

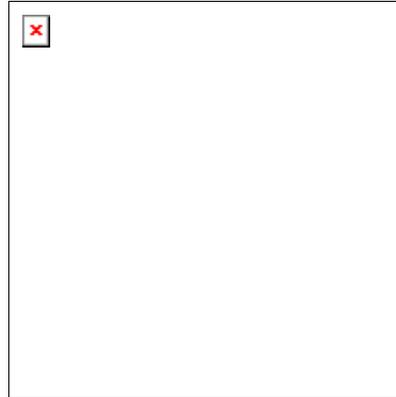
Steve Ray

From: Deal W. Hudson [thewindow@morleyinstitute.org]
Sent: Saturday, March 03, 2007 7:32 AM
To: sray@rc.net
Subject: The Discovery Channel Makes a Titanic Mistake

The Window

on March 2, 2007

A Catholic Look at Society, Culture and Politics



Deal W. Hudson

In This Issue:

The Discovery Channel Makes a Titanic Mistake

Announcement: The 5-CD set of my lectures on "The Truth About the Religious Right" are now available for purchase at <http://www.the-real-religious-right.com/>

On March 4 the Discovery Channel will air a documentary, "The Lost Tomb of Jesus," produced by James Cameron, Oscar-winning director of the "Titanic." Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici, the film's archaeological "expert," claim to have discovered the tomb of Jesus and his family.

They also claim to have found evidence that Jesus had a son with, guess who, Mary Magdalene.

If it sounds just like the *Da Vinci Code* all over again, you're right. But where author Dan Brown employed pseudo-art history, Cameron and Jacobovici have conscripted an archaeological theory rejected years ago by established experts in the field.

In an interview on the *Today Show* on February 26, Cameron confessed, "I'm not an archaeologist, I'm a filmmaker," which about says it all. (Oh, by the way, Cameron and Jacobovici have also co-authored a book, "The Jesus Family Tomb.")

Meredith Vieira, co-host of the *Today Show*, acted as if she were interviewing Albert Einstein just after he discovered the theory of relativity: "If this is correct, what are the implications? They're huge," Vieira said.

But here is the rest of the story, or should I say hoax.

Ten ossuaries or "bone boxes" were unearthed in 1980 during a construction project south of Jerusalem. The ossuaries were removed and stored with the Israeli Antiquities Authority. Six of the boxes are marked with names: 1) Yeshua bar Yosef, Hebrew for 'Jesus son of Joseph'; 2) Maria, or Marya; 3) Matthew, or Matya, understood to be another relative, probably on Mary's side; 4) Yose, understood to be a brother of Jesus'; 5) Mariamene e Mara, interpreted by the filmmakers as Mary Magdalene; and finally, 6) "Yehuda bar Yeshua" or Judah, son of Jesus.

The existence of the ossuaries reported in 1996 by the London Times made identical claims to those of Cameron and Jacobovici.

Historians say these were very common names during that time. Cameron and Jacobovici, however, are relying on the estimates of statisticians that boxes marked with these names could belong to any other family. Their expert in the film says the chances are one in 600, which Cameron and Jacobovici conclude make the ossuaries very likely the real thing.

Help me here. Would anybody take that bet? 1 chance in 600!

Samples of the remains were taken to DNA experts who established there was no genetic link between the boxes containing "Jesus" and "Mary Magdalene," which are interpreted as establishing them as husband and wife. According to the Discovery Channel film, "Perhaps they were married, and perhaps it was kept secret to protect a potential dynasty, a secret hidden through the ages, a secret we just may be able to uncover in the holy family tomb."

I wonder if Dan Brown is going to sue the Discovery Channel for stealing intellectual property?

This is not the first time Jacobovici or the Discovery Channel have been associated with fraudulent claims about archaeological finds. In 2002 Jacobovici publicly supported the authenticity of the so-called ossuary of James, brother of Jesus, which was found to be a forgery by experts. The Discovery Channel dutifully reported on the James ossuary as if it were an established scientific fact. But it was determined that the words "brother of Jesus" were added to the box at a later date. Jacobovici has never backed away from his claim that the ossuary of James is authentic. It turns out that the James ossuary came from the original ten uncovered in 1980.

In the last few days, archaeological experts have come forward to denounce the film and the book. They did the same in 1996 after a BBC documentary reported a similar story on the ossuaries. Amos Kloner, an expert on Israeli tombs and the first archaeologist to examine the site, said the conclusions reached by Cameron and Jacobovici have no archaeological validity: "They just want to get money for it," Kloner commented (2/26/2007, Associated Press). Kloner told the BBC News website, "I don't accept the news that it was used by Jesus or his family."

Another expert in ancient antiquities, Professor L. Michael White, from the University of Texas, expressed doubt about the claims: "This is trying to sell documentaries," he said, adding a series of strict tests needed to be conducted before a bone box or inscription could be confirmed as ancient. "This is not archeologically sound, this is fanfare" (2/26/2006, Reuters).

Finally, there is the comment of Joe Zias, an archeologist at the Rockefeller University in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. Zias remarks, "Simcha [Jacobovici] has no credibility whatsoever" (Press release, 2/26/2006, Catholic League).

The Discovery Channel is supposed to broadcast programming about *scientific* discovery and exploration. The field of biblical archaeology boasts numerous experts with established scientific credentials. Why not commission a group of them to produce a film that would reveal the ongoing exploration of ancient sites in the Holy Land, such as that at the base of the Temple

Mount itself?

The answer must be that the Discovery Channel is not interested in science that is respectful of its own methods or the beliefs of millions who believe in the sacred story of the Saviour who rose from his tomb.

If you would like to contact the Discovery Channel directly, here is the link to send a comment by e-mail: <http://extweb.discovery.com/viewerrelations>

Employment Available:

For anyone interested in a position as Headmaster of a classically-based Catholic school outside of Philadelphia, please write or call:

Regina Coeli Academy
1108 E. Willow Grove Ave.
Wyndmoor, PA 19038
215-836-2208

See also: <http://www.reginacoeliacademy.com/index.html>

The Window is published by the Morley Institute for Church & Culture.

For the latest Catholic news, the Window recommends the [Catholic News Agency](#).

Please add us to your address book so that The Window will always arrive in your in-box not your bulk or junk e-mail folder.

Email: thewindow@morleyicc.com
Phone: 202-367-7456

Please click [here](#) if you would like to unsubscribe.

Please click [here](#) if you would like to modify your email address.

Please click [here](#) if you or an associate would like to receive The Window.



Morley Institute for Church & Culture | 2100 M St. NW, STE 170-259 | Washington | DC | 20037-1233

To Unsubscribe, please [click here](#).