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In its long history, the Christian church has had many rebellions and it has accommodated all them within an umbrella that got broader and broader. Can it accommodate this phenomenon?

Millions are rushing to see the new movie "Da Vinci Code" based on Dan Brown's novel of the same name. This movie has already beat box office records as far as the West is concerned. In Third World countries, the lobby to ban the film has had more success. India released the movie only after a censor clip although in three of the country's 29 states-Punjab, Goa, and Nagaland- a total ban has been imposed. The Sri Lanka government has also banned the movie on representations been made by the Bishops.

Let's peep a bit into the past: In the year 1516, there was Martin Luther, the German monk and professor, who nailed his famous 95 theses on the Church door at Wittenburg protesting against the greed and abuse of the Church. Luther signalled the first serious challenge to the once uniform Christian church and that challenge gave birth to the Protestant brand of Christianity thereby splitting the monolithic character of the Church. About the same period saw the French rebel theologian, John Calvin, laying another founda-



tion stone on behalf of the Reformation movement.

In modern times, a whole array of Christian brands like the Salvation Army, Born Again, etc grew up. Recent times have seen the birth of whole new megachurches that operate on a different wavelength altogether. They have been

and it attacks the very foundation of Christianity on the basis of recently discovered manuscripts. Interviewed by American national TV Dan Brown asserts that although the plot is fictional he believes that its account of Jesus' identity is true. According to the manuscripts cited, Jesus Christ was not the Son of God

CHRISTIAN EARTHQUAKE THE SHOCKING CHALLENGE OF DA VINCI CODE

built around issues that have even ignored the focus of the doctrine that Jesus Christ preached namely to love our neighbour and to care for the poor and the weak. These new versions of Christianity are more in line with the new consumerism, teaching people how to look after themselves- how to discipline their kids how to achieve professional goals, how to invest etc. They are very individualistic and they cater to the individual's

referred to in the bible. According to the novel Leonardo Da Vinci, the great painter, engineer, architect and genius of the Renaissance belonged to a secret society that kept secrets about Jesus Christ until the world was ready to hear the truth. The secrets were kept with the use of cryptography in which Da Vinci was an expert. For instance in the world-famous Last Supper painting the person whom we hitherto thought was Jesus' apostle John is said

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to be really Mary Magdalene. In the story, secrets such as these get unveiled by a process of decoding. The tale is told in a thriller-type cinematic experience.

Key questions raised are: Did Jesus have a secret marriage with Mary Magdalene and a child from her? Did the political machinery of Constantine and the church invent Jesus' divinity? Were the original records of Jesus destroyed? Do the recently discovered manuscripts tell the truth about Jesus?

Banning free expression seldom achieves its purpose. In fact, it is a counterproductive approach, as it would only serve to create a greater curiosity to see the movie. The shocking challenge will live on and it can be brought to rest only by setting the record straight. The demand for banning appears to be a typical Third World reaction whereas the vast Western Free World has, with only a few exceptions, allowed the novel and the movie a free ride. Whether it is all about Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or Zoroastrianism, people have a right to free thought, free expression, and free interpretation. In fact, the older religions have a large part of their early history handed down orally wherein distortions of fact may have occurred making the field open to a lot of subsequent interpretation in the light of new evidence that may come up. This makes the right to freedom of expression even more cogent. It is this very right that also guarantees the freedom to counter false information. The protesting Church authorities should, therefore, utilise the same freedom to counter the claims of Dan Brown. To the contemporary intellectual world, nothing is sacred. Even ideas and ideologies are in the competitive marketplace.



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