth* offers much greater detail about Aseneth than the Genesis account, which is extremely brief. Nevertheless, the two accounts agree on these points: she married Joseph and bore two sons – Manasseh and Ephraim and was the daughter

of a priest (Genesis 41:45-51; 46:20). It is the added information that leads to many of the assumptions made in *The Lost Gospel* that are outside mainstream scholarship regarding this story.

While no one knows who wrote *Joseph and Aseneth*, from a cursory reading it seems obvious the writer was attempting to clarify an obvious issue some might have with Joseph having married a Gentile. As Dr. Robert Cargill, Assistant Professor of Classics and Religious Studies at the University of Iowa, has stated:

“As prohibiting intermarriage became a bigger and bigger deal in the Second Temple period, many Jews began to see the problem with Joseph’s marriage to Aseneth, as Joseph was said to have not only married an Egyptian, but the daughter of an Egyptian priest!...The popular ancient love story of *Joseph and Aseneth* serves as an apology explaining why a righteous Israelite patriarch like Joseph would marry the daughter of a pagan priest...The biblical account says Joseph married an Egyptian woman, so *Joseph and Aseneth* explains that Aseneth first converted, and therefore was eligible to be married to Joseph.”<sup>6</sup>

Jacobovic and Wilson put an entirely different spin on the story – one that can only be found through reinterpreting the Bible, history, and a heavy reliance on the Gnostics. The story they unravel begins at the feet of a statue of the Greek goddess Artemis and will cause one’s head to spin at their dizzying conjectures of what might have been. For, according to *The Lost Gospel*, the *Joseph and Aseneth* story is actually a story written in code and that code must be broken in order to rightly understand it.

#### CAN YOU SAY CONSPIRACY

This is based on what amounts to be a conspiracy theory held by those like Jacobovic and Wilson who believe the true teachings of Jesus and his disciples and the history of the Church were perverted by the Apostle Paul and others in history who hijacked the “real” gospel by making Jesus God and adding a resurrection story. According to this view, as Paul’s influence grew the truth about Jesus would diminish until the Emperor Constantine “officially” had Jesus declared God at the Council of

Nicaea in 325 AD.

These conspirators believe the Church then banned and destroyed writings such as the *Gnostic Gospels*, which taught a different view of Jesus, in order to cover up the “true story” of Jesus. In line with this belief, Jacobovic and Wilson claim the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* was one of these Gnostics and, fearing the Church would destroy it, wrote in code – preserving the truth in a story in which the main characters are to be understood as types of Jess and Mary Magdalene.

To support their view, conspirators will ignore the historical record, maintaining it is untrustworthy. They commonly express it as, “history is written by the winners.” In other words trust me – not history. As Jacobovic and Wilson explain it, “There are really two Christian worlds: the world of the winners (Paul’s followers, which includes all the official Christian groups today) and the world of the losers (those who were banned, burned, ostracized, and driven underground). It’s from the world of the losers that *Joseph and Aseneth* emerges.”<sup>7</sup>

In addressing these same claims as made in relation to *The Da Vinci Code*, I wrote, “Though these documents were destroyed, that they existed certainly had not been swept under the rug. Irenaeus, an early Christian theologian and a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John, wrote *Against Heresies* to address some of the heresies of these Gnostic teachings.”<sup>8</sup>

#### Foot Notes (Part 1)

1. *The Jesus Family Tomb* p. 61
2. *Ibid.* p. 45
3. *The Lost Gospel* p. 157
4. *Ibid.* p. 160
5. *Ibid.* pp. X-XI
6. robertcargill.com/2014/11/10/review-of-the-lost-gospel-by-jacobovici-and-wilson/
7. *The Lost Gospel* p. 283
8. *The Da Vinci Code: The Facts Behind the Fiction*, Bob Waldrep

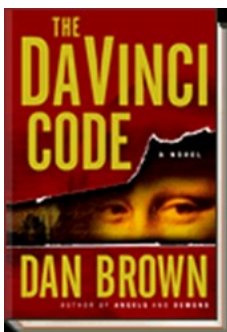


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## Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction

(Part One) by Bob Waldrep



The *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown is a best seller on the fiction list; however, the author clearly states that the story takes place in the context of factual events, places, organizations and rituals. To enhance the credibility of this claim, Brown includes not only fictional characters in his plot, but real people (both past and present) who will be readily recognized by the book’s audience.

On November 3, ABC News devoted an hour of programming in a special *Primetime* with Elizabeth Vargas to investigate the “factual” claims of the book. The conclusion of investigative reporter Vargas, “What we found is that some of the claims the book makes are simply not credible and some of the claims have been made before. But there are some surprising truths behind the story of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Leonardo Da Vinci.” (*Primetime*, airdate 11/03/03)

#### FACT OR FICTION?

It is apparent from the author’s viewpoint, he is hopeful it will be taken as mostly fact. This becomes quite clear from the opening segment of the *Primetime* special when the author states: “I began as a skeptic. As I started researching *The Da Vinci Code* I really thought I would disprove a lot of this theory about Mary Magdalene and holy blood and all of that. I became a believer.”

What is it he came to believe? Following are some of the claims made (without any rebuttal, I might add) by characters in his book (bear in mind that the author is, admittedly, a true believer):

“More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament...yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion...The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.” (p.231)

“Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras – called the Son of God and the Light of the World – was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus...Even Christianity’s holy day was stolen from the pagans.” (p.232)

“At [the Council of Nicea, 325 AD] many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus... until [then he] was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet...Jesus establishment as the ‘Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea...A relatively close vote at that.” (p. 233)

“From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history. Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that

spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The other gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.” (p.234)

“...almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false. As are the stories about the Holy Grail.” (p. 235)

“...legend tells us the Holy Grail is a chalice – a cup. But the Grail’s description as a chalice is actually an allegory to protect the true nature of the Holy Grail... The Grail is literally the ancient symbol for womanhood and the Holy Grail represents the sacred feminine and the goddess, which of course has now been lost, virtually eliminated by the Church.” (p.238)

“The Church needed to defame Mary Magdalene [making her out to be a prostitute] in order to cover up her dangerous secret – her role as the Holy Grail.” (p.244)

“[Jesus gave] Mary Magdalene instructions on how to carry on His Church after He is gone...Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene.” (pp 247-248)

“Behold, the greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. [Mary Magdalene] bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ...” (p 249)

“Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion...With the help of Jesus’ trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea [she] secretly traveled to France, [where] she found safe refuge in the Jewish community. It was here in France that she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah.” (p 255)

“The quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the sacred feminine.” (p.257)

The Grail story is everywhere, but it is hidden. When the Church outlawed speaking of the shunned Mary Magdalene, her story and importance had to be passed on through more discreet channels...channels that supported metaphor and symbolism...The arts... Once you open your eyes to the Holy Grail you see her everywhere. Paintings. Music. Books. Even in cartoons, theme parks, and popular movies.” (p. 261)

These are but a few of the passages that indicate what it is the author purports to have set out to disprove by his research but ended up believing. But how do his “facts” stand up to the historical evidence?

#### WHAT PRIMETIME UNCOVERED

Concerning whether Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, they come to no solid conclusions. Those interviewed who believe as Brown, tried to find Biblical evidence by pointing to the Gospel account of Mary trying to touch Jesus after his resurrection and His telling her to “Stop clinging to me. (John 20:17) Some believe this to be an indication of intimacy indicating the two were married.

According to Dr. Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary this ...”was just her single act of devotion given to him without concern about what people are thinking about what she is doing.”



To this Vargas states: "Most other Biblical scholars we spoke with agree with Darrell Bock's assessment. But we did find one who thinks the scene in the garden might point to an intimate relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus." Note "most" disagree with this position while they found but "one" who agreed with it.

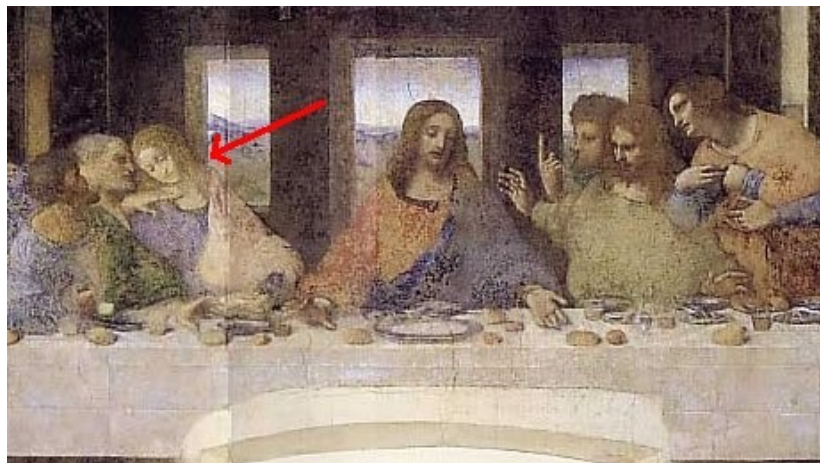
This one was Father Richard McBrien, PhD of the University of Notre Dame who interestingly on several occasions in the interview had stated he did not believe Jesus had been married, even relying upon the Scripture to support his conclusion. On the point in question, however, he concedes that, "If (emphasis added) he [Jesus] was married it was obviously to Mary Magdalene." Not quite the overwhelming evidence that Brown and ABC might have hoped for.

Having failed to find proof from within the Biblical record, Vargas now examines the assertion that the works of Leonardo Da Vinci support this belief. In his book, Brown's characters put great stock in the works of Da Vinci as evidence that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene who bore his child and was intended to be the foundation of the Church and lead it into goddess worship. Brown is convinced that Da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper particularly proves this point.

His reasoning, in part, is that Da Vinci includes Mary Magdalene in the portrait at the right hand of Jesus. While art historians have long recognized that individual as the youthful Apostle John, Brown is convinced otherwise. In speaking with Vargas for the *Primetime* interview he reveals he was first exposed to this idea some fifteen years ago while attending a class in which the Professor pointed out that missing from Da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper was a common cup used for the wine. Brown said he had never noticed this before. Then the professor told them the cup was in the painting but it wasn't a drinking cup, it was a person. That person he was told was Mary Magdalene who was seated in the painting beside Jesus.

Brown doesn't stop there. Not only does he

believe the painting supports the view that Jesus was married but also that he was a feminist due to the way Da Vinci postures the subjects in the painting forming a "V" between Jesus and the figure to his right (Brown tells us the "V" is an ancient symbol for woman). He believes the painting also gives credence to his belief that Da Vinci was part of a secret society of goddess worshippers, the Priory of Sion, who were tasked with preserving and protecting the Holy Grail.



What seems to have escaped Brown and others who buy into this theory is that Da Vinci was neither present at the Last Supper nor did Jesus and the disciples sit for this painting. Even if he, in fact, intentionally placed Mary Magdalene into his painting that does not make it a historical fact. Nor does it explain why John was left out.

Here is how an eyewitness to the event describes who participated. "Now when evening had come, He was reclining at the table with his twelve disciples." (Matthew 26:20) The author of this Gospel had earlier identified these twelve disciples as: Simon Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Phillip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. (Matthew 10:3-4) Obviously, were Matthew to have painted this scene it would not have included Mary Magdalene and John would definitely have been part of it.

But what did *Primetime's* investigation turn up on this point? There is a telling scene where Vargas and noted Princeton Professor of Art History, Dr. Jack Wasserman, stand before Da Vinci's painting and the following conversation ensues:

**Vargas:** "Isn't it possible that is a woman next to Jesus?"

**Wasserman:** "No, of course not."

**Vargas:** "It looks like a woman."

**Wasserman:** "No it doesn't."

**Vargas:** "Why don't you think so?"

**Wasserman:** "Because it looks like a young male. I see no breasts. The fact that he has long hair, so does Christ have long hair, so does James the figure with his arms stretched out, have long hair, so does that figure second from the left have long hair."

Vargas: "But all the other figures, their faces look distinctly masculine, while John's looks quite feminine."

**Wasserman:** "Yes, the matter of the fact in most representations of the Lord's Supper in Florence he looks like a, he's a very, very young man."

Not being able to get Dr. Wasserman to agree it is a woman, the scene immediately cuts to author, Dan Brown, who declares: "If you look at that painting that is clearly a woman."

Just as Vargas could not find Biblical scholars to support Brown's belief Jesus was married, neither could she find support among art experts that Dr. Wasserman was incorrect, stating: "We were only able to find one prominent art historian who said he'd long believed the figure might be a woman."

Vargas now turns to what those who embrace this theory believe to be their strongest support - legends, conspiracy theories, and the Gnostic gospels. No historical evidence to support this belief is offered, only theory and conjecture from those who hold to it.

As part of this segment, (On Gnosticism-See previous issue Vol. 7:1) *Primetime* follows the "story" to France to investigate the legends of the Knights Templars, the Priory of Sion, and other "facts" upon which Brown states his book is based. But when Vargas spoke with scholars who specialize in the study of the Grail and the so-called "Secret Societies" and legends that surround it, she found the same response as she had with Biblical scholars and art historians.

(Article Continues in next issue, Vol. 7:2)



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