

**ANGELS & DEMONS:**  
*More Demonic Than Angelic*



*Catholic League*  

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*for Religious and Civil Rights*

## *Introduction*

This booklet was written to debunk the mythology, lies and smears of Dan Brown's book, *Angels & Demons*, and the movie upon which it is based. Like *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown weaves an intriguing tale of suspense, peppered with supposedly real-life events. But there is much more to his work than drama.

Myths abound about the secret society, the Illuminati, and Brown takes them to a new level. Lies are told about many persons, events and institutions, and—in vintage Brown form—the Catholic Church is smeared from beginning to end.

The damage done to the Catholic Church goes beyond Brown. Ron Howard, the director of the film, along with the movie's producers and film crew members, do not hide their animus against all things Catholic. All of this, and more, is discussed in this volume.

The Catholic League has one goal: to alert the public, especially Catholics, to the agenda of everyone associated with this production. In a day and age when it is becoming more and more difficult to separate fact from fiction, it is incumbent upon those of us committed to “truth in advertising” to speak plainly. That is why I wrote this booklet.

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*The Da Vinci Code* was written by Dan Brown after he wrote *Angels & Demons*. The protagonist in both volumes is Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon. In *Angels & Demons*, Langdon is recruited by CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) to investigate what happened to one of its top physicists: he was found dead with a mysterious symbol seared into his chest. It was the symbol of a secret society, long thought moribund, the Brotherhood of the Illuminati.

In time Langdon becomes convinced that the Illuminati have returned. According to Brown, the organization, which numbered Galileo among its members, was founded to assert the superiority of science over the irrationality of religion, especially Roman Catholicism. It now seeks revenge, having captured antimatter, a dangerous substance discovered by the scientist who was assassinated. Langdon's mission is to stop the Illuminati before it blows up the Vatican with a time bomb procured from the antimatter.

The book, if read purely for entertainment purposes, has its merits. Most of the characters that are pure fiction—like the young priest who before he became pope fell in love with a nun (they wanted a child, but also wanted to remain chaste, so they settled for artificial insemination)—are so absurd as to be unbelievable. But, as with *The Da Vinci Code*, the real problem lay in Brown's deceit. He takes real life characters, like Copernicus and Galileo; and real life organizations, like the Illuminati; and real life issues, like science and religion, and blows them to smithereens.

Brown's defenders say he is a novelist and no one should take what he says seriously. The problem is that Brown alternates between promoting his books as fiction and as fact. He wants to have it both ways. Moreover, Hollywood would never make a movie about the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and it wouldn't matter a whit if it was made on the grounds that it was nothing but fiction. What would matter is that a film version of this slanderous anti-Jewish tract might promote intolerance.

Dan Brown is a master of disinformation. In other words, he knows what the historical record says, and yet he deliberately misrepresents it. Worse, he does so with malice: His willful distortion of the truth is done to smear the Catholic Church. He wants the reader to believe that the Catholic Church sees science as the enemy and will stop at nothing to get its way.

### *Lying about “Facts”*

The problem with *Angels & Demons* is the same problem that was evident in *The Da Vinci Code*: both books start with the assertion of certain “Facts,” and in both cases Brown is guilty of playing fast and loose. Consider how he starts *Angels & Demons*.

Brown begins with a “Fact” page that mentions CERN. He describes it as a Swiss facility that created antimatter, “the most powerful energy source known to man.” It is so powerful that “a single gram of antimatter contains the energy of a 20-kiloton nuclear bomb—the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.” All of this is nonsense.

CERN has gotten so many inquiries about Brown’s allegations that it has a special section on its website answering them. For example, it says that “CERN is not a Swiss institute, but an international organization”; it is located partly in Switzerland and partly in France. Antimatter does exist, and is routinely created at CERN, but “There is no possibility to use antimatter as energy ‘source.’” A popular question asked of CERN officials is, “Do you make antimatter as described in the book?” The reply: “No.” Everyone wants to know how dangerous antimatter really is. CERN says it is “Perfectly safe, given the minute quantities we can make. It would be very dangerous if we could make a few grams of it, but this would take us *billions of years*.” (My emphasis.)

More important, Brown says on the very next page that “The brotherhood of the Illuminati is also factual.” And what are the Illuminati up to? In the book it says that “the Illuminati were hunted ruthlessly by the Catholic Church.” In a trailer for the movie, Tom

Hanks, who plays Langdon, says of the secret society that “The Catholic Church ordered a brutal massacre to silence them forever. They’ve come for their revenge.”

All of this is a lie. Not a single member of the Illuminati was ever hunted, much less killed, by the Catholic Church. Exactly who the Illuminati were shows how bogus Brown’s claims are.

On pp. 39-40 in the book, it says the Illuminati were founded in the 1500s; the movie says the same. On p. 223, it says that “Word of Galileo’s brotherhood started to spread in the 1630s, and scientists from around the world made secret pilgrimages to Rome hoping to join the Illuminati....” The film’s director, Ron Howard, concurs: “The Illuminati were formed in the 1600s. They were artists and scientists like Galileo and Bernini, whose progressive ideas threatened the Vatican.”

Brown, on his website, hammers this point home: “It is *a historical fact* that the Illuminati vowed vengeance against the Vatican in the 1600s. The early Illuminati—those of Galileo’s day—were expelled from Rome by the Vatican and hunted mercilessly.” (My italic.)

This kind of libel is easy to disprove. The Illuminati were founded by a law professor, Adam Weishaupt, in Bavaria on May 1, 1776. It didn’t last long: it totally collapsed in 1787. This isn’t a matter of dispute, so dragging Galileo into this fable is downright dishonest—he died in 1642, almost a century and a half before the Illuminati were founded. Brown must know all this because on his own website there is a section on the Illuminati that correctly identifies its founding in 1776!

In truth, the Illuminati were populated by men of the Enlightenment who believed they possessed some special knowledge that would enable them to reform Germany. Weishaupt demanded that his followers cut themselves off from family and friends—in cult-like form—so they could build a revolutionary society. Before he died, he renounced all secret societies and reconciled himself with the Catholic

Church. But none of this is told to the readers of Brown's book. That's because he wants us to believe that the Illuminati are still in existence.

On p. 49, Langdon says that the goal of the Illuminati is to create "A New World Order based on scientific enlightenment." This puts Dan Brown in some choice company. No one in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did more to promote the idea that the Illuminati were busy trying to create a New World Order than Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society. In recent years, it has become a favorite notion of people like Pat Robertson and Tim LaHaye. The American Taliban, John Walker Lindh, also believed it to be true. Indeed, it is one of the most popular myths entertained by conspiracy-minded kooks everywhere.

### *The Dastardly Deeds of the Illuminati*

Even though the Illuminati are long dead, the following is a list of some of the things that they are still credited with doing. All of the examples are taken from authors and those who claim to track the works of the secret society.

The Illuminati were responsible for the assassinations of the following presidents: Abraham Lincoln, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, James Garfield and William McKinley. They were "probably" responsible for killing Warren Harding and "possibly" FDR. In any event, Princess Diana's death was their doing, as well.

The secret society certainly has made its mark on history. Here are some of the things it is allegedly responsible for: the French Revolution; the Russian Revolution; commissioning Marx and Engels to write *The Communist Manifesto*; an attempted overthrow of the United States; persuading the pope to disband the Jesuits (who are also credited by some as founding the Illuminati); manipulating U.S. Supreme Court Justice Marshall to grant the federal government "implied powers"; instigating uprisings in Europe in the 1840s; and manipulating Lincoln to adopt a graduated tax.

The Illuminati are said to have founded the following: the Federal Reserve; Workman's Compensation; the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment (adoption of a federal income tax); the League of Nations; the Communist Party; the Marshall Plan; the United Nations; the Council on Foreign Relations; the Trilateral Commission; and the World Bank.

It also played a role in fomenting World War I, World War II (it encouraged Hitler to invade Poland), the Cold War and 9/11. It is responsible for assaults on Christianity and for dividing Orthodox and Conservative Jews. AIDS, Ebola and the Gulf War Syndrome are the creation of the Illuminati. It is even responsible for Hurricane Katrina and the Red Cross (which it benefited from).

This is the same camp that Dan Brown is in bed with.

### *More Lies*

The book is chock full of lies about all kinds of things. Here is a sample.

*Angels & Demons* says that the Catholic tradition of canonization is taken from an ancient "god-making rite." But saints are not gods, and in any event the pagan origins of canonization have been thoroughly refuted. There is absolutely no evidence for Brown's claim that dying for the sins of others is a Christian idea stolen from the legendary Mexican ruler, Quetzalcoatl. Holy Communion, according to Brown, is a concept that was taken from the Aztecs. But the fact is that Christianity antedates Aztec civilization by over 1000 years.

The book claims that CERN invented the Internet, which is manifestly untrue. It credits two BBC reporters with winning a Pulitzer Prize, even though the award only goes to Americans. It says Winston Churchill was a "staunch Catholic," when the fact is he was never a Catholic. It floats the idea that the Catholic Church is filthy rich when in reality its annual operating budget is about one-fifth that of Harvard's.



The book maintains that Copernicus was murdered, yet the record shows he died of a stroke. It holds that Galileo was a pacifist, though there is no evidence that he ever was. Brown takes a belief by Christian Scientists on the impropriety of medically treating a young person and falsely attributes it to Catholicism. He also falsely paints Catholics as opposed to the teaching of evolution, and identifies a Protestant organization, the Christian Coalition, as a Catholic entity. These are perhaps small points, but they show what Brown is up to. A more serious issue is the way he distorts the relationship between Catholicism and the arts, injecting sexuality into it.

Brown, of course, wants to promote every negative stereotype about the Catholic Church. One of the all time favorites is the Church's alleged phobia about sexuality. So it is not surprising to learn that Brown paints Pope Pius IX as a penis-cleansing maniac who destroyed great works of art. "In 1857," Brown says on p. 159, "Pope Pius IX decided that the accurate representation of the male form might incite lust inside the Vatican. So he got a chisel and mallet and hacked off the genitalia of every single male statue inside Vatican City."

Now for some reason, it seems to have gotten by every historian, archivist and critic of the Catholic Church that Pius IX walked around the Vatican, hammer in hand, hitting every male statue between the legs. One would never know by reading *Angels & Demons* that in reality this same pope lavishly supported the arts and rewarded artists for their contributions. He was also known for renovating paintings in the Vatican.

Brown saves his big weapons for the alleged papal reaction to Bernini's masterful sculpture, "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa." According to Brown, "Pope Urban VIII had rejected *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* as too sexually explicit for the Vatican. He banished it to some obscure chapel across town." On the same page, p. 422, we learn that "The sculpture, as anyone who had seen it could attest, was anything but scientific—*pornographic* maybe, but certainly not scientific." (His italics.) On the next page, he writes that "the statue depicted St. Teresa on her back in the throes of a toe-curling orgasm."

Again, Brown simply makes up “facts” to suit his agenda. For starters, in the sculpture, Teresa is not on her back—she is sitting up. She indeed conveyed her love for God in many ways, including expressions of erotic intensity. Cathleen Medwick’s *Teresa of Avila: Progress of a Soul* is a splendid book that shines light on this subject. She categorically refutes the notion that her “ecstasies” smacked of sexual repression. The author argues that Teresa was “a soul in progress toward a very specific and elusive goal.” Her goal, she says, was to be with God. It is worth pointing out that Medwick is not some Catholic dupe: she is self-described as a “non-observant Jew.”

As for Urban VIII, not only was he not an adversary of Bernini, he was his friend and patron. In Arthur Lubow’s biography of the great artist, he recounts how throughout the 20 years of Urban VIII’s tenure, Bernini was treated royally by the pope. Indeed, Bernini was a favorite of all popes in his lifetime, and was bestowed with the Cross of the Order of Christ.

### *Catholicism and Science*

The most invidious stereotype that Brown seizes upon in this book is the idea that the Catholic Church is anti-science. Nothing could be further from the truth. But before this stereotype is debunked, it is worth considering how Brown sees science. He sees science as God.

On p. 31, one of Brown’s characters delights in saying, “Soon *all* Gods will be proven to be false idols. Science has now provided answers to almost every question man can ask.” (His emphasis.) So what’s left? Here is his answer: “Where do we come from? What are we doing here? What is the meaning of life and the universe?”

That’s a lot left unanswered. But not to worry, we learn that these questions—the ontological questions that all humans have pondered throughout history—are merely “esoteric” in nature. “There are only a few questions left,” writes Brown, “and they are the esoteric ones.” Like the very meaning of existence!

On p. 218, Brown gets so excited by the promise of science that he uses italics to exclaim, "*Science is God.*" On p. 474, he really gets into orbit: "Medicine, electronic communications, space travel, genetic manipulation...these are the miracles about which we now tell our children. These are the miracles we herald as proof that science will bring us the answers." Then he goes for the gold: "The ancient stories of immaculate conceptions, burning bushes, and parting seas are no longer relevant. God has become obsolete. Science has won the battle."

Is there anything science can't do? Evidently not. Here is Brown at his wackiest (p. 658): "Science has come to save us from our sickness, hunger, and pain! Behold science—the new God of endless miracles, omnipotent and benevolent! Ignore the weapons and the chaos." It's even an elixir for personal problems: "Forget the fractured loneliness and endless peril. Science is here!"

Brown is optimistic. He believes that just recently, science and religion are coming together. In an interview, he said we live in "an exciting era," one where "for the first time in human history, the line between science and religion is starting to blur." As evidence, he says—apparently with a straight face—that Buddhist monks are now reading physics books.

Now if Brown were not so hopelessly anti-Catholic, he may have recognized that Catholicism blurred the lines between religion and science a long time ago. Indeed, he would have to acknowledge that absent Catholicism, science would not have progressed as it has.

"For the last fifty years," says professor Thomas E. Woods, Jr., "virtually all historians of science...have concluded that the Scientific Revolution was indebted to the Church." Sociologist Rodney Stark argues that the reason why science arose in Europe, and nowhere else, is because of Catholicism. "It is instructive that China, Islam, India, ancient Greece, and Rome all had a highly developed alchemy. But only in Europe did alchemy develop into chemistry. By the same

token, many societies developed elaborate systems of astrology, but only in Europe did astrology lead to astronomy.”

The Catholic role in pioneering astronomy is not questioned. J.L. Heilborn of the University of California at Berkeley writes that “The Roman Catholic Church gave more financial aid and social support to the study of astronomy for over six centuries, from the recovery of ancient learning during the late Middle Ages into the Enlightenment than any other, and, probably, all other institutions.” The scientific achievements of the Jesuits, alone, reached every corner of the earth.

What was it about Catholicism that made it so science-friendly, and why did science take root in Europe and not some place else? Stark knows why: “Because Christianity depicted God as a rational, responsive, dependable, and omnipotent being, and the universe as his personal creation. The natural world was thus understood to have a rational, lawful, stable structure, awaiting (indeed, inviting) human comprehension.”

But Brown will have none of it. In his mind, the Catholic Church is fearful of science and has always tried to repress it. It would be interesting to know how he would explain the fact that the first leader of the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy of Sciences was none other than his favorite “martyr,” Galileo Galilei.

### *Galileo*

The myths about Galileo are so rich that few bother to consult the historical record to learn what really happened. Brown exploits this ignorance to the hilt. When he says on p. 41 that Galileo’s “data were incontrovertible,” he is not even close to telling the truth. For instance, we know that the tides are explained by the gravitational forces of the moon. But Galileo’s fixation on the earth revolving around the sun did not allow him to see this—he believed that the tides were understood by the earth’s revolutions around the sun. More important, what got Galileo into trouble was less his ideas than his arrogance: he made claims that he could not *scientifically* sustain.

If Galileo was punished for maintaining that the earth revolves around the sun, then why wasn't Copernicus punished? After all, Copernicus broached this idea before Galileo toyed with it, and like Galileo, he was also a Catholic. The difference is that Copernicus was an honest scientist: he was content to state his ideas in the form of a hypothesis. Galileo refused to do so, even though he could not prove his hypothesis.

If the Catholic Church was out to get Galileo from the get-go, then how does one explain why he was celebrated for his work in Rome in 1611? Why did Pope Paul V embrace him? Why did he become friends with the future pope, Urban VIII? Quite frankly, Galileo never got into trouble before he started insisting that the Copernican system was positively true. When he first agreed to treat it as a hypothesis, or as a mathematical proposition, he suffered not a whit.

In 1624, Urban VIII gave Galileo medals and other gifts, and pledged to continue his support for his work. According to Woods, "Urban VIII told the astronomer that the Church had never declared Copernicanism to be heretical, and that the Church would never do so." This, of course, is not what Brown wants us to believe.

Eight years later, Galileo wrote his *Dialogue on the Great World Systems*; he did so at the urging of the pope. But this time he made the leap of asserting that the Copernican theory was empirically true. Moreover, he presented himself as a theologian, not simply as a mathematician, as he agreed to do. The Church was not pleased, and indeed felt double-crossed by him. Just as important, the scientific community was unimpressed. His hubris was appalling to as many outside the Church as within it.

It is easy for us today to say that the Church overreacted in its treatment of Galileo. This is true. But it is also important to note that he was never tortured and never spent a day in prison. He was confined to house arrest in a modest home for nine years. He even stayed for a while in the home of the archbishop of Siena. Not exactly the Gulag-type experience we've been led to believe.

If the Catholic Church was so anti-science, why did Pope Benedict XIV grant an imprimatur to the first edition of the complete works of Galileo? He did this in 1741. And if further proof is needed to demonstrate that Galileo's abrasiveness had something to do with the Church's response, consider that scientists like Father Roger Boscovich continued to explore Copernican ideas at the same time Galileo was found "vehemently suspected of heresy." It should also be noted that Catholics were never forbidden from reading Galileo. Moreover, scientific books of all kinds circulated freely during and after his censure.

### *Anti-Catholicism*

"It's certainly not anti-Catholic." That's how Dan Brown characterizes his book. So was the Vatican wrong to bar the film crew from shooting on its grounds? The Vatican took that step because it properly regarded Brown's other movie, "The Da Vinci Code," to be a patently unfair presentation of Catholicism.

Before "The Da Vinci Code" was released, co-producer John Calley admitted to the *New York Times* that the movie was "conservatively anti-Catholic." How telling it is, then, that the *New York Times* reported that co-producer Brian Grazer wants the movie version of *Angels & Demons* "to be less reverential than 'The Da Vinci Code.'" That about seals it. The final nail in the coffin was unwittingly offered by the movie crew of "Angels & Demons."

Father Bernard O'Connor is a Canadian priest and an official with the Vatican's Congregation for Eastern Churches. In 2008 he was in Rome while director Ron Howard was shooting the movie. O'Connor had two encounters with the film crew, informal discussions with about 20 of them. He was dressed casually so no one knew he was a priest. They spoke openly, thinking he was just "an amiable tourist." He wrote an article about his experiences for the monthly magazine, *Inside the Vatican*.

One self-described “production official” opined, “The wretched Church is against us yet again and is making problems.” Then, speaking of his friend Dan Brown, he offered, “Like most of us, he often says that he would do anything to demolish that detestable institution, the Catholic Church. And we will triumph. You will see.” When Father O’Connor asked him to clarify his remarks, the production official said, “Within a generation there will be no more Catholic Church, at least not in Western Europe. And really the media deserves to take much of the credit for its demise.”

This should put to rest all reservations about the real intent of at least some in the media—their goal is to weaken, if not totally disable, the Catholic Church. They do not point their guns at Islam or Judaism. It’s the Catholic Church they want to sunder.

“The public is finally getting our message,” boasts the movie official. The message is clearly defined: “The Catholic Church must be weakened and eventually it must disappear from the earth. It is humanity’s chief enemy. This has always been the case.” He credits “radio, television, Hollywood, the music and video industries, along with just about every newspaper which exists, all saying the same thing.” He also cites the role which colleges and universities have played in undermining Catholicism.

After Father O’Connor’s article was published, I contacted him about a few issues. I wanted to know how he approached the crew, who they were and how he could verify his comments.

“I wanted frankness from a variety of people,” he told me. “Technicians, film crew, extras, anyone who came by the coffee bars(s) adjacent to Via della Conciliazione.” He said he “sort of ‘hung out’ there” for a couple of afternoons. All but one of those whom he spoke to was male, and “the ages varied between early 30s and late 50s.” He said the comments he heard were “almost entirely negative.” As soon as he got back to his apartment, he started jotting down what he heard.

All of which begs the question: Why do Dan Brown, and many in the media, Hollywood and academe, hate the Catholic Church so much? Perhaps the most succinct answer comes from Langdon in *Angels & Demons* (pp. 136-137). When asked whether he believes in God, he admits it is not easy. What really gets him is the Ten Commandments, and other religious strictures: “The claim that if I don’t live by a special code I will go to hell. I can’t imagine a God who would rule that way.”

If ignorance is bliss, then it must be comforting for Brown and Howard, as well as many in the movie crew, to believe that there are no “special codes” ordained by God to live by. Which explains why they continue to lie and smear the Catholic Church with alacrity.

*\* (All page numbers are taken from the paperback Pocket Books version that was published in 2000.)*



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