

THE LADY SPEAKS

Uncovering the Secrets of the Mona Lisa

For Immediate Release

New Book Reveals the Hidden Secrets within da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* For five hundred years the lady has smiled—now she speaks.

DALLAS, TEXAS—For almost five hundred years, the painting of the *Mona Lisa* has mystified viewers and intrigued historians. Completed in 1515, the *Mona Lisa* has hidden the lady's secret well. A secret too dangerous for the artist to acknowledge during his life, but one that he hoped future generations would understand and embrace.

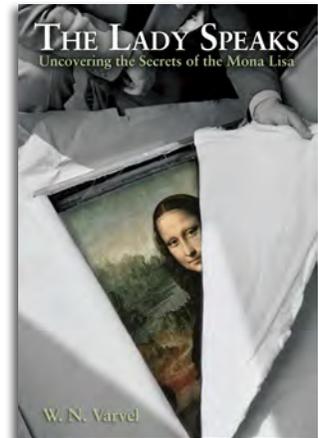
Now, after years of devoted research and analysis of the works of Leonardo da Vinci, author W. N. Varvel has decoded the *Mona Lisa* and reveals the message within her smile in *The Lady Speaks: Uncovering the Secrets of the Mona Lisa* (Brown Books Publishing Group). Like a detective on the trail of a major case, Varvel tracks clues, links previously unnoticed connections, recreates scenarios, identifies villains and heroes, and weaves a tapestry of comprehensive evidence to “prove” what the lady says. “This is a brilliant, engaging, and well-documented presentation of the hidden truth within the *Mona Lisa*,” says Jennifer Mitchell, JD, Attorney-at-Law.

In *The Lady Speaks*, Varvel offers enthusiasts of art history and the renaissance period an eye-opening look inside the *Mona Lisa*, revealing how meticulously the artist weaves a calculated fabric of clues, symbols, and images to establish not only da Vinci's but also Michelangelo's belief in Theological Gender Equality—believing that the book of Zechariah in the Bible led each in their like-mindedness. He also detects another message: the need for theological gender equality to occur before the “New Jerusalem” and da Vinci's dependence on the world to recognize the coming of the New Jerusalem as what lies behind the *Mona Lisa* smile.

Rev. Irie Session, senior pastor, Warren Avenue Christian Church says, “*The Lady Speaks* compels the Church to re-examine biblical texts and iconic religious works of art to derive refined truths which currently run counter to traditional patriarchal and androcentric interpretation.” James O. Duke, PhD, professor, Brite Divinity School adds, “It testifies to the divine genius of both da Vinci and Michelangelo, particularly in light of the danger from the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition.”

Varvel notes, “In March 2012, the Louvre in Paris confirmed the radical revision of the dating of the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo da Vinci's famous portrait had been dated around 1503–1506, but this dating has been formally altered to 1503–1519. This critical change in dating is important because it substantiates the data presented in *The Lady Speaks: Uncovering the Secrets of the Mona Lisa*.”

Today, nearly five hundred years since the completion of the *Mona Lisa*, modern generations have the opportunity to recognize theological gender equality. Through their art, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo present their arguments and “teach” this most cherished of Christian concepts, believing that the book of Zechariah in the bible led each in their like-mindedness on the topic. For five hundred years, the lady has smiled—now she speaks.



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Brown Books Publishing Group • www.BrownBooks.com
Contact: Cindy Birne or Cathy Williams at 972.381.0009
cindy@brownbooks.com or cathy@brownbooks.com

The Lady Speaks: Uncovering the Secrets of the Mona Lisa
Author: W. N. Varvel | ART / History / Renaissance
ISBN: 978-1-61254-073-3 | \$24.95 | www.TheLadySpeaks.com

THE LADY SPEAKS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



W. N. Varvel has been on a journey of academic research and self-discovery for the past twelve years, leading to the unexpected discovery and decoding of the interpretation of the *Mona Lisa*. He researches and writes about the Italian High Renaissance in Canada and the United States. During graduate study at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, he established the correlation between Leonardo's *The Battle of Anghiari* and Michelangelo's *The Battle of Cascina*. Currently he is preparing *The Little Book*, a follow-up to *The Lady Speaks*. A graduate of Texas A&M with degrees in chemical and petroleum engineering, he held positions at Chevron Texaco and founded A-Plus Tutoring in College Station, Texas. He lives in Dallas with his wife, Janice, and son, Daniel.



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QUESTIONS FOR W. N. VARVEL

- Q:** When did your fascination with the painting of the *Mona Lisa* first begin, and what inspired you to write *The Lady Speaks*?
- Q:** How did a former engineer by profession undertake a twelve-year journey to examine and research the *Mona Lisa*, especially with the scope of work revolving around theological gender equality? Describe your process. Have you always been a person who enjoyed digging deep into works of art and their meanings or is this just a hobby?
- Q:** Please define what establishes an artist throughout history as a “genius” as opposed to simply a great and talented artist, in your opinion.
- Q:** In *The Lady Speaks*, you reveal that both Michelangelo and da Vinci shared a passion in believing that the book of Zechariah in the Bible led each in their like-mindedness on the subject of theological gender equality. How did you arrive at that conclusion, and who do you believe was the greater of the two artists?
- Q:** You clearly describe the relationship between Michelangelo and da Vinci in your book. Why is that important to your conclusion on theological gender equality?
- Q:** How can you be so sure that you’re accurate in your assumption that the *Mona Lisa* was in fact Isabella d’Este? What if it’s not her at all?
- Q:** What do you believe are the top five “keys” or “secrets” revealed in *The Lady Speaks* about the *Mona Lisa*?
- Q:** There are certainly many other accounts about the meanings behind the *Mona Lisa* and you even mention a few in the book. What do you have to say about critics of your conclusion, and how does your research trump other research?
- Q:** Can you explain why both artists featured in the book believed that theological gender equality must occur before the “New Jerusalem” can come to be? What is the “New Jerusalem”?
- Q:** Hypothetically speaking, what do you think Jesus would think if He read *The Lady Speaks*?



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QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

- Q: What led you to conclude that the *Mona Lisa* smile spoke to theological gender equality?
- Q: Why do you believe that an artist of da Vinci's genius would ever let the face of Jesus be painted by anyone other than himself on his own piece of work that took fifteen years to complete?
- Q: Young Michelangelo despised the old man da Vinci. Michelangelo made public his hatred for da Vinci. Why would you assume that they would ever believe together that theological gender equality must occur?
- Q: We know that da Vinci's views on theological gender equality would have been a threat to his life during his day. Do you think that even in the twenty-first century that we will see theological gender equality in the Church? Why or why not?
- Q: What are some key takeaway messages from *The Lady Speaks*?
- Q: Who do you consider your target audience? In other words, who do you think will be intrigued by your discoveries in *The Lady Speaks*?
- Q: Do you have plans for another book?



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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“*The Lady Speaks* compels the church to re-examine biblical texts and iconic religious works of art to derive refined truths which currently run counter to traditional patriarchal and androcentric interpretation.”

—**Rev. Dr. Irie Session**

Senior Pastor, Warren Avenue Christian Church

“After nearly five hundred years of speculation, the lady speaks. This is a brilliant, engaging, and well-documented presentation of the hidden truth within the *Mona Lisa*. The message of *Theological Gender Equality* is of profound importance to our generation and illuminates the original intent of Leonardo da Vinci.”

—**Jennifer Mitchell, JD**

Attorney-at-Law



“*The Lady Speaks* presents Leonardo da Vinci’s hidden message within the *Mona Lisa*, *Theological Gender Equality* to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The message broadens the understanding of men and women to the truth that the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is universal to all.”

—**Brenda Gordon**

Product Manager, Vice President of a large financial institution

“*The Lady Speaks* is a brilliant and intriguing investigation that reveals the true, hidden message within the *Mona Lisa*—a message of profound importance to our generation.”

—**Ramiro de la Cruz**

Territory Manager, IBM

“The *Mona Lisa* is both a masterpiece in art as well as a religious icon. Readers of *The Lady Speaks* will never be able to view the *Mona Lisa* in the same way.”

—**Rev. Dr. Alpina Wines**

Pastor, Dido United Methodist Church

“A most brilliant and insightful read! To think that both Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci were aware of the necessity for the Church to recognize *Theological Gender Equality* over five hundred years ago testifies to their divine genius, particularly in light of the danger from the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition.”

—**James O. Duke, PhD**

Professor, Brite Divinity School



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EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 1 OF *THE LADY SPEAKS*

CHAPTER 1

Marching Toward the “New Jerusalem”

Tell me. Will any good come of it?” With this single question and a final stroke of the brush, Leonardo da Vinci completed the greatest masterpiece in painted portraiture, the *Mona Lisa*, in 1515. It had been a continual labor of love that started in the year 1500 and took fifteen years to produce.

Leonardo had first promised the Marchesa of Mantua, Isabella d’Este, in January 1500 that he would finish her portrait, which she had requested. Leonardo prepared two sketches of Isabella in profile and another preliminary pen and ink drawing for her portrait during his monthlong stay in Mantua before he continued on his journey to seek a new patron in the city of Venice (Figures 3, 4, and 5).

While in Venice, Leonardo showed this preliminary pen and ink drawing of the portrait of Isabella d’Este to his friend Lorenzo da Pavia, who wrote to Marchesa Isabella on March 13, 1500: “Leonardo da Vinci is in Venice, and he has shown me a portrait of Your Ladyship that is very lifelike. It is very well done and could not possibly be better.”

Leonardo specifically promised Isabella d’Este that he would “paint her portrait in colors.” He would find himself able to keep his promise fifteen years later, only by way of taking a papal commission given to him by Pope Leo X in March 1515.

Pope Leo X commissioned Leonardo “to paint a small welcoming gift for Isabella d’Este,” upon her diplomatic visit to Rome in October 1515, which allowed Leonardo approximately



Figure 3.
Pencil sketch of Isabella d’Este, Leonardo da Vinci, January 1500



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EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 1 (CONTINUED)

seven months to complete the commission. Little did anyone know—certainly not Pope Leo X—that Leonardo would take this commission and produce an unparalleled masterpiece of such genius that it would take society nearly 500 years to uncover its “hidden message.” This message was mutually held by Leonardo and Isabella d’Este and placed within her portrait, waiting for civilization to advance far enough to finally *see* the “unseen.”

Leonardo’s bravado in using a papal commission for his own personal theological dissertation did not escape the ire of Pope Leo X. When he heard that Leonardo was not able to complete the commission in time for the arrival of Marquesa Isabella d’Este in Rome, the pope replied tersely, “This man will never accomplish anything! He thinks of the end before the beginning.”

No more artistic papal commissions were issued to Leonardo after this disastrous encounter with Pope Leo X, although additional technical and engineering commissions were granted. Pope Leo X apparently wanted to put the whole episode behind him; His Holiness never asked to see the finished commission. Isabella d’Este would never lay eyes upon the *Mona Lisa* either, for reasons of prudence and safety to both Isabella and Leonardo.

For the era of the Italian High Renaissance, the hidden message within the *Mona Lisa* was heretical. The argument within the *Mona Lisa* was a perfect presentation of Leonardo’s blasphemous message—so much so that it also was perfect heresy. If Pope Leo X had seen the *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo would have had some serious explaining to do.

Putting prudence before valor, Leonardo kept the *Mona Lisa* a secret for four years, at which time he orchestrated its purchase into the royal collection of King Francis I of France. Leonardo did not tell the twenty-five-year-old King Francis of the existence of the hidden message in the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo had every reason to fear that King Francis might openly declare war upon Rome if a full understanding of this message were given to him. Leonardo took the secret of this message to his grave in 1519.



Figure 4.
Pastel sketch of Isabella d’Este, Leonardo da Vinci, late January 1500

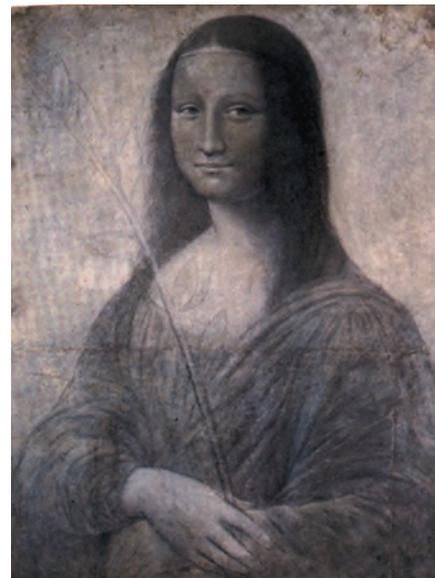


Figure 5.
Pen and ink drawing of Isabella d’Este, age twenty-five, private collection of Giuseppe Vallardi, Florence, Italy, Leonardo da Vinci, February 1500



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SYNOPSIS

For almost five hundred years, the Mona Lisa smile has mystified viewers and intrigued historians. Completed in 1515, the *Mona Lisa* has hidden the lady's secret well. Now, after years devoted to research and analysis of the works of Leonardo da Vinci, W. N. Varvel has decoded the *Mona Lisa* and reveals the message within her smile, a secret too dangerous for the artist to acknowledge during his life but one which he hoped future generations would understand and embrace. Detailing how the artist wove a calculated fabric of clues, symbols, and images, Varvel establishes not only da Vinci's, but also Michelangelo's, belief in Theological Gender Equality. Like a detective on the trail of a major case, Varvel tracks clues, links previously unnoticed connections, recreates scenarios, identifies villains and heroes, and weaves a tapestry of comprehensive evidence to "prove" what the lady says. For five hundred years, the lady has smiled—now she speaks.



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