

NOVEL IDEAS

Dan Brown, author of the best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, has created quite a stir with some of his assertions. The book's hero, Robert Langdon, is out to prove himself innocent of a murder and goes in pursuit of the Holy Grail. But what he discovers is not what legend has said. Landon discovers secrets about Jesus, hidden in the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci, which the Catholic Church has been suppressing for two thousand years.

In the novel, Langdon is stalked by an Opus Dei priest who doesn't want Langdon to uncover the secret about the Catholic Church. The secret involves the notion that Jesus was not divine and that the Bible was written by a group of men with a political agenda. Readers also learn that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered the line of French kings, the Merovingians.

The author is anything but orthodox. When asked whether he is a Christian, he answered, "I am, although not in the most traditional sense of the word... I consider myself a student of many religions." When asked about Opus Dei, he said, "While Opus Dei is a very positive force in the lives of many people, for others affiliation with Opus Dei has been a profoundly negative experience. Their portrayal in the novel is based on more than a dozen books written on Opus Dei as well as my own personal interviews with current and former members."

When asked if his book is anti-Catholic, the best he could offer was that he didn't mean it to be. "I'm fascinated with Christian History, and I wanted to build a thriller," he said. "It's a chase through Europe after the oldest and most famous and powerful secret that lives on today in popular culture." His thoughts on Leonardo Da Vinci: "He had an unfortunate place in history of being born a modern man of reason in an age of religious fervor, when science was synonymous with

heresy.”

Brown’s observations on the Catholic Church and women are quite revealing. For Brown, the Church has repressed both women and the feminine side of Christianity for centuries. For example, “Those deemed ‘witches’ by the Church included all female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, mystics, nature lovers, herb gatherers, and any other women ‘suspiciously attuned to the natural world.’” He also says that during three hundred years of witch hunts, “the Church burned at the stake an astounding five million women.”

Most of Brown’s novel ideas are of no real interest to the Catholic League. Unfortunately, however, there are millions of undiscerning Americans who find it difficult to separate fact from fiction. To believe that the Church burned five million witches is insane. It would mean that most of the female population of Europe would have been wiped out. Besides, it was not the Catholic Church that did most of the persecution of witches—it was civil authorities. And, in fact, the Protestant states persecuted witches with far more gusto than the Inquisition.

We agree with Brown on one thing: he is not a Christian in the most traditional sense of the word.