

DAN BROWN ADORES THE MASONS

Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* was published on September 15. This time the author of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons* decided to focus on the Freemasons.

Brown may loathe Catholics, but he just adores the Masons. "Brown goes out of his way in 'The Lost Symbol' to present the lodge as essentially benign and misunderstood," reported the AP the day the book appeared. The Catholic Church, of course, is seen by Brown as essentially wicked and misunderstood only by its followers.

"Masons are praised for their religious tolerance," the article said. Somehow Catholics failed to notice: so abhorrent were Masons in their thrashing of Catholicism that the 1917 Code of Canon Law provided for automatic excommunication to any Catholic who joined a lodge. The current stricture in the Church, following the 1983 revisions to the Code, doesn't mention Masons by name, but does retain excommunication for those who join anti-Catholic organizations.

In his new book, Brown defends the Masons against "unfair" portrayals. So kind of him. In real life Brown says he has "enormous respect for the Masons." Must be their historic anti-Catholicism that won him over. Showing nothing but sweetness and light, the man who has made millions dumping on the Church says of his new work, "It's a reverent look at their philosophy. I'm more interested in what they believe than all their rituals and conspiracy theories about them." Now if only Brown had cut Catholics the same break.

Brown says his own religious beliefs are a "work in progress." Indeed, *he* is a work in progress. "I spend part of every day thinking about religion, spirituality and God—maybe more than people who go to church. By Sunday, I'm pretty tired." Good choice. The Lord said that was the day to rest. Maybe Brown

will convert yet.

Ron Howard must be salivating at the thought of directing the film version. At least he won't have the Catholic League to kick him around.