

***SITUATING CHRISTIANITY AND POWER IN SELECT NOVELS
BY DAN BROWN***

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Submitted

***In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.***

DECLARATION

Mizoram University

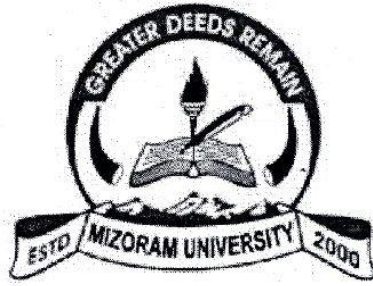
December, 2014.

I, Zorinsangi, hereby declare that the subject manner of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that “Situating Christianity and Power in Select Novels by Dan Brown” written by Zorinsangi has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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(ZORINSANGI)

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Chapter 1: Situating Dan Brown in the Context of Literature.

The American writer and musician Dan Brown was born on the 22th of June, 1964 to be the oldest of three children in Exeter, New Hampshire, USA. He grew up on the campus of Phillips Exeter Academy where his father, Richard G. Brown worked as a Math professor and his mother, Constance Brown, a professional sacred musician. (Paulson, 2009) Brown hugely credits his parents' different backgrounds with his interest in both science and religion as both of Brown's parents are also singers and musicians, having served as Church choir masters, with his mother also serving as Church organist. Growing up on the Exeter campus and having participated in a college related life that was also informed by Christian values- singing in the Church choir and attending Church camp, Brown, himself was raised an Episcopalianⁱ.

After graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1982, Brown attended Amherst College, where he was a member of the Psi Upsilon fraternityⁱⁱ. He gave zealous efforts in participating in the various activities of the college. He played squash, sang in the Amherst Glee Club, and was even a writing student of the visiting novelist Alan Lelchukⁱⁱⁱ. (Price, n.d) Brown spent the 1985 school year abroad in Seville, Spain, where he was enrolled in an art history course at the University of Seville. Brown's experience in Spain hugely influenced his writings. He took writing classes, that would feed into his eventual career as a novelist.

At the start of his career, Brown initially intended to follow in his mother's footsteps as a musician albeit in different musical genres, and he also released several Compact Disk albums

under his own label. After graduating from Amherst in 1986, Brown dabbled with his musical career, creating effects with a synthesizer, and self-producing a children's cassette entitled *Synth Animals*, which included a collection of tracks such as *Happy Frogs* and *Suzuki Elephants*. This album sold a few hundred copies. Brown then formed his own record company called *Dalliance*, and in 1990, he self-published for the second time, a Compact Disk album entitled *Perspective*, targeted to the adult market. This too sold a few hundred copies. In 1991, Brown moved to Hollywood to pursue a career as singer-songwriter and pianist. To support himself financially, he taught classes at Beverly Hills Preparatory School and also joined the National Academy of Songwriters, and participated in many of its events. While pursuing his music career in California, Brown met Blythe Newlon, the woman who would become his wife. Newlon was the Director of Artist Development at the National Academy of Songwriters at the time and was 12 years his senior. Brown and Newlon married in 1997, at Pea Porridge Pond, near Conway, New Hampshire. (Price, n.d)

In 1993, Brown released an album titled *Dan Brown*, which included songs such as *976-Love* and *If You Believe in Love*. And in 1994, Brown released another album *Angels & Demons* where the artwork used was the same ambigram by artist John Langdon which was later used for the novel *Angels & Demons*^{iv}. The album included songs such as *Here in These Fields* and the religious ballad *All I Believe*. Brown and his wife moved back to his hometown in New Hampshire in 1993 where Brown became an English teacher at his alma mater, Phillips Exeter Academy. At this time, Brown also gave Spanish classes to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at Lincoln Akerman School in Hampton Falls. (Paulson, 2009)

The year 1993 marked a very important year for Dan Brown and also for the development of his career as a writer. It was in this year that, while on holiday in Tahiti, Brown read Sidney Sheldon's^v novel *The Doomsday Conspiracy*, and was so inspired by it that he wanted to become a writer of thrillers. (Price, n.d) Brown immediately started work on his first thriller *Digital Fortress*^{vi}, setting much of its plot in Seville, Spain, where he had studied in 1985 but couldn't finish as promptly as he had wanted to since he was still a teacher, by profession. In 1996, Brown eventually became a full-time writer and *Digital Fortress* was published in 1998. Brown subsequently wrote *Angels & Demons* which was released in 2000 and *Deception Point*^{vii}, released in the next year, 2001. *Angels & Demons* was the first to feature the lead character, Harvard^{viii} symbology expert Robert Langdon.

Brown's first three novels had little success, with fewer than ten thousand copies in each of their first printings. However, his fourth novel, *The Da Vinci Code*^{ix}, became a bestseller, going to the top of the *New York Times*' Best Seller list during its first week of release in 2003. It is now credited with being one of the most popular books of all time, with more than 81 million copies sold worldwide. Amazingly, the book's success has won huge popularity for Brown and has helped push sales of Brown's earlier books. In 2004, all four of Brown's novels were on the *New York Times* list, all in the same week, and in 2005, Brown made it to *Time* magazine's list of the one hundred most influential people of the year. *Forbes* magazine also placed Brown at number twelve on their 2005 'Celebrity 100' list, and estimated his annual income at US\$76.5 million. *The Times* estimated his income from *The Da Vinci Code* sales as \$250 million. (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d)

Brown's third novel featuring Robert Langdon, *The Lost Symbol*^x, was released on September 15, 2009. According to the publisher, on its first day the book sold over one million in

hardcover and e-book versions in the U.S., the U.K. and Canada, prompting the printing of 600,000 hardcover copies in addition to the five million first printing. (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d) The plot of *The Lost Symbol* takes place in Washington D.C. over a period of twelve hours, and features the Freemasons. Brown's promotional website states that puzzles hidden in the book jacket of *The Da Vinci Code*, including two references to the Kryptos sculpture at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, give hints about the sequel. This repeats a theme from some of Brown's earlier work. Brown's fourth novel featuring Robert Langdon, *Inferno*^{xi} is a mystery thriller novel released on May 14, 2013, by Doubleday. It, too, immediately became a bestseller. In an interview, back in 2006, Brown has stated that he had ideas for about twelve future books featuring Robert Langdon. (Lattman, 2006)

An explosive international thriller, Brown's first 'Robert Langdon Series', *Angels and Demons* published in 2000 by Pocket Books publishers, New York careens from enlightening epiphanies to dark truths as the battle between science and religion turns to war. The controversy 'revealed' is that the Catholic Church has had an unfortunate history of persecuting scientists and this centuries-old underground organization- the Illuminati has resurfaced with a deadly vendetta against the Catholic Church. (Newman, n.d)

Angels and Demons follows Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, as he tries to stop what seems to be the Illuminati, from destroying the Vatican City with the newly-discovered power of antimatter. The Illuminati are a secret society from long ago who's members were prominent and rich. They supposedly have resurfaced to carry out the final phase of its legendary vendetta against its most hated enemy, the Catholic Church , and are wanting media credit for evil acts of murder and mayhem to scare the world.

in the 1500s, a group of men in Rome fought back against the church. Some of Italy's most enlightened men... to share their concerns about the church's inaccurate teachings. They feared that the church's monopoly on 'truth' threatened academic enlightenment around the world. They founded the world's first scientific think tank, calling themselves 'the enlightened ones'. (Brown, *Angels and Demons*, 31- 32)

The basic plot is a classic race against time to find the hidden canister of antimatter and hunt down a serial killer in Rome. The book purports to show how the Vatican works as the plot to blow it up is uncovered during the conclave, revealing hidden secrets and mysteries as the story unfolds.

Leonardo Vetra, a world renowned scientist at CERN (Conseil European pour la Recherche Nucleaire) is found brutally murdered. His chest is branded with a symbol — the word 'Illuminati', formed as an ambigram, using a hot iron and his eye torn out. Instead of calling the police, the Director of CERN, Maximilian Kohler researches the topic on the Internet and finally gains contact with Professor Langdon, an expert on the Illuminati and requests his assistance in uncovering the murderer. What Langdon finds at the murder scene frightens him: the symbol appears to be authentic and the legendary secret society, long thought to be defunct, seems to have resurfaced.

Kohler calls Vetra's adopted daughter and project partner Vittoria to the scene, and it is ascertained that the Illuminati have stolen a canister containing antimatter — an extremely deadly substance with destructive potential comparable to the most powerful nuclear weapons in existence, a potential unleashed upon contact with any form of normal matter. When charged

with electricity at CERN, the canister's magnetic field controls the drop of antimatter to float in a pure vacuum, ensuring safety; but when it was taken away from its electricity supply, it automatically switched to its back-up battery, which will only power it for twenty four hours. The horrible truth is that the Illuminati has put the stolen canister somewhere in Vatican City, with a stolen security camera to show its digital clock counting down to explosion.

Langdon and Vittoria make their way to Vatican City, where the Pope has recently died and the papal conclave has convened to elect the new pontiff. Cardinal Saverio Mortati, host of the election, discovers that the four Preferiti- cardinals who are the most likely papal successor, are missing. Langdon and Vittoria begin searching for the Preferiti in hope that they will also find the antimatter canister in the process.

Convinced that the Illuminati are in some way responsible for the disappearance of the Preferiti, Langdon attempts to retrace the steps of the so-called 'Path of Illumination', an ancient and elaborate process once used by the Illuminati as a means of induction of new members; prospective candidates for the Order were required to follow a series of subtle clues left in various landmarks in and around the Vatican City to be granted membership. Using his extensive knowledge of religious and occult history, Langdon sets off on the Path of Illumination in hopes on uncovering clues as to the disappearance of the Preferiti and the location of the antimatter canister.

The Path leads Langdon to four major locations in the Vatican City, each associated with what the Illuminati believed to be the four primordial elements of all things in existence: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Upon arriving at each location, Langdon finds each one of the Preferiti murdered in a way thematically related to each location's related element. The first cardinal was

branded with an Earth ambigram and had soil forced down his throat; the second was branded with an air ambigram and had his lungs punctured; the third was branded with a fire ambigram and was burned alive; and the fourth was branded with a water ambigram and was left to drown at the bottom of a fountain.

After finding the bodies of the first two Preferiti (Earth and Air), Langdon hurries to the Santa Maria della Vittoria Basilica and finds the Preferiti's abductor in the act of setting the cardinal on fire. The kidnapper, who is also responsible for the Leonardo Vetra's murder and the theft of the antimatter canister, is an unnamed Hassassin who is working under the orders of the Illuminati master 'Janus', whose true identity is unknown until the revelation at the end of the book. Commander Olivetti dies and Langdon is nearly killed in this encounter with the Hassassin, who manages to kidnap Vittoria. Langdon escapes and accosts the Hassassin at the final element's landmark, but is unable to save the cardinal.

Having been unsuccessful at saving any of the Preferiti, Langdon nevertheless attempts to complete the Path of Illumination in order to find the Hassassin and rescue Vittoria.. His search leads him to Castle Sant'Angelo that hides a tunnel leading directly into the pope's chambers in the Vatican. Langdon frees Vittoria, and together they send the Hassassin falling several hundred feet to his death. The two hurry back to St. Peter's Basilica, where they find that Kohler has arrived to confront the Pope's closest aid, camerlengo^{xiii} Carlo Ventresca in private. Langdon and Vittoria fear that Kohler is Janus, and that he has come to murder the camerlengo as the final step in his plot against the Church. Hearing the camerlengo scream in agony from being branded with the Illuminati Diamond, the Swiss Guards burst into the room and open fire on Kohler. Just before he dies, Kohler gives Langdon a videotape that he claims will explain everything.

With time running out, the Swiss Guard begins to evacuate the Basilica. As he is exiting the church, the camerlengo apparently goes into a trance and rushes back into the Basilica, claiming that he has received a vision from God revealing the location of the antimatter canister. With Langdon and a few others in pursuit, the camerlengo ventures into the catacombs and finds the canister sitting atop the tomb of Saint Peter. Langdon and the camerlengo retrieve the antimatter and get in a helicopter with only minutes to spare. The camerlengo manages to parachute safely onto the roof of St. Peter's just as the canister explodes harmlessly in the sky.. Langdon survived the explosion by using a window cover from the chopper as a parachute and landed in the Tiber River near Tiber Island, which is famous for its reputation as an island blessed with miracles of healing.

Langdon returns to St. Peter's and views Kohler's tape with the College of Cardinals. Langdon, Vittoria, and the cardinals confront the camerlengo in the Sistine Chapel, where the truth is finally revealed. They found out that shortly before his sudden death, the Pope was scheduled to meet with Leonardo Vetra concerning his research at CERN. Vetra, a devout Catholic, believed that science was capable of establishing a link between Man and God, a belief that was manifested by his research on antimatter. Vetra's research greatly impressed the late Pope and it was known that he even considered the Vatican funding the project which caused great discomfort to the camerlengo, who firmly believed that the Church alone, not science, should dictate the moral creed of the Christian faithful.

While discussing about Vetra to the camerlengo, the Pope reveals that his support is also due to science having created him a miracle- a son. Without waiting to hear the explanation and horrified that the Pope appeared to have broken his vow of chastity, the camerlengo plots to rectify the situation. He had poisoned the pope and, under the guise of an Illuminati master

(Janus), recruited the Hassassin, a killer fueled by the same zeal and animus towards the Church as his ancestors, to kill Leonardo Vetra, steal the antimatter, kidnap and murder the Preferiti just as the papal conclave was set to convene. The camerlengo had planted the antimatter in St. Peter's and feigned his last-minute 'vision' from God in order to be seen as a hero and the savior of Christendom by those who witnessed his brave acts. As one final twist, it is also revealed, much to his own shock that Camerlengo Carlo Ventresca himself was the birth son of the late Pope, conceived through artificial insemination. Overcome with grief and guilt at having caused so much death, Ventresca soaks himself in oil and immolates himself before a crowd of onlookers in St. Peter's Square. The conclave elects Cardinal Mortati as the new pope.

The Illuminati thus had no actual role in any of the novel's events, and its 'involvement' was merely a plot engineered by the camerlengo to cover his own plans. As Langdon suspected from the very beginning, the Order of the Illuminati was indeed long extinct. By the end of the novel, Langdon and Vittoria retire to the Hotel Bernini. Lieutenant Chartrand delivers a letter and package to Langdon from the new Pope. The package contains the 'Illuminati Diamond' brand, which is loaned to Langdon.

The Da Vinci Code, the second book of the 'Robert Langdon series', published by Doubleday in 2003 refers to cryptic messages that supposedly were incorporated by Leonardo Da Vinci^{xiii} into his artwork. The idea for the book first came to Brown while he was studying art history in Spain and learned about hidden symbols in Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings. While he was researching *Angels and Demons*, Brown was confronted with the works of Leonardo Da Vinci once again so he arranged to go to the Louvre, where he saw many of Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings and interviewed an art historian. (Paulson, 2009) Before writing *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown spent a year researching on Leonardo Da Vinci and reading widely about cryptography

and symbology. He also studied up on, and interviewed members of Opus Dei, a controversial organization within the Catholic Church.

The Da Vinci Code journeys through Paris, London, and just south of Edinburgh, Scotland. The plot also makes reference to New York City and areas of Spain. The plot occurs in the present day. While in Paris on business, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon (first introduced in *Angels & Demons*) receives an urgent late-night phone call which states that the elderly curator of the Louvre^{xiv}, Jacques Sauniere has been murdered inside the museum. Near the body, police have found a baffling cipher.

Solving the enigmatic riddle, Langdon is stunned to discover it leads to a trail of clues hidden in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, clues visible for all to see and yet ingeniously disguised by the painter. Langdon joins forces with a gifted French cryptologist, Sophie Neveu, and learns the late curator was involved in the Priory of Sion—an actual secret society whose members included Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci, among others. The Louvre curator had sacrificed his life in order to protect the Priory's most sacred trust- the location of a vastly important religious relic, hidden for centuries.

According to the novel, five months before the death of Jacques Sauniere, Bishop Aringarosa is called to the Vatican and told that the Pope no longer wants the Catholic Church to be associated with Opus Dei. A few weeks later, Aringarosa receives a call from Lee Teabing, who disguises himself as a devout Frenchman and calls himself “the Teacher.” Teabing tells Aringarosa that for twenty-million euro, he would share the location of the Holy Grail with Aringarosa who can use it to bargain with the Church.

When Teabing has enough information he tells Silas, the Opus Dei albino monk, to kill the Grand Master and his senechaux. Silas must first demand to know where the keystone is:

“According to lore, the brotherhood had created a map of stone- a *clef de voute*...or keystone- an engraved tablet that revealed the final resting place of the brotherhood’s very existence.” (Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 13)

“ The keystone. It will lead us to our final goal” (ibid. 74)

When Silas kills the men, they each give him the same incorrect answer. As he lay dying in the Grand Gallery, Jacques Saunier too has lied to Silas about the Grail’s location. Realizing that he has only a few minutes to live and that he must pass on his important secret, Saunier paints a pentacle on his stomach with his own blood, draws a circle with his blood, and drags himself into the center of the circle, re-creating the position of Leonardo Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man^{xv}. He also leaves a code, a line of numbers, and two lines of text on the ground. Robert Langdon is actually brought to the crimescene by the police captain, Bezu Fache because he felt that Langdon was responsible for the murder as, Saunier left a riddle on the floor next to his body, that included Langdon’s name.

13- 3- 2- 31- 1- 1- 8- 5

O, Draconian devil!

Oh, lame saint!

P.S. Find Robert Langdon. (ibid. 67)

Langdon and Sophie follow Saunier’s clues to a Swiss Bank where they uncover a cryptex. Without knowing that Teabing is the mastermind behind the murders that occurred that

evening, Langdon takes Sophie to his home. Teabing is a religious historian and a life-long Grail seeker as well as Langdon's friend. They were able to open the cryptex, finding only another cryptex inside. Teabing purposely misreads the next clue, leading them to the wrong place.

However, after much struggle, Sophie and Langdon decipher the real location described in the clue and they go to Westminster where Langdon retrieves the cryptex from Teabing and is able to guess the password. He and Sophie went to Scotland where they believe the Grail is. Instead, they find Sophie's grandmother and brother, whom Sophie believed were dead and who were supposedly, the descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, we also learn that Mary Magdalene's story would have been lost forever had it not been for her protectors who chronicled Mary's life, and even catalogued her descendants. Nevertheless, the Church relentlessly sought to annihilate all documents relating to her identity and 'her family's rightful claim to power.' This ongoing attempt by Roman Catholic authorities to eradicate all evidence of 'the true story of her life' went on for centuries. The Church's diabolical plot failed, however, because a group of truth-honoring knights stepped into the conflict. These warriors known collectively as 'the Knights Templar' were organized by a brotherhood called the Priory of Sion, a secret group allegedly founded in 1099 by the French king Godefroi de Bouillon. He was a descendant of Jesus and Mary, who according to *The Da Vinci Code*, formed the Priory in order that the truth would be protected and passed on to future generations.

but the brotherhood had another, more important duty as well- to protect the bloodline itself. Christ lineage was in perpetual danger. The early Church feared that if the lineage were permitted to grow, the secret of Jesus and Magdalene

would eventually surface and challenge the fundamental Catholic doctrine- that of a divine Messiah who did not consort with women or engage in sexual union.

(ibid. 257)

In a breathless race through Paris, London, and beyond, Langdon and Neveu match wits with a faceless powerbroker who appears to work for Opus Dei— the clandestine, Vatican-sanctioned Catholic sect believed to have long plotted to seize the Priory’s secret. Unless Langdon and Neveu can decipher the labyrinthine puzzle in time, the Priory’s secret and a stunning historical truth will be lost forever. In an exhilarating blend of relentless adventure, scholarly intrigue, and cutting wit, symbologist Robert Langdon in *The Da Vinci Code* is the most interesting character to appear in years. The book heralds the arrival of a new breed of lightning-paced, intelligent thriller, surprising at every twist, absorbing at every turn, and in the end, utterly unpredictable, right up to its astonishing conclusion.

The third book of the ‘Robert Langdon Series’, *The Lost Symbol* is about the pursuit of ‘ancient mysteries’ hidden in Washington DC by the Freemasons^{xvi}. When it was published in 2009, there were predictions that it would antagonise the Freemasons in the same way that the Catholic Church was stung by *The Da Vinci Code*. The protagonist Robert Langdon, an expert in symbols, is trying to crack a series of cryptic clues related to Masonic secrets that are hidden in some of Washington's most famous buildings. In this book, Dan Brown demonstrates once again as to why he is the world’s most popular thriller writer. *The Lost Symbol* is a masterstroke of storytelling— a deadly race through a real-world labyrinth of codes, secrets, and unseen truths, all under the watchful eye of Brown’s most terrifying villain to date. Set within the hidden chambers, tunnels, and temples of Washington, D.C.

As the story unfolds, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon is summoned unexpectedly to deliver an evening lecture in the U.S. Capitol Building by his mentor, a 33rd degree Mason named Peter Solomon, who was the head of the Smithsonian Institution, and was also asked to bring a small, sealed package which Solomon had entrusted to Langdon many years earlier. Within minutes of his arrival, however, the night takes a bizarre turn. When Langdon arrives at the Capitol, he learns that the invitation he received was not from Solomon, but from Solomon's kidnapper, Mal'akh, who has left Solomon's severed right hand in the middle of the Capitol Rotunda in a recreation of the Hand of Mysteries. A disturbing object— a human hand, artfully encoded with five symbols is discovered in the Capitol Building. Langdon recognizes the object as an ancient invitation, one meant to usher its recipient into a long-lost world of esoteric wisdom.

Peter Solomon's severed right hand was standing upright, the flat plane of the detached wrist skewered down onto the spike of a small wooden stand. Three of the fingers were closed in a fist, while the thumb and index finger were fully extended, pointing up toward the soaring dome.The Hand of Mysteries.
(Brown, *The Lost Symbol*, 79- 80)

When it is found out that Langdon's beloved mentor, Peter Solomon—a prominent Mason and philanthropist is brutally kidnapped, Langdon realizes his only hope of saving Peter is to accept this mystical invitation and follow wherever it leads him. Mal'akh contacts Langdon, charging him with finding both the Mason's Pyramid, which Masons believe is hidden somewhere underground in Washington D.C., and the Lost Word, lest Solomon be executed. Langdon is instantly plunged into a clandestine world of Masonic secrets, hidden history, and

never-before-seen locations—all of which seem to be dragging him toward a single, inconceivable truth.

Several chapters also delve into Mal'akh's history with Peter Solomon. Many years ago, Peter bequeathed a large sum of inheritance money to his rebellious son, Zachary, who then fled the Solomon household and led a reckless life in Europe until he was arrested and imprisoned in Turkey for smuggling drugs. Peter flew to Turkey, but decided to have Zachary extradited in a week's time instead of getting him out immediately in order to teach him a lesson, but apparently, Zachary was murdered by his cellmate, who got his hands on Zachary's fortune and fled to Greece to lead a luxurious life under the name Andros Dareios.

Dareios, however, soon grew tired of his life. Apparently having spoken with Zachary about Solomon's life as a Mason, Dareios broke into Solomon's home to find the Masonic pyramid, but accidentally killed Peter's mother, Isabel, and was in turn shot and left to fall into a frozen river by a vengeful Solomon himself. Surviving the fall, Dareios nursed himself back to health, covered his scars and eventually his entire body with tattoos and set off on a mission to infiltrate the Freemasons and gain access to their secrets, adopting the name Mal'akh.

“ They will never know my true purpose here..... Soon you will lose everything you hold most dear.” (*ibid.* 19- 21)

Langdon met with Inoue Sato, the head of the CIA's Office of Security who claims that Mal'akh poses a threat to the national security of the US, and that his capture is more important than Peter's rescue, although she refuses to elaborate. Sato then confronts Langdon with the security x-ray taken of his bag when he entered the Capitol, which reveals a smaller pyramid in

the package and attempts to take Langdon into custody. However Bellamy, the Architect of the Capitol and a Freemason, flees with Langdon during the melee. He later explains to Langdon that he too has been in contact with Mal'akh, and wants Langdon's assistance in rescuing Peter.

Mal'akh has infiltrated the organization in order to obtain an ancient source of power, which he believes Langdon can unlock for him in return for Peter Solomon's life. As Langdon deals with the events into which he has been thrust, Mal'akh destroys the Smithsonian-sponsored laboratory of Dr. Katherine Solomon, Peter's younger sister, where she has conducted experiments in Noetic Science, in the process ambushing and almost killing Katherine, but she manages to escape and meet up with Langdon and Bellamy.

Mal'akh is able to convince Langdon to unlock the code at the Pyramid's base, and then flees with a weakened and wheelchair-bound Peter Solomon to the Temple Room of the Scottish Rite's House of the Temple and forces the Word—the circumpunct—out of Peter and tattoos it on his head on the last portion of unmarked skin on his body. Mal'akh then orders Peter to sacrifice him, as he believes that it is his destiny to become a demonic spirit and lead the forces of evil. When Peter claims that he will do so without hesitation to avenge his son and mother, Mal'akh shocks Peter by revealing that he is actually Zachary Solomon himself, having conspired with the prison warden in order to fake his death by disfiguring the body of another inmate beyond recognition.

Fortunately, the CIA thwarted Zachary's plan and fatally impaled him and later on, Peter informs Langdon that the circumpunct Zachary tattooed on his head is not 'the Word'. He also informs Katherine that he had made back-ups of all of her noetic research data on his own computer, which meant that her research can continue. Deciding to take Langdon to the true

secret behind the Word, Peter leads him to the room atop the Washington Monument and tells him that the Word—a common Christian Bible, the "Word of God"—lies in the Monument's cornerstone, buried in the ground beneath the Monument's staircase. Langdon realizes that the symbols on the pyramid's base spelled out the words *Laus Deo* which translate to *Praise God*. These words are inscribed upon the small aluminum capstone atop the Monument, which is the true Masonic Pyramid.

Peter placed a hand on Langdon's shoulder. 'Robert, the Lost Word is not a "word".' He gave a sage smile. 'We only call it the "Word" because that's what the ancients called it...in the beginning.' For America's Masonic forefathers, the Word had been the Bible. The moment mankind separated himself from God, the true meaning of the Word was lost. (ibid. 640- 646)

As the world discovered in *Angels & Demons*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Lost Symbol*, Dan Brown's novels are brilliant tapestries of veiled histories, arcane symbols, and enigmatic codes. In this novel, Brown challenges readers with an intelligent, lightning-paced stories that offer surprises at every turn. His novels accelerate through startling landscapes toward each unthinkable finale.

The son of a mathematics teacher and a church organist, raised on a preparatory school campus, with his fascination with the paradoxical interplay between science and religion, Dan Brown is the author of numerous bestselling novels which has become the subject of intellectual debate among readers and scholars around the world.

Notes

ⁱ An Episcopalian is someone who is a member of a Church in the Anglican Communion or in Anglican Tradition. The Episcopal Church, also called the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, is the United States-based member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion

ⁱⁱ Psi Upsilon (ΨΥ, Psi U) is the fifth oldest college fraternity in the United States founded at Union College on November 24, 1833. It has chapters at colleges and universities throughout North America.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alan Lelchuk is a novelist, professor, and editor from Brooklyn, New York. His novels are *American Mischief*, *Miriam at Thirty-Four*, *Shrinking: The Beginning of My Own Ending*, *Miriam in Her Forties*, *Brooklyn Boy*, *Playing the Game*, and *Ziff: A Life?* He co-edited *8 Great Hebrew Short Novels* and has written, for young adults, *On Home Ground*. His work has been translated into more than half a dozen foreign languages, including Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

^{iv} *Angels & Demons* is a 2000 bestselling mystery-thriller novel written by Dan Brown and published by Pocket Books.

^v Sidney Sheldon (February 11, 1917 – January 30, 2007) was an American writer. He became most famous after he turned 50 and began writing best-selling novels, such as *Master of the Game* (1982), *The Other Side of Midnight* (1973) and *Rage of Angels* (1980).

^{vi} *Digital Fortress* is a techno-thriller novel written by Dan Brown and published in 1998 by St. Martin's Press.

^{vii} *Deception Point* is a techno-thriller novel by Dan Brown published in 2001 by Pocket Books.

^{viii} Harvard University is a private Ivy League research university in Cambridge, Massachusetts, whose history, influence and wealth have made it one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

^{ix} *The Da Vinci Code* is a 2003 mystery-detective novel written by Dan Brown and published by Doubleday.

^x *The Lost Symbol* is a 2009 novel written by Dan Brown and published by Doubleday.

^{xi} *Inferno* is a 2013 mystery thriller novel by Dan Brown and the fourth book in his 'Robert Langdon series'. It was published by Doubleday.

^{xii} The camerlango Carlo Ventresca will be referred as 'camerlango' hereon as done in the novel.

^{xiii} Leonardo da Vinci was an Italian polymath, painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer. He is widely considered to be one of the greatest painters of all time and perhaps the most diversely talented person ever to have lived. His works include *Mona Lisa*, *The Last Supper* and *The Vitruvian Man*

^{xiv} The Louvre or the Louvre Museum is one of the world's largest museums and a historic monument. A central landmark of Paris, France, it is located on the Right Bank of the Seine in the 1st arrondissement(district). Nearly 35,000 objects from prehistory to the 21st century are exhibited over an area of 60,600 square metres (652,300 square feet). With more than 9.7 million visitors each year, the Louvre is the world's most visited museum.

^{xv} The *Vitruvian Man* is a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci around 1490. The drawing is based on the correlations of ideal human proportions with geometry described by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius in Book III of his treatise *De Architectura*.

^{xvi} Freemasonry is a fraternal organisation that traces its origins to the local fraternities of stonemasons, which from the end of the 14th Century regulated the qualifications of masons and their interaction with authorities and clients.

Chapter 2: Christianity in Brown's Discourse.

Growing up under the religious environment of having a Church choir master father and a Church organist mother in a household where religious and academic topics were discussed openly, Dan Brown's family background gives hint to the writer fascinated with esoteric mysteries that he now is. As such, the works of Dan Brown touch on many kinds of mysteries and conspiracy theories where mysteries or theories regarding religion, particularly that of Christianity has always been found to be the most prominent theme in his novels.

Dan Brown, was interviewed John Dankosky on June 7 at the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford, Conn. The on-stage conversation and book-signing event benefitted the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford when the conversation turned to religion and science, topics Brown has dealt with in his novels. Brown's parents exposed him to both from an early age: at an Episcopal church, he read the Bible and sang in the choir, accompanied by his mother, who played the organ and was known as the 'church lady.' His math-professor, textbook-writing father took him star gazing and told him about the Big Bang Theory. (Yarger, 2014)

The two worldviews collided for Brown when he was 13. He had always been encouraged by his parents to ask questions, and he asked a priest which view was correct. The priest responded, "Nice boys don't ask that question." That episode nudged Brown away from his childhood faith. But a deeper exploration of science brought him back to the conclusion there

must be a god. “The more I find out, the less I know,” Brown said. He wishes the two sides in the debate could engage in more civil dialogue and ‘learn to be friends’ but noted this is difficult when people get dogmatic. (Yarger, 2014) Dan gave an interesting example for such dogmatism, people claiming the Bible is the only truth means that nothing else can be true, and the discussion ends.

Dankosky asked Brown whether he would rather live in a world without religion or without science. Brown would choose a world with religion, as long as that meant spirituality more broadly and not just institutions. “We’re all looking at the same god, whatever he, she, or it is. It’s all just a different language,” said Brown. The big questions are spiritual ones, he said, and “I fear science doesn’t have all of the answers.” Since science and religion use “two different languages to tell the same story,” Brown said his books are a “quest to fuse those two worlds.” (Yarger, 2014)

Dan Brown’s first book of the ‘Robert Langdon Series’, *Angels & Demons*, published by Pocket Books in 1998, is a story that evolves completely within the realm of the Catholic Church. Robert Langdon is introduced as a man who loves ‘art, symbology, codes, secret societies’ and is a professor of religious iconology at Harvard University although it is shown in the book that he doesn’t put much faith in religion himself.

‘You sound sceptical,’ Kohler said. ‘I thought you were a religious symbologist. Do you not believe in miracles?’.....‘Not to disappoint you, sir, but I study religious symbology- I’m an academic, not a priest’. (Brown, *Angels and Demons*, 21)

Despite his notorious relationship with the Roman Catholic church, this Harvard symbologist has been called upon to decipher the clues to a catastrophic conspiracy within the Catholic Church. The Pope Father Silvano Bentivoglio has died, and the conclave has gathered in a locked room to choose his successor among four cardinals, the designated 'preferitti' who were hand-picked to be successors to the church's throne, but before a conclave can begin to determine who will be the next Pope, the four preferitti are kidnapped. An ominous threat of their hourly demise, along with the complete annihilation of Vatican City, is issued as an elaborate revenge schemed by a persecuted group known as the Illuminati.

The Illuminati went deep underground, where they began mixing with other refugee groups fleeing the Catholic purges- mystics, alchemist, occultists, Muslims, Jews. Over the years, the Illuminati began absorbing new members. A new Illuminati emerged. A darker Illuminati. A deeply anti- Christian Illuminati. (ibid. 34)

While Robert Langdon and Vittora Vetra along with the help of the Catholic Church and the Vatican police are attempting to save the cardinals, three of the cardinals die horrific deaths, all seconds before they are able to intervene. Not only is the Catholic Church running out of candidates for Pope, the digital clock on the antimatter counting down to explosion is also running out of time. The complete ruin of the Vatican city and the 'end' of Catholicism is feared.

If the Illuminati were still active, and if they stole the antimatter, what would be their intention? What would be their target?there would be a rather majestic eloquence to it- antimatter, the ultimate scientific achievement, being used to vaporie. (ibid. 92)

Although Brown's story in *Angels and Demons* is centered on the Vatican, the characters have heavily debated upon issues, such as Creation vs. Evolution and the purpose of the church in today's society. The most stirring and thought-provoking is captured when Professor Langdon and Vittoria Vetra are dialoguing about the very existence of God when the two scientific minded characters are on a plane for Rome to warn Vatican City about the catastrophic threat against them.

Vittoria was watching him. 'Do you believe in God, Mr. Langdon?' The question startled him.... Although he studied religion for years, Langdon was not a religious man. He respected the power of faith, the benevolence of churches, the strength religion gave so many people...and yet, for him, the intellectual suspension of disbelief that was imperative if one were truly going to 'believe' had always proved too big an obstacle for his academic mind. 'I *want* to believe,' he heard himself say. (ibid. 108)

As she digs for a deeper response, the tables are turned between Robert Langdon Vittoria Vetra. Vittoria's response, like those of so many academics is that, she is reluctant to accept the figure of God as depicted in the Christian Bible.

'As a scientist and a daughter of a Catholic priest, what do *you* think of religion?' Vittoria paused, brushing a lock of hair from her eyes. 'Religion is like language or dress. We gravitate toward the practices with which we were raised. In the end, though, we are all proclaiming the same thing. That life has meaning. That we are grateful for the power that created us'.

‘And God?’ he asked. ‘Do you believe in God?’

Vittoria was silent for a long time. ‘Science tells me God must exist. My mind tells me that I will never understand God. And my heart tells me I am not meant to’. (ibid. 110)

Vittoria Vetra even goes on to explain that she believes Native Americans ‘got it right’ and that God is Mother Earth. The disinclination both characters show to accept one True God as fact seems to stem from Brown’s personal faith. On an occasion where Dan Brown was asked if he was a Christian, he posted his reply on his official Web site:

Yes. Interestingly, if you ask three people what it means to be Christian, you will get three different answers. Some feel being baptized is sufficient. Others feel you must accept the Bible as absolute historical fact. Still others require a belief that all those who do not accept Christ as their personal savior are doomed to hell. Faith is a continuum, and we each fall on that line where we may. By attempting to rigidly classify ethereal concepts like faith, we end up debating semantics to the point where we entirely miss the obvious--that is, that we are all trying to decipher life's big mysteries, and we're each following our own paths of enlightenment. I consider myself a student of many religions. The more I learn, the more questions I have. For me, the spiritual quest will be a life-long work in progress” (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d).

Brown’s spiritual quest led him to this personal faith conclusion, albeit incomplete. This confession seems to indicate that he is still seeking the Truth.

Brown has, many a time sounded as though he is advocating a view called 'Religious Pluralism.'ⁱ The basic assertion of this view is that all roads lead to 'God'. No one religious or faith view is correct, nor should anyone claim that their particular religious outlook is absolute or objective. As he believed, all humans must each follow 'our own paths of enlightenment.' He said,

Particle physicists now believe that matter – that is, everything around us – is trapped energy . . . Each of us in this room are nothing more than pure energy manifesting itself in the shape of human beings . . . These same physicists who proclaim that everything around us is energy are now quietly asking if it is really coincidence that the vast majority of ancient religious texts, including the Bible, describe God as energy, and that they describe God as all around us. (Lattman, 2006)

When *The Da Vinci Code* was published by Doubleday in 2003, many Christian leaders denounced the book and they refuted many of the claims made therein. It has now been years since it was released, and although much of the objectionable claims made against Christ and His Church have been debunked, the ideas that have been presented in the book have had a significant impact upon people around the globe.

“FACT: . . . All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” (Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*)

Thus begins one of the best-selling and most controversial books in history. Dan Brown's action-thriller *The Da Vinci Code* became a cultural phenomenon and triggered a firestorm of

debate due to many of the statements about Jesus Christ. The Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon joins forces with a gifted French cryptologist, Sophie Neveu when Sophie's grandfather, the elderly curator of the Louvre has been murdered inside the museum. Near the body, police have found a baffling cipher. Solving the enigmatic riddle, Langdon is stunned to discover it leads to a trail of clues hidden in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, clues visible for all to see and yet ingeniously disguised by the painter.

Da Vinci. Langdon felt a shiver of amazement. The clarity of Saunier's intentions could not be denied. In his final moments of life, the curator had stripped off his clothing and arranged his body in clear image of Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*. (ibid. 45)

According to *The Da Vinci Code*, true Christianity was started by Jesus Christ whom many people viewed as 'just another prophet'. He allegedly made no claims of divinity. Moreover, he was married, and his wife was none other than Mary Magdaleneⁱⁱ, who not only bore his child when he was crucified, but who also was handpicked by him to lead the Church. According to the book, this plan, however, fell through after Christ's death because the other apostles, especially Peterⁱⁱⁱ, were jealous of Mary's role among the group and were enraged about Mary being Christ's successor. So she fled in fear of her life to France, where she raised Christ's daughter and her descendents intermarried with French royalty, thereby creating the Merovingian^{iv} bloodline of kings.

"...Christ's line grew quietly undercover in France until making a bold move in the fifth century, when it intermarried with French royal blood and created a lineage known as the Merovingian bloodline." (ibid. 257)

The story involves a quest for a redefined holy grail^v. Rather than being the cup used by Christ during the Last Supper, Brown's book claims the grail is Mary Magdalene. However, the apostles changed Christ's message so they could make the church patriarchal and suppress women. They tried desperately to destroy any documents or evidence that went against their claims. Supposedly, a secret society called the Priory of Sion passed on the truth to its followers, which included an impressive list of scientists and scholars throughout history, such as Leonardo da Vinci^{vi} and Isaac Newton^{vii}. Brown claims that Leonardo da Vinci left clues in his artwork, especially *The Last Supper* painting.

Sophie examined the figure to Jesus' immediate right, focusing in. As she studied the person's face and body, a wave of astonishment rose within her. The individual had flowing red hair, delicate folded hands, and the hint of a bosom. it was, without a doubt...female. (ibid. 243)

The book centers on the idea that sitting to the right of Jesus in the painting is Mary Magdalene rather than the Apostle John. Virtually everyone knew this "truth" during Christianity's earliest years, according to Brown's book. But then, by recasting Mary "as a whore in order to erase evidence of her powerful family ties," male church leaders were able to begin "the greatest cover-up in human history." (ibid. 256) These religious villains also supposedly changed the originally pagan, goddess-worshipping church into a Jesus-worshipping, power-crazed den of evildoers who perverted Christ's teachings to further their own political agenda.

That's part of what the Crusades were about. Gathering and destroying information. The threat Mary Magdalene posed to the men of the early Church was potentially ruinous. Not only was she the woman to whom Jesus had assigned

the task of founding the Church, but she also had physical proof that the Church's newly proclaimed deity had spawned a mortal bloodline. (ibid. 254)

Langdon learns that the late curator was involved in the brotherhood, the Priory of Sion— whose members included Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci, among others who, according to *The Da Vinci Code*, were formed so the truth would be protected. The Louvre curator had sacrificed his life in order to protect the Priory's most sacred trust: the location of a vastly important religious relic, hidden for centuries. Unless Langdon and Neveu can decipher the labyrinthine puzzle the deceased curator had put out for them in time, the Priory's secret—and a stunning historical truth—will be lost forever.

I must pass on the secret.

Staggering to his feet, he pictured his three murdered brethren. He thought of the generations who had come before them...of the mission with which they had all been entrusted.

An unbroken chain of knowledge. (ibid. 5)

At one point in the novel, Teabing told Sophie to read from *The Gospel of Philip*^{viii} in an effort to prove that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married:

“And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval”. (ibid. 246)

Teabing asserted that as any Aramaic scholar will agree, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse.

Like his previous thriller, *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown's next best seller takes the reader on a fascinating tour of architectural symbols, statuary and cryptic meaning. No longer centered in Rome or Paris, *The Lost Symbol*, published in 2009 is all about the U.S. capitol in Washington D.C. Acclaimed as the fastest selling adult novel in history, the book's plot is based on the premise that an ancient treasure of unimaginable value was hidden in Washington D.C. by the nation's forefathers. A treasure so precious that it was brought to America centuries ago for safekeeping.

The story is mostly a race between a ruthless character intent on finding the treasure for his own gain and the main character, Robert Langdon who tries to get there first to stop him. As Robert Langdon deciphers one fascinating clue after another, it becomes clear that the treasure is inherently about spirituality yet again.

The Lost Symbol has much to impart about the mind-body problem as filtered through the work of Peter's younger sister and scientist Dr Katherine, who conducted experiments in Noetic Science where she made a huge breakthrough in the field.

“What my research has brought me to believe is this. God is very real- a mental energy that pervades everything. And we, as human beings, have been created in *that* image.” (Brown, *The Lost Symbol*, 298)

She chides Langdon for his innate skepticism with regard to her chosen field:

Is it not possible that we are still living in the Dark Ages, still mocking the suggestion of 'mystical' forces that we cannot see or comprehend? History, if it has taught us anything at all, has taught us that the strange ideas we deride today will one day be our celebrated truths. (ibid. 308)

According to the novel, the new science- Noetic Science had discovered that matter is a manifestation of thought and that understanding this concept plays a profound role in what man is capable of. Katherine herself, made experiments to denote and explain the concept of prayer through this field of science and also made the startling discovery of how to actually weigh the soul of a human being.

“ ‘...if enough people begin thinking the same thing, then the gravitational force of that thought becomes tangible... and it exerts actual force.’ Katherine winked. ‘And it can have a measurable effect in our physical world’.” (ibid. 114)

Peter tells Langdon that the Masons believe that the Bible is an esoteric allegory written by humanity, and that, like most religious texts around the globe, it contained veiled instructions for harnessing humanity's natural God-like qualities—similar to Katherine's Noetic research—and is not meant to be interpreted as the commands of an all-powerful deity. This interpretation, according to him, has been lost amid centuries of scientific skepticism and fundamentalist zealotry. The Masons had buried it, believing that, when the time was right, its rediscovery would usher in a new era of human enlightenment.

‘The Bible is one of the books through which the mysteries have been passed down through history...’ Langdon said nothing. The Ancient Mysteries, as he

understood them, were a kind of instruction manual for harnessing the latent power of the human mind..a recipe for personal apotheoses. He had never been able to accept the power of the mysteries, and certainly the notion that the Bible was somehow hiding a key to these mysteries was an impossible stretch. (ibid. 646)

Brown writes, “Now science, which for centuries has derided religion as superstition, must admit that its next big frontier is quite literally the science of faith and belief...” (ibid. 124) He presents the idea that the Scriptures have always been encoded with scientific information and that the precious treasure sought for centuries is this truth that unlocks the true meaning of the Bible. A trail that recognizes the intertwined nature of the Bible and science.

“...it was our minds that were created in the image of God. We’ve been reading the Bible too literally.”

Still, Dan Brown claims to be a Christian, although he interprets Christianity very broadly and he has stated that ‘he is a student of many religion.’ He also said, “I am still searching. I wrote this novel as part of my own spiritual quest.”(Abanes, n.d) For many, it seemed that part of his spiritual quest is to attempt to undermine the historical basis of Christianity. When he claimed that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a child who was whisked away to France after Jesus' crucifixion, he said, “In my mind, the possibility that Jesus might have married Mary Magdalene in no way undermines the beauty of Christ's message” (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d).

Brown projects that Leonardo da Vinci and Sir Isaac Newton, along with the Italian painter Botticelli, the French author Victor Hugo, and many other historical figures, were all supposedly Grand Masters of the Priory. For proof of Leonardo's involvement, Brown says that one need only look at some of the artist's most famous paintings. They supposedly contain symbols and codes that reflect Leonardo's own worship of the sacred feminine (or the goddess), his disdain for traditional Christianity, and the truth about Mary Magdalene. (Abanes, n.d)

After the publication of *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown admitted that he was shocked at the degree and venom of the criticism leveled toward him. "I have been accused of all sorts of things this year, among other things, of being anti-Christian," he said, "I was raised Christian, and to this day, I try to live my life following the basic tenets of the teachings of Christ. This book is in no way anti-Christian or anti-Catholic. I am a Christian, although perhaps not in the most traditional sense of the word. I consider myself a student of many religions. My book just looks at the Catechism and the history of Christianity through a slightly different lens, that being the exploration of those books of the Bible that did not make it into Constantine's version, the one we read today." (Wicker, 2009) In interviews, he was also careful to regularly assert that the novel he had written and the facts that he exposes should not turn people into nonbelievers.

Despite Brown's reluctance to accept the validity of the Bible and the basic tenants of the Christian faith, his books open a worldwide discussion into God's existence, as intended. *The Da Vinci Code* continues to be Brown's most controversial novel. According to him, his stories aren't meant to isolate or offend people of faith. He put it in this manner:

“It is important to remember that a reader does not have to agree with every word in the novel to use the book as a positive catalyst for introspection and exploration of our faith.” (Price, n.d)

In this perspective, Dan Brown certainly is not traditional in his religious beliefs, but he does seem to like to create characters that believe in higher powers. Almost all the specifics in his novels are derived from their Catholic setting while offering a ‘cocktail’ of history, art, religion and mystery. In today’s world, there seems to be only one place where he is able to find all those things together- in the Roman Catholic Church.

Notes

ⁱReligious pluralism generally refers to the belief in two or more religious worldviews as being equally valid or acceptable. More than mere tolerance, religious pluralism accepts multiple paths to God or gods as a possibility and is usually used in contrast with 'exclusivism', the idea that there is only one true religion or way to know God.

ⁱⁱIn the New Testament Mary Magdalene is mentioned among the women who accompanied Christ and ministered to Him, where it is also said that seven devils had been cast out of her. She is next named as standing at the foot of the cross. She saw Christ laid in the tomb, and she was the first recorded witness of the Resurrection.

ⁱⁱⁱ Peter's true and original name was Simon, sometimes occurring in the form *Symeon*. He was the son of Jona and was born in Bethsaida. The Apostle Andrew was his brother, and the Apostle Philip came from the same town. Peter, a fisherman, was called to be a disciple of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry.

^{iv} The Merovingians were a dynasty of Frankish kings who ruled a frequently fluctuating area in parts of present-day France and Germany from the 5th to the 8th century AD.

^v The Holy Grail is generally considered to be the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper and the one used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch His blood as He hung on the cross.

^{vi} Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci was an Italian Renaissance polymath: painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer. Among his works, the *Mona Lisa* is the most famous and most parodied portrait and *The Last Supper* the most reproduced religious painting of all time.

^{vii} Sir Isaac Newton was an English physicist and mathematician (described in his own day as a ‘natural philosopher’ who is widely recognised as one of the most influential scientists of all time and as a key figure in the scientific revolution. Newton's *Principia* formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation.

^{viii} The Gospel of Philip is one of the Gnostic Gospels, a text of New Testament apocrypha, dated to around the 3rd century but lost to modern researchers until an Egyptian man rediscovered it by accident, buried in a cave near Nag Hammadi, in 1945.

Chapter 3: Christianity and Science.

The relationship between religion and science has been a subject of study since Classical antiquity, addressed by philosophers, theologians and scientists. Perspectives from different geographical regions, cultures and historical epochs are diverse, with some characterizing the relationship as one of conflict, others describing it as one of harmony, and others proposing little interaction.

In an interview Dan Brown was asked, "Are you religious?" where he replied, "I was raised an Episcopalian, and I was very religious as a kid. Then, in eighth or ninth grade, I studied astronomy, cosmology, and the origins of the universe. I remember saying to a minister, 'I don't get it. I read a book that said there was an explosion known as the Big Bang, but here it says God created heaven and Earth and the animals in seven days. Which is right?' Unfortunately, the response I got was, 'Nice boys don't ask that question.' A light went off, and I said, 'The Bible doesn't make sense. Science makes much more sense to me.' And I just gravitated away from religion." (Price, n.d)

The search for 'the truth' has always been man's obsession. Man has seemingly searched every nook and corner to find this ultimate truth about his creation and his existence. Eventually the battle has come down to the two large subjects- religion and science and, the battle between religion, particularly that of Christianity, and science, fighting for the possession of 'the truth' has become a worldwide debate and this aspect is also clearly denoted in the novels of Dan Brown.

Dan Brown's novels that feature the lead character Robert Langdon include historical and scientific themes and Christianity as motifs, and as a result, have generated controversy. Brown uses the medium of the book - like Leonardo Da Vinci uses his art - to communicate his own personal views. Commenting on the various ideas he has projected in his books, he says,

“While it is my belief that the theories discussed by these characters have merit, each individual reader must explore these characters' viewpoints and come to his or her own interpretations.” (Price, n.d).

Brown's characters do, to some degree, speak for him and communicate his questions and opinions. In interviews and discussions Brown has spoken in even more detail about his point of view. He explains that like many people, he grew up surrounded by what he calls, “the paradoxical philosophies of science and religion” (Price, n.d) where Brown considers himself more generally spiritual, saying:

“I consider myself a student of many religions. The more I learn, the more questions I have. For me, the spiritual quest will be a life-long work in progress.” (Kaplan, 2009).

There have been many debates under the broad heading of Science versus Christianity. The more familiar over the past few years is the narrower of the two and the question remains as to whether Darwin's Theory of Evolutionⁱ could withstand the criticisms of Christians who believe that it contradicts the creation account in the Book of Genesisⁱⁱ. The anti-religion position is being promoted with increasing insistence by scientists who are angered by intelligent design and excited, perhaps intoxicated, by their disciplines' increasing ability to map, quantify and change the nature of human experience. The field of evolutionary psychology generates theories

of altruismⁱⁱⁱ and even of religion that do not include God. Something called the multi-verse hypothesis in cosmology speculates that ours may be but one in a cascade of universes, suddenly bettering the odds that life could have cropped up here accidentally, without divine intervention. (Wicker, 2009)

Brown's family was quite religious, but he, like many self-aware seekers of knowledge, couldn't find sufficient answers in his faith. Nevertheless in the early part of his career as a writer, Brown seemed to hold his faith much more in religion than in the latter part of his career. His own ambiguity about Christianity and science has developed at a fast pace and is depicted through his works. This has led to a phase in Brown's career where he seems to have taken up the belief in the collaboration of Christianity and science. He somehow finds that these two subjects are always in conflict with each other. His works emphasize that the more Brown learns about science, the more he wants to come back to God. In this regard he has denoted:

The irony is that I've really come full circle. The more science I studied, the more I saw that physics becomes metaphysics and numbers become imaginary numbers. The further you go into science, the mushier the ground gets. You start to say, 'Oh, there is an order and a spiritual aspect to science'. (Kaplan, 2009).

Science and religion generally pursue knowledge of the universe using different methodologies. Science acknowledges reason, empiricism, and evidence, while religions include revelation, faith and sacredness. Scientists are trained to ask questions, requiring evidence, reproducibility and control experiments, so as to be sure that everything has been done correctly and properly interpreted. These types of questions are sometimes not welcomed in Church. And

thus, the new atheists frequently repeat their assertion that faith is belief in the absence of evidence.

Many thinkers and scholars nowadays argue that it is very easy for people to reconcile science and religion because some things are above strict reason, scientific expertise or domains do not spill over to religious expertise or domains necessarily. They argue for compatibility since they do not agree that science is incompatible with religion and vice versa. They argue that science provides many opportunities to look for and find God in nature and to reflect on their beliefs since significant portions of scientists are religious and the proportion of persons believing in evolution is much higher, it implies to them that both are indeed compatible.

However, some argues that when discussing compatibility, some scientific intellectuals often ignore the viewpoints of intellectual leaders in theology and instead argue against less informed masses, thereby, defining religion by non intellectuals and slanting the debate unjustly. They argue that views on evolution and levels of religiosity in some countries, along with the existence of books explaining reconciliation between evolution and religion, indicate that people have trouble in believing both at the same time, thus implying incompatibility. To them, the central difference between the nature of science and religion is that the claims of science rely on experimental verification, while the claims of religions rely on faith, and these are irreconcilable approaches to knowing and therefore, science and religion according to this view are incompatible due to conflicts between approaches of knowing and the availability of alternative plausible natural explanations for phenomena that is usually explained in religious contexts.

In *Angels and Demons*, the conflict between Christianity and science is the key issue. The story is sketched between the Roman Papal-dominance and an ancient brotherhood of Science-

The Illuminati (the enlightened ones). In the very first meeting of Langdon with Kohler, the claim scientists made regarding the triumph of science over religion is seen from Kohler's own words:

Since the beginning of time, spirituality and religion have been called on to fill the gaps that science did not understand. The rising and setting of the sun was once attributed to Helios and a flaming chariot. Earthquakes and tidal waves were the wrath of Poseidon. Science has now proven those gods to be false idols. Soon all Gods will be proven to be false idols. Science has now provided answers to almost every question man can ask. (Brown, *Angels and Demons*, 25)

Events in Europe such as the Galileo affair^{iv}, associated with the Scientific revolution^v and the Age of Enlightenment^{vi}, led scholars to postulate a conflict thesis, holding that religion and science conflict methodologically, factually and politically. While the conflict thesis remains popular for the public, it has lost favor among most contemporary historians of science. An often cited example of conflict was the Galileo affair, whereby interpretations of the Bible were used to attack ideas by Copernicus on Heliocentrism^{vii}. By 1616, Galileo went to Rome to try to persuade the Catholic Church authorities not to ban Copernicus' ideas. In the end, a decree of the Congregation of the Index was issued, declaring the ideas that the Sun stood still and that the Earth moved were 'false' and 'altogether contrary to Holy Scripture', and suspending Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus*^{viii} until it could be corrected. Galileo was found 'vehemently suspect of heresy', namely of having held the opinions that the Sun lies motionless at the center of the universe, and that the Earth is not at its centre and moves. He was required to 'abjure, curse and detest' those opinions. (Wicker, 2009)

Most contemporary historians of science now reject the conflict thesis in its original form and no longer support it. Instead, it has been superseded by subsequent historical research which has resulted in a more nuanced understanding. Although popular images of controversy continue to exemplify the supposed hostility of Christianity to new scientific theories, studies have shown that Christianity has often nurtured and encouraged scientific endeavour, while at other times the two have co-existed without either tension or attempts at harmonization. (Davies, *God and the New Physics*, 7)

Angels & Demons focuses entirely on the relationship between modern science and Roman Catholicism. And Robert Langdon, who once suggested that there might be no difference between humanity and divinity, is now compelled to admit that he does not believe in God—and he did not really know what to say when he was confronted with the question:

"My church comforts the sick and dying. My church feeds the hungry. What does *your* church do? That's right, you don't have one." (ibid. 254)

Some Christians react against science, fearing that they may be contaminated by it, or that it will undermine true faith. Yet many scientists are practising Christians, who delight in discovering new things about God's creation. Some fear that science is inherently atheistic. Yet science is theologically neutral; it is practised by Christians and atheists alike. However, it seems religion and science will always clash. The market seems flooded with books by scientists describing a caged death match between science and God. Many people, not just Christians, fear what science may do in the future and that humans are 'playing God'. (Wicker, 2009) Yet this seems to be an issue about the application of science- technology, rather than science itself. The

fact that something can be misused does not seem a sufficient reason to prevent its use for promoting great good.

There are many areas of common ground between science and faith. Both science and faith believe in truth and studies show that many scientists stand in awe of the wonderful world we live in and that a majority believe there is indeed a creator to it. Moreover, Christians can affirm the value of studying this world, which God has declared to be 'good' and demonstrated its worth. Scientific discoveries most certainly do raise theological questions. But hiding in a parallel theological universe without reference to the physical world God has created would be a denial of God's authority over all creation. Too often the science-faith dialogue gets bogged down in questions of origins, these may be relevant issues for some, but they are a distraction when there are far more important daily issues of science to talk about. (Davies, *God And The New Physics*, 34)

As such, many theologians, philosophers and scientists in history have found no conflict between their faith and science. Some contemporary theologians hold that religion and science are non-overlapping magisteria, addressing fundamentally separate forms of knowledge and aspects of life, they see no necessary conflict between religion and science. Some theologians or historians of science even propose an interconnection between them.

Angels & Demons doesn't overlook, but highlights that some of its heroes of science, such as Galileo, were devout Catholics who saw science and religion as complementary rather than opposed. Brown's fictional heroes likewise include a priest-scientist, Leonardo Vetra, and his daughter Vittoria, who see no conflict between faith and reason. Nevertheless, Brown claims,

the enlightened attitudes of Galileo and others conflicted with the Church's claim to be 'the sole vessel through which man could understand God'.

Dan Brown's personal point of view too, is inherently enigmatic and there is an ambiguity in terms of the conflict between Christianity and science. His novels, till date, continue to deliberate on this aspect. Dan Brown denotes, through his novels, all the possibilities of the conflict and a possible solution, too, but he denotes also that it is only make believe even as he attempts to bridge the gap. He narrates that the gap is always too wide between religion and Christianity. Dan Brown denotes that science and Christianity cannot be tied together but that the wish of it being possible is tremendous. Brown portrays that there have been many people who want to bridge the gap between these two beliefs, however the gap mostly ended up bigger than before.

The introduction of the Illuminati into the story as a science cult which sets out to avenge their forefathers brings out the main conflict within Christianity and science in *Angels & Demons*. The Illuminati, according to the book was a brotherhood formed by the greatest minds of science who learned and discovered the true nature of the Universe and its workings. Langdon informed Kohler that in fact one of Illuminati's most revered member Galileo Galilei tried to soften the Church's position on science by proclaiming that science did not undermine the existence of God, but rather reinforced it. He held that science and religion were not enemies, but rather allies. Unfortunately the unification of science and religion was not what the Church wanted, so the Church banned these ideas and imposed several charges and punishments to those scientists which started the real enmity and conflict between the two.

Obliteration of Catholicism was the Illuminati's central covenant. The brotherhood held that the superstitious dogma spewed forth by the church was mankind's greatest enemy. They feared that if religion continued to promote pious myth as absolute fact, scientific progress would halt, and mankind would be doomed to an ignorant future of senseless holy wars. (ibid. 38)

Another important aspect of the book is the question for the preference of science or religion on basis of which gives the best suitable answers to the questions that man has, since the very beginning of time. There is again an argument whether science or religion solves or aggravates the situation. Dan Brown himself seems to be answering this question through the words of the camerlengo when he addressed to the Illuminati through the media. However this answer is very tricky as it gave no definite preference, again, neither to science nor religion for being the complete and satisfying answer. It seems that Brown once again stands for the unification of both.

God has become obsolete. Science has won the battle.... But science's victory has cost every one of us....Science may have alleviated the miseries of disease and drudgery...but it has left us in a world without wonder." The camerlengo goes on " Even the technology that promises to unite us, divides us. Each of us is now electronically connected to the globe, and yet we feel utterly alone....It shatters God's world into smaller and smaller pieces in quest of meaning...and all it finds is more questions. (ibid. 379)

The main issue to be aware of is the view that science and religion can't play nice together. Science is seen as the provider of truth and progress, while the Christian Church (the

Roman Catholic one) is stuck in a belief system that needs to be updated. Interestingly enough, the book portrays a Catholic Priest working in the CERN facility trying to capture anti-matter in a magnetic vial. It is an interesting symbolizing church and science working together. In any way, the book does not seem to be a frontal attack on Catholicism as the backward, anti-science religion, that critics regularly likes to display, but it does suggest that ‘The Church’ needs to adapt and change to suit scientific truths. Through Vittoria too, we see this preference on the adaptation of science into religion:

We all seek God in different ways. What are you afraid of? That God will show himself somewhere other than inside these walls? That people will find him in their own lives and leave your antiquated rituals behind? Religions evolve! The mind finds answers, the heart grapples with new truths. My father was on your quest! A parallel path! Why couldn't you see that? God is not some omnipotent authority looking down from above, threatening to throw us into a pit of fire if we disobey. God is the energy that flows through the synapses of our nervous system and the chambers of our hearts! God is in all things! (ibid. 534-535)

The Da Vinci Code, became a pop-culture phenomenon since it was released in 2003. In fact, it has spawned a whole cottage industry of publishing. It is riding current waves in our culture: revelations of scandals in the Catholic Church and other churches; the growing interest in apocryphal^{ix} and gnostic^x writings claiming to be the genuine accounts of the life of Jesus; the ‘spirituality is good but religion is bad’ mind-set; the feminization of Western society; the rage for New Age^{xi} and Biblical illiteracy.

The book mentions Leonardo Fibonacci di Pisa, a thirteenth-century mathematician who discovered a series of numbers with a very curious quality. Fibonacci's sequence begins with zero, then one, then each subsequent number is the sum of the two previous numbers (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc.). After the first several numbers, the ratio between any two numbers in the sequence is 1.618 (i.e., the second number is 1.618 times greater than the previous number).

This discovery is very significant, and it relates to the creation/evolution controversy. The ratio 1.618, known by the ancient Greeks as the Divine Proportion or Golden Ratio, is found virtually everywhere, both in nature and in art, music and architecture. It appears in spirals such as pinecones, pineapples, seashells, horns, sunflowers and many others; it is the ratio between each of our finger bones, arm bones and leg bones. The number of leaves or petals on a plant is often a Fibonacci number; it is said that this is why a flower with five petals is more pleasing to the eye than one with four petals.

Nobody understood better than Da Vinci the divine structure of the human body. Da Vinci actually exhumed corpses to measure the exact proportions of human bone structure. He was the first to show that the human body is literally made of building blocks whose proportional ratios always equal PHI. (Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 95)

According to the book, our perception of beauty is very often unconsciously based on this ratio 1.618. Knowing this, composers and artists—including Leonardo da Vinci—frequently base their works on the Divine Proportion. While many of Brown's assertions concerning this phenomenon are questionable and fictional, the ubiquity of the Divine Proportion, or phi, in

nature is well documented and it is difficult to imagine a more powerful evidence for design and science.

The Da Vinci Code preached that the Christian church has tried to suppress 'the eternal feminine' personified by Jesus' supposed wife, Mary Magdalene.

'The Grail story is everywhere, but it is hidden. When the Church outlawed speaking of the shunned Mary Magdalene, her story and importance had to be passed on through more discreet channels... channels that supported metaphor and symbolism'.

'Once you open your eyes to the Holy Grail, Langdon said, 'you see her everywhere. Paintings. Music. Books. Even in cartoons, theme parks, and popular movies'. (ibid. 261)

The Da Vinci Code also proposes a radical redefinition of Jesus Christ. Rather than Jesus being fully God and fully man, the Son of God, and the Second Person of the Trinity, Dan Brown's book claims that Jesus was only a man.

'My dear,' Teabing declared, 'until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal'.... 'What I mean,' Teabing countered, 'is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*'. (ibid. 233).

The Lost Symbol, is third in the series of fiction novels featuring Robert Langdon following up *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*. The blockbuster success of Brown's

previous works—in print and on the silver screen—indicates readers love secrets almost as much as Brown himself. All the elements expected from Brown are present in this novel, the suspense, the clever puzzles, and the tightly fitted tales of intrigue and conspiracies. *The Lost Symbol* remains in the style of the previous books by Dan Brown – suspenseful, page-turning, short chapters, all with a little twist to conclude.

Dan Brown relishes secrets. He delights in the hidden, the mysterious, and the surprising. In *The Lost Symbol*, Brown displays his knack for spinning twisted tales and his love for unwinding them bit by tantalizing bit. The intricate secrets of the mystery in *The Lost Symbol* take a long time to tell. Much of the bulk can be attributed to the element of Brown's novels that has sparked controversy from the Christian community- his detailed explanations of Freemason beliefs. Brown is at it again taking left and right jabs at Christianity, as was done in both *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, more with the Roman Catholic church.

Langdon nodded, ‘A very old myth. The secret of the Ancient Mysteries is pre Christian, actually. Thousands of years old.’

‘And yet it’s *still* around?’

‘As are many equally improbable beliefs.’ Langdon often reminded his students that most modern religions included stories that did not hold up to scientific scrutiny: everything from Moses parting the Red Sea...to Joseph Smith using magic eyeglasses to translate that Book of Mormon from a series of gold plates he found buried in upstate New York. *Wide acceptance of an idea is not proof of its validity.* (Brown, *The Lost Symbol*, 156)

Here, in *The Lost Symbol*, the Christian church is supposedly trying to suppress the fact, apparently a tenet of Freemasonry, that everyone secretly worship the Egyptian sun-god Ra. Brown once again presents a re-defined Jesus Christ and also a new perception of *The Bible*.

Mal'akh gazed at the window, which displayed part of the church's doctrinal statement: WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS BEGOTTEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY, AND IS BOTH TRUE MAN AND GOD.

Mal'akh smiled. *Yes, Jesus is indeed both – man and God – but a virgin birth is not the prerequisite for divinity. That is not how it happens.* (ibid. 356)

Biblical references abound in the book, central to the plot is the notion that mankind can become gods through discovering the 'Ancient Mysteries,' and Brown selects strategic passages to imply the *Bible* secretly supports this idea. Along the way, there are enough references to Jesus as a mythical figure who healed the sick through the focusing of his mental energy.

Warren Bellamy, a close friend and Masonic brother of Peter Solomon told Langdon:

'I can see your dilemma, Professor. However, both the Ancient Mysteries and Masonic philosophy celebrate the potentiality of God within each of us. Symbolically speaking, one could claim that anything within reach of an enlightened man...is within reach of God.'

Langdon felt unswayed by the wordplay.

‘Even the *Bible* concurs,’ Bellamy said. ‘If we accept, as Genesis tells us, that *God created man in his own image*, then we also must accept what this implies – that mankind was not created *inferior* to God. In Luke 17:20 we are told, *The kingdom of God is within you.*’

‘I’m sorry, but I don’t know any Christians who consider themselves God’s *equal.*’

‘Of course not,’ Bellamy said, his tone hardening. ‘Because most Christians want it both ways. They want to be able to proudly declare they are believers in the *Bible* and yet simply ignore those parts they find too difficult or too inconvenient to believe’. (ibid. 356-357)

These aspects claim that God and man are basically alike, rather than man being inferior to their Creator. Thus, man is both human and divine. Brown could purport that Jesus is both human and divine, but only because He was simply like the rest of mankind. By the end of the book, Brown has tied in Christianity with Gnosticism^{xii}. And, the book’s conclusion is that all religious paths are really headed towards the same thing – knowledge and enlightenment. It is all about discovering a kind of esoteric and hidden wisdom.

Indeed, it appears Brown prefers what he calls the ‘religion’ of Einstein– a so-called cosmic religion that will transcend the notion of a personal God and avoid dogma and theology (ibid. 308). But a moments reflection will show that when God is reduced to something less than personal, the result is surely a lower and less developed form of religion not a higher one. Indeed, the human penchant to reduce God to something less than human and personal is part

and parcel of the human attempt to claim human lordship over everything, including God. Christian theology is portrayed as the bad guy, as is historical exegesis of the *Bible* in its original contexts and meanings. (Paulson, 2009)

Some may fear that scientific explanations diminish any sense of wonder and awe, and that explaining equals explaining away. Yet, an explanation of a rainbow in terms of optics or a mountain range in terms of geophysics does nothing to diminish humans appreciation of these wonderful sights. God is God whether humans understand how or what He has done or not. (Davies, *God And The New Physics*, 24)

It is easy to misunderstand the Bible. The account of creation in Genesis may mean that God created the world in six twenty four-hour days. It might also be metaphoric, meaning that the 'days' of creation represented a much longer period of time- as 2 Peter 3:8 says, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years". (ibid. 19) The Bible account might not rule out the possibility that dinosaurs roamed the earth before humans and as such might not rule out the possibility of many scientific theories proposed to happen. Although Brown seems to relentlessly pillories Christianity and particularly Catholicism, he doesn't necessarily pit science against 'faith' or 'God'. It may be concluded that his books are not anti-religion or anti-faith, but anti-dogma, anti-institutional, and anti-patriarchal.

Notes

ⁱ Darwin's Theory of Evolution is a theory of biological evolution developed by Charles Darwin and others, stating that all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce.

ⁱⁱ *Genesis* is the first book of the Old Testament which expresses the central theme: God creates the world, along with creating the first man and woman and appoints man as his regent.

ⁱⁱⁱ Altruism is the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others.

^{iv} The Galileo affair was a sequence of events, beginning around 1610, during which Galileo Galilei came into conflict with both the Catholic Church, for his support of Copernican astronomy, and secular philosophers, for his criticism of Aristotelianism.

^v The scientific revolution was the emergence of modern science during the early modern period, when developments in mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology (including human anatomy) and chemistry transformed views of society and nature.

^{vi} The Age of Enlightenment the era in Western philosophy, intellectual, scientific and cultural life, centered upon the 18th century, in which reason was advocated as the primary source for legitimacy and authority.

^{vii} Heliocentrism is the astronomical model developed by Nicolaus Copernicus and published in 1543 AD. It positioned the Sun near the center of the Universe, motionless, with Earth and the other planets rotating around it in circular paths modified by epicycles and at uniform speeds.

^{viii} *De Revolutionibus* is the seminal work on the heliocentric theory of the Renaissance astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus.

^{ix} A story or statement of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true.

^x The 52 texts discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt include 'secret' gospels poems and myths attributing to Jesus sayings and beliefs which are very different from the New Testament

^{xi} The New Age movement is a religious or spiritual movement that developed in Western nations during the 1970s. The movement is characterised by a holistic view of the cosmos, a belief in an emergent Age of Aquarius –an emphasis on self-spirituality and the authority of the self, a focus on healing, a belief in channeling, and an adoption of a "New Age science" that makes use of elements of the new physics.

^{xii} Gnosticism describes a collection of ancient religions whose adherents shunned the material world created by the demiurge and embraced the spiritual world.

Chapter 4: Power and Dan Brown.

“The Lost Word is not a metaphor....it is real. The Word is written in an ancient language...and has been hidden for ages. The Word is capable of bringing unfathomable power to anyone who grasps its true meaning.” (Brown, *The Lost Symbol*, 566)

Michel Foucault is arguably the most influential European writer and thinker of the second half of the twentieth century. His work is controversial and has attract much criticism, but the question he raised, the topics he addressed, and the positions he took have become central features of today’s intellectual landscape. In literary studies, Foucault stands as a major source for post-structuralismⁱ, New Historicismⁱⁱ, cultural studiesⁱⁱⁱ, and queer theory^{iv}, while also fueling the growing interest in literature and medicine, the examination of the institutional bases from which writers and critics operate, and the interest in processes of identity formation. Foucault developed – in both *Discipline and Punish*^v and *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, *An Introduction* (1976)^{vi} – an influential account of the interconnections between power, knowledge, and the subject. Two short phrases provide excellent points of entry to Foucault’s revision of traditional notions of power. Famously, he writes that “power is exercised, rather than possessed,” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 94) and he insists that power is not repressive but productive.

Power in Foucault’s account does not belong to anyone, nor does it emanate from one specific location, such as the state. Rather, power is diffused throughout social institution, as it is exercised by innumerable, replaceable functionaries. It operates through the daily disciplines and

routines to which bodies are subjected. Thus, for example, the teacher exercises power over students, and schools have countless ways of governing students' behaviour. But the teacher holds that power only as a function of his or her place in the institution, being subject as a teacher to various rules, incentives, and punishments. Both teacher and students are located, though differently, within the institution, and both go through their paces within a network that guides and oversees their conduct.

Foucault is one of the few writers on power who recognised that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society :

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* , 194).

Foucault has also observed that power has no locus, but exists in complex relational webs:

“One impoverishes the question of power if one poses it solely in terms of legislation and constitution, in terms solely of state and the state apparatus.” (Foucault, *Power*, 158)

This is to say, not that an institution cannot wield power, but that power does not flow from any one source or in only one direction.

Foucault agrees that the Church is a “superb instrument of power for itself. Entirely woven through with elements that are imagery, erotic, effective, corporal, sensual, and so on.” (Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 107). For him, it was a struggle for power and domination. Faith, which is the basic tool for religion is unfounded and pointless when it comes to controlling or changing a culture. What was more important to Foucault was the dominant power, which the Church was gradually reaching for. He also denotes, “Historically, what exists is the Church. Faith, what is that? Religion is a political force,” (ibid. 123). This argument certainly holds true in Brown’s context within the plot of his novels.

Michel Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of ‘episodic’ or ‘sovereign’ acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. ‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense it is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 63). Instead it is a kind of ‘metapower’ or ‘regime of truth’ that pervades society, and it is in constant flux and negotiation.

Angels and Demons, published in 2000, identifies, and then glosses over Professor Langdon’s responses to explicit questions regarding faith in God. Debates over the historical treatment of science by the Church are questions of fact which, with enough research and open minds, can be resolved. Identifying the focus of an inquiry into the existence of God, recognizing the limits of the human mind, and determining the requirements for faith are essential, in the dynamics between power and Christianity. When world-renowned Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon is summoned to a Swiss research facility CERN (Conseil European pour la Recherche Nucleaire) to analyze a mysterious symbol seared into the chest of a murdered physicist Leonardo Vetra, he discovers evidence of the unimaginable: the resurgence of an ancient secret

brotherhood known as the Illuminati, the most powerful underground organization ever to walk the earth.

The Illuminati, a secret Masonic society from long ago whose members were prominent and rich, appear to have resurfaced to carry out the final phase of its legendary vendetta against its most hated enemy, the Catholic Church, and are wanting media credit for evil acts of murder and mayhem to scare the world. Langdon's worst fears are confirmed on the eve of the Vatican's holy conclave as it is ascertained that the Illuminati have stolen a canister containing antimatter. It is Langdon's job to decipher the codes left by the Illuminati and find the cardinals before they are killed. The horrible truth is that the Illuminati has put the stolen canister somewhere in Vatican City, with a stolen security camera to show its digital clock counting down to explosion.

In the end, the person behind the evil scheme, camerlengo Carlo Ventresca reveals his purpose in a shocking twist of the story's plot. He is obsessed with the fact that the Catholic Church can't seem to compete against science and technology. He states:

Tell me... How can the church condemn that which makes logical sense to our minds! How can we decry that which is now the very foundation of our society! Each time the church raises its voice in warning, you shout back, calling us ignorant. Paranoid. Controlling! And so your evil grows. Shrouded in a veil of self-righteous intellectualism. It spreads like a cancer. Sanctified by the miracles of its own technology. Deifying itself! Until we no longer suspect you are anything but pure goodness. 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. Forget the fractured loneliness and endless peril. Science is here! (Brown, *Angels and Demons*, 525)

In this same monologue, he explains his need to convince the world of the evils of science, and states:

For centuries... the church has stood by while science picked away at religion bit by bit. Debunking miracles. Training the mind to overcome the heart. Condemning religion as the opiate of the masses. They denounce God as a hallucination – a delusional crutch for those too weak to accept that life is meaningless. I could not stand back while science presumed to harness the power of God himself!....The day science substantiates God in a lab is the day people stop needing faith! (ibid. 534)

It is then that Vittoria Vetra comes back with a response that seems as delusional as the statements above to a Christian who has sound doctrine,

‘You mean the day they stop needing the church!’ And then she continues, ‘Doubt is your last shred of control. It is doubt that brings souls to you. Our need to know life has meaning. Man’s insecurity and need for an enlightened soul assuring him everything is part of a master plan. But the church is not the only enlightened soul on the planet! We all seek God in different ways. What are you afraid of? That God will show himself somewhere other than inside these walls? That people will find him in their own lives and leave your antiquated rituals behind? Religions evolve! The mind finds answers, the heart grapples with new truths....God is not

some omnipotent authority looking down from above, threatening to throw us into a pit of fire if we disobey. God is the energy that flows through the synapses of our nervous system and the chambers of our hearts! God is in all things!'. (ibid. 534-535)

The camerlango's clever plan was to infuse fear into the minds of the people so that they may believe and accept their religion again.

It had been so pure.

The Illuminati. Science and Satan as one.

Resurrect the ancient fear. then crush it.

Horror and Hope. Make them believe again. (ibid. 532)

Power is also a major source of social discipline and conformity. In shifting attention away from the 'sovereign' and 'episodic' exercise of power, traditionally centred in feudal states to coerce their subjects, Foucault reflected upon a new kind of 'disciplinary power' that could be observed in the administrative systems and social services that were created in 18th century Europe, such as prisons, schools and mental hospitals. Their systems of surveillance and assessment no longer required force or violence, as people learned to discipline themselves and behave in expected ways.

Christianity as the ultimate power structure imposes an obligation upon its followers to accept its dogma, its sacred text and, most importantly, its authority as truth through aspects of confession and the pastoral power. People willingly submit to this much in the same way as they submit to governmental and medical authority. In *Angels and Demons*, Maximilian Kohler's life was destroyed by blind faith in religion. His parents did not want the doctors to give him medicine because they thought that it was against God's will. They only prayed that their son

would get better soon, but they did not realise that he was struggling for life. Had a doctor not given him an injection, he would have died. Nevertheless he was rendered paralysed because his parents refused medication consistently. Therefore he grew up preferring science over Christianity and he felt that only science was proof to everything on earth.

Foucault was fascinated by the mechanisms of prison surveillance, school discipline, systems for the administration and control of populations, and the promotion of norms about bodily conduct, including sex. He studied psychology, medicine and criminology and their roles as bodies of knowledge that define norms of behaviour and deviance. Physical bodies are subjugated and made to behave in certain ways, as a microcosm of social control of the wider population, through what he called ‘bio-power’. Disciplinary and bio-power create a ‘discursive practice’ or a body of knowledge and behaviour that defines what is normal, acceptable, deviant, etc. – but it is a discursive practice that is nonetheless in constant flux (Foucault 1991)

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 65).

Therefore, power is given to that which is known and understood. Characters in Brown’s novels have consistently rendered elements of power to the forces, be it Christianity or science. Each character is driven by these forces which have full power over them.

According to *The Da Vinci Code*, published in 2003, Leonardo Da Vinci was one of the most revered member of the ancient secret society Priory of Sion, who were dedicated to preserving the "truths"; namely that Jesus designated Mary Magdalene as His successor; that His message was about the celebration of the "sacred feminine"; that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and had children and that the Holy Grail of legend and lore is really Mary Magdalene who is the "sacred feminine" and the vessel who carried Jesus' children. The major theme of this novel, i.e. the power of mystery in the human mind is expressed in a quotation by Sophie's grandmother Marie Chauvel in the resolution.

“It is the mystery and wonderment that serve our souls, not the Grail itself. The beauty of the Grail lies in her ethereal nature.” (Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 444)

The conflicts within Christianity here also takes up the main focus in terms of the power paradigm. While this novel promotes faith, it also cautions against pursuing one's beliefs to the point of fanaticism. Brown offers two examples of characters that become fanatics: Silas and Teabing. Silas is a religious fanatic, a monk of Opus Dei, and the murderer of Jacques Sauniere. He pursues his desire to please God and act on behalf of the Church to cloud his judgment, and he is willing to murder as long as he believes that he is supporting the Church:

the measure of your faith is the measure of the pain you can endure, the teacher had told him. Silas was no stranger to pain and felt eager to prove himself to the Teacher, the one who had assured him his actions were ordained by a higher power. (ibid. 146)

Silas is obsessed with self-punishment and celibacy, and his goal in life is to aid the Bishop and Opus Dei. Similarly, Lee Teabing believes so strongly in finding and revealing the

Sangreal documents that he is willing to murder for his cause. Brown exposes his ideas regarding the subjectivity of history books and claims that many truths and secrets have been hidden and lost through history. Though a work of fiction, and though every place mentioned and incidents described may not be exactly precise, Brown's exploration of the aspect of power definitely brings his readers to a consciousness of realizing and questioning religious and history books so that they may come to a more rational understanding.

The great draw to *The Da Vinci Code* is its central conspiracy theory, which, very simply put, sees Jesus married to Mary Magdalene. After Jesus' death, Mary then supposedly fled with their child and became, over time, a symbol of the "sacred feminine" of ancient paganism. But the threat against Christ and His Word, the *Bible*, in *The Da Vinci Code* runs much deeper than the mere rehashing of an ancient conspiracy theory. By planting seeds of doubt in the reader's mind concerning how the *Bible* came into existence, the novel skilfully imposes a direct questioning against the authority of Scripture.

Meaning that history is always written by the winners.... By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account.... The Sangreal documents simply tell the other side of the Christ story. In the end, which side of the story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration. (ibid. 256)

The insistence that "power is productive" underwrites Foucault's rejection of "the repressive hypothesis" in the *The History of Sexuality I* where power is traditionally seen as repressing behaviour that it finds unproductive, threatening or otherwise undesirable. For example, people have various sexual desires that are deemed unacceptable and social power is exerted to repress those desires and the behaviour that follow from them. Foucault argues,

however, power produces the very categories, desires, and actions it strives to regulate. Before an act is prohibited it is not singled out as something separate and identifiable or perhaps even desirable. The enunciation of the category and the law both create, identify and designate certain actions as crimes and affords them a heightened presence.

However, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality I* are in accord when it comes to Power- knowledge, which is the term Foucault uses to indicate how the production of knowledge is wedded to productive power. Modern power requires increasingly narrow categories through which it analyzes, differentiates, identifies, and administers individuals. The human sciences not only provide tools for this sorting process but also legitimate the actions that follow it. The psychological exam, for example, denotes what needs to be done: whether a certain person is a criminal who must be sent to prison, or an insane person who must be sent to a hospital.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, people believe in things, or are inspired by things, which cannot be proven true. Similarly, people must rely on their faith in religion or faith that the Grail exists. The mystery and wonder produced by these facets of their lives are more important than the real facts. Dan Brown refuses to accept the idea that faith in God is rooted in ignorance of the truth. The ignorance that the Church has sometimes advocated is embodied in the character of Bishop Aringarosa, who does not think the Church should be involved in scientific investigation. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the Church has also enforced ignorance about the existence of the descendents of Jesus. Although at one point in the novel Langdon says that perhaps the secrets of the Grail should be preserved in order to allow people to keep their faith, he also denotes that people who truly believe in God will be able to accept the idea that the Bible is full

of metaphors and are not literal transcripts of the truth. People's faith, in other words, can withstand the truth.

Clearly power- knowledge undercuts any lofty humanistic narrative of the life of the mind or the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. The intellectual comes to look like power's dupe, or perhaps a privilege insider to power's activities. The university, in particular, serves a dual function. As gatekeeper, it sorts students via grades, exams, course requirements, and others, thereby limiting access to various cherished places in the social hierarchy such as medical carriers. At the same time the university undertakes funded research thereby producing the knowledge through which populations are observed and managed. Foucault uses the term 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth'.

These 'general politics' and 'regimes of truth' are the result of scientific discourse and institutions, and are reinforced and redefined constantly through the education system, the media, and the flux of political and economic ideologies. In this sense, the 'battle for truth' is not for some absolute truth that can be discovered and accepted, but is a battle about "the rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power are attached to 'the true'... a battle about 'the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays'" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 130).

A key point about Foucault's approach to power is that it transcends politics and sees power as an everyday, socialised and embodied phenomenon. This is why state-centric power struggles, including revolutions, do not always lead to change in the social order. For some, Foucault's concept of power is so elusive and removed from agency or structure that there seems to be little scope for practical action. But he has been hugely influential in pointing to the ways

that norms can be so embedded as to be beyond perception – causing humans to discipline their own selves without any wilful coercion from others.

The Da Vinci Code raises the question of whether history books necessarily tell only the truth. The novel is full of reinterpretations of commonly told stories, such as those of Jesus' life, the pentacle, and the Da Vinci fresco 'The Last Supper'. Brown provides his own explanation of how the Bible was compiled and also of the missing Gospels. According to Brown's fictional historian, Leigh Teabing, the Roman Emperor Constantine picked through the ancient gospels and chose the ones that suited his political agenda, thus creating what we now have as the *Bible*, while willfully suppressing other, more viable, documents.

Dan Brown has said, "The theory I reveal is one that has been whispered for centuries. It is not my own. Admittedly, this may be the first time the theory has been unveiled within the format of a popular thriller, but the information is anything but new. My sincere hope is that *The Da Vinci Code*, in addition to entertaining people, will serve as an open door for readers to begin their own explorations". (Wicker, 2009)

In his works, he also elucidates, "Truth has power. And if we all gravitate toward similar ideas, maybe we do so because those ideas are true...written deep within us. And when we hear the truth, even if we don't understand it, we feel that truth resonate within us...vibrating with our unconscious wisdom. Perhaps the truth is not learned by us, but rather, the truth is recalled...remembered...re-cognized...as that which is already inside us." (Dan Brown, *The Lost Symbol*, 578)

In *The Lost Symbol*, published in 2009, the chaotic and shocking journey in finding out that 'the Word'- the *Bible* is actually the true Masonic secret which is said to be possessed by

power to enlighten human kind and Katherine's statement about how truths are tampered or altered by the changing times is only a small fragment of the much larger reflection of the conflict between science and Christianity in the novel.

At the start of the novel, Robert Langdon attempts to explode what he declares are ‘myths surrounding Freemasonry’ but as the story unfolds, Langdon went on a journey to find ‘the Word’ in order to save his friend Peter Solomon. At the end of the novel, Solomon, deciding to take Langdon to the true secret behind ‘the Word’, leads him to the room atop the Washington Monument and tells him that ‘the Word’- the *Bible*, the "Word of God"—lies in the Monument's cornerstone, which is buried in the ground beneath the Monument's staircase. Langdon moreover realizes that the symbols on the pyramid's base spelled out the words *Laus Deo* which translate to *Praise God*. These words are inscribed upon the small aluminum capstone atop the Monument, which is the true Masonic Pyramid.

“The Bible is one of the books through which the mysteries have been passed down through history. Its pages are desperately trying to tell us a secret.” (*ibid.* 646)

In his attempt to explain why the Bible has endured through the ages, Peter Solomon, Robert Langdon’s mentor and a Mason states the following:

“The reason...is that there exist powerful secrets hidden in the pages of this ancient book... a vast collection of untapped wisdom waiting to be unveiled.” (*ibid.* 346)

The hidden meanings in the Bible, according to him, are the reasons why the finest minds have pondered this book for so long. The justification then for allegorizing and deconstructing

the *Bible* comes from the Founding Fathers, on this theory. Langdon, as he listens to Peter Solomon has questions about this.

“How could the Ancient Mysteries that the Masons talk of, and the *Bible* be one and the same? The Ancient Mysteries are about the latent power of the human mind... a formula for personal deification of the self-help sort”. (ibid. 491).

Solomon goes on to say that what Revelation^{vii} is all about is the great enlightenment of humankind that is coming— coming through things like Noetic Science, but also by studying the ancient symbols in books like the *Bible*.

We are in that narrow window of time during which we will bear witness to our ultimate renaissance. After millenia of darkness, we will see our sciences, our minds and even our religions unveil the truth....The Book of Revelation is a vibrant example of our shared truth. The last book of the Bible tells the identical story as countless other traditions. They all predict the coming unveiling of great wisdom. (ibid. 409-410).

According to him, “Laus Deo” is not merely a saying on top of the Washington Monument. It is the essence of what the Bible calls us all to recognize— that God is God, and human beings are too. As humans are created in the image of God, whatever potential God have, humans do too. He lays special emphasis on the words of the *Bible*, “ye shall be as gods”.

Contrary to many interpretations, Foucault believed in possibilities for action and resistance. He was an active social and political commentator who saw a role for the ‘organic intellectual’. His ideas about action were concerned with man’s capacities to recognise and

question socialised norms and constraints. To challenge power is not a matter of seeking some 'absolute truth', but 'of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 75). Discourse can be a site of both power and resistance, with scope to 'evade, subvert or contest strategies of power' .

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart. (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 100-101).

Dan Brown offers an augmented version of the world, adding a level made of riddles, conspiracies and clues towards cursed treasures. Integrating them in the intricate toys that his novels are, the writer re-enchants systematically city squares and artwork. Even in *The Lost Symbol* — the dollar bills, hosting on their surface obscure Masonic references. Even with a popular language and a style far from refined, Dan Brown compels his readers to look at reality with different eyes, and participate with him to the game of conspiracies, treasure hunts, and finally saving the world from the clutches of the wicked.

Notes

ⁱ Post-structuralism primarily encompasses the intellectual developments of certain mid-20th-century French and continental philosophers and theorists. It advocates an instability in the human sciences, due to the complexity of humans themselves and the impossibility of fully escaping structures in order to study them.

ⁱⁱ New historicism was a school of literary theory which consolidated critical theory into easier forms of practice for academic literary theorists who came of age in the 1990s. It first developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic and Harvard English Professor Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread influence in the 1990s. New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cultural studies is an academic field of critical theory and literary criticism initially introduced by British academics in 1964 and subsequently adopted by allied academics throughout the world. Cultural studies combines feminist theory, social theory, political theory, history, philosophy, literary theory, media theory, film/video studies, communication studies, political economy, translation studies, museum studies and art history/criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies.

^{iv} Queer theory is a field of post-structuralist critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of queer studies and women's studies. Queer focuses on "mismatches" between sex, gender and desire.

^v *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* is a 1975 book by the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

^{vi} *History of sexuality Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* , was first published in 1976 by Éditions Gallimard, before being translated into English by Robert Hurley and published by Allen Lane in 1978.

^{vii} The Book of Revelation, often occupies a central place in Christian eschatology. The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic document in the New Testament canon.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study has attempted to portray the power of Christianity through a careful study of the selected works of the American novelist Dan Brown. By analyzing the power paradigm within the stories of Brown's novels and also by evaluating the influence of Christian themes and motifs of the selected works, the purpose of the research has been to project how power is exercised by Christianity.

Dan Brown's novels are treasure hunts that are set in a twenty four-hour period, and feature the recurring themes of cryptography, keys, symbols, codes, and conspiracy theories. His books have been translated into fifty two languages and sold over two hundred million copies. Brown is one of the highest selling author of all time and with only six books, he has achieved these sales writing fewer books than anyone above him on the list. 'The Robert Langdon series' is one of the highest selling series in the world. (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d)

The son of a mathematics teacher and a church organist, Brown was raised on a preparatory school campus where he developed a fascination with the paradoxical interplay between science and religion. These themes eventually formed the backdrop for his books. Brown's interest in secrets and puzzles stems from their presence in his household as a child, where codes and ciphers were the linchpin tying together the mathematics, music and languages in which his parents worked. His father used to devise elaborated treasure hunts for Brown and his siblings, and the young Brown spent hours working out these anagrams and crossword

puzzles. This background later provided Brown with the immense interest in religious and historical topics and brought out in him the urge to explore some of the complicated conflicts that arose within the concepts of religion.

An interesting theme which is frequently addressed in Brown's work is the secret society. Brown has said that having grown up in New England, where Ivy League universities, Masonic lodges, and seats of governmental power all have their secret rituals and mysterious elements, secret societies hold a special fascination for him. (Paulson, 2009) Thus, fascination with Catholicism and its many mysteries, the ancient societies, organizations, and conspiracy theories in history are the subject matter of the majority of Brown's best-selling novels.

Flowing out of Dan Brown's basic commitment to the solid nature of scientific knowledge, and his musings about the 'ethereal' and 'hard to accept' nature of religious knowledge, comes his view of interpretation and, more specifically and relevantly, the interaction between this view and history. Brown described how he interprets religious belief:

Faith is a continuum . . . By attempting to rigidly classify ethereal concepts like faith, we end up debating semantics to the point where we entirely miss the obvious – that is, that we are all trying to decipher life's big mysteries, and we're each following our own paths of enlightenment. (Kaplan, 2009)

Understanding Brown's view of knowledge is absolutely foundational to understand the rest of what he believes. Having grown up as the son of a mathematician and a Church organist he said, "I wasn't really sure where to turn. Where science offered exciting proofs of its claims, where there were photos, equations and visible evidence, religion was a lot more demanding. I had to accept everything on faith. As I'm sure you're aware faith takes a fair amount of effort –

especially as a young child; especially in an imperfect world. So as a boy I graduated towards the solid foundations of science.” (Chaffey, 2011)

For Dan Brown, it was as though, the security that he found in the 'photos, equations and visible evidence' of scientific knowledge left other kinds of knowledge out in the cold. They started to look unappealing, or they seemed like they would be too much effort. And his recognition of the existence of suffering in the world added an extra push towards his view that religious belief required him 'to accept everything on faith' while scientific knowledge, or empirical knowledge, is much more solid and easy to trust than religious knowledge. Science became easy to trust and depend on, 'faith' or religious knowledge seemed much harder to accept and approach. When questioned as to whether this confusion was really what made him to write such controversial books, he said, “I really wish I had the luxury of absolute unquestioning faith. I do not. And I am still searching. I wrote these novels as part of my own spiritual quest. I never imagined a novel could become so controversial.” (Chaffey, 2011)

Dan Brown has pointed out, “The world is a big place, now more than ever. There is an enormous danger in claiming that we are infallible, absolute, and that everyone who does not think like we do is wrong, and therefore an enemy.” (Abanes, n.d) According to him, it is important to be careful when we talk in terms of what is the ‘truth’ and that it is wrong to claim that what each individual knows is true-for-all, objective and absolute. In the name of global stability it is required for individuals to stop thinking that what is known to each person is true for everyone. Brown has said, “Our male dominated philosophies of absolutism have a long history of violence and bloodshed which continues to this day.”(Abanes, n.d)

From what can be perceived, Brown's view is that claiming to know something that is outside of the realm of scientific knowledge is wrong. A person should be careful not to become too confident about his interpretation being correct. So when it comes to religion, Brown's view is that these truths are more on the 'true-for-me' side of things and not on the 'true-for-all' side of things. Consequently failing to see this is a mistake, a failure to see that historical data or testimony is highly ambiguous – because it relies on a human being during its writing, and by the readers as they read it. Brown said,

The history that eventually becomes our truth, depends entirely on what we read and who our teachers are. My critics and I clearly have read different books and have had different teachers. Some of these people seem absolutely certain of their truth. And of that I am envious. As I said, I was not born with the luxury of absolute certainty. (Wicker, 2009)

So Brown feels that all these aspects should restrict talk of what is found in historical religious texts to, at best, the probable, and all talk of the certain, absolute, objective or true-for-all should be put off.

Like many other writers, Dan Brown has faced law suits and his prose style has been criticized as clumsy. Much criticism also centers on Brown's claim found in the preface to each of his novels, *Angels and Demons*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Lost Symbol*, that the novels are based on fact and that the references to all works of art and the brotherhood of the Illuminati, all descriptions of artwork and documents and all rituals and monuments are accurate.

In August 2005 author Lewis Perdue unsuccessfully sued Brown for plagiarism, on the basis of claimed similarity between *The Da Vinci Code* and his novels, *The Da Vinci Legacy*

(1983) and *Daughter of God* (2000). Judge George Daniels said, in part: "A reasonable average lay observer would not conclude that *The Da Vinci Code* is substantially similar to *Daughter of God*." (Schneider- Mayerson, 2011) In April 2006 Brown won a copyright infringement case brought by authors Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, who claimed that Brown stole ideas from their 1982 book *Holy Blood Holy Grail* for his 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*. (Schneider- Mayerson, 2011) Mr Justice Peter Smith found in Brown's favour in the case. On March 28, 2007, Brown's publisher, Random House, won an appeal copyright infringement case again. The Court of Appeal of England and Wales rejected the efforts from Baigent and Leigh, who became liable for paying legal expenses of nearly US\$6 million. (Schneider- Mayerson, 2011)

A contributing factor for the outcome of these cases is that these authors presented their works as non-fiction, whereas fiction writers like Dan Brown himself often draw upon non-fiction resources for content research. In an interview with Matt Lauer on *The Today Show* in September 2009, Brown responded to criticism by saying, "I do something very intentional and specific in these books. And that is to blend fact and fiction in a very modern and efficient style, to tell a story. There are some people who understand what I do, and they sort of get on the train and go for a ride and have a great time, and there are other people who should probably just read somebody else." (The Today Show, 2009) Brown has maintained that his novels are works of fiction and that he does not have to defend his contentions.

Dan Brown's basic beliefs about knowledge, interpretation, true-for-all truths and religious pluralism inform and affect his entire view of the world and his novels. It can be seen that Brown isn't just writing stories, but he is trying to provoke discussion. As he says, "My sincere hope is that my novels, in addition to entertaining people, will serve as an open door for readers to begin their own explorations" (Chaffey, 2011).

Dan Brown is an influential man and for many people, his books are their first introduction to Dante or Leonardo Da Vinci. Even the Louvre offers a Brown-themed visitor trail, primly titled "The Da Vinci Code, Between Fiction and Fact". In a response to *Angels and Demons*, the plot of which hinges on an "antimatter bomb" stolen from CERN and primed to destroy the Vatican, the international research institute issued 'Frequently Asked Questions' for readers wishing to learn more. In Florence, readers can walk in the footsteps of Brown's hero, Robert Langdon, on a day-long tour .

“My job is to write the best book I can. I hope it's a catalyst for reminding people how much fun it is to read, and that they go out and buy other books.” (Trachtenberg, 2009)

With this kind of global influence, his readers perceive him as a renaissance¹ man. In his novels, every piece of knowledge is only valuable in so far as it can be directly applied to the solution of a problem. In *The Da Vinci Code*, Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings offer handy clues to solve a murder. Bernini's sculptures point the way to a conspiracy at the heart of the Church in *Angels and Demons*. Even Washington DC's architecture is only of interest as evidence in a Masonic mystery of *The Lost Symbol*. Dan Brown wants his readers to see knowledge not as abstract, but as a key with which to unlock the present. And when the key doesn't fit, it gets discarded.

Brown's critics like to mock his uneasy relationship with historical fact. As stated earlier, the 'Robert Langdon series' novels all open with a statement assuring readers that what follows is based on the truth. Antimatter bombs, ancient Illuminati conspiracies, heirs of Christ – these, a sober note informs us, are all founded on real, reliable research. But there is nothing new in an

author's playing with truth and, at the same time, playing with their audience. If Brown's appeal to facts enrages readers, it just might be because they have fallen for it. When Samuel Coleridgeⁱⁱ wrote about "willing suspension of disbelief"ⁱⁱⁱ, he referred to the disposal of those willing to enjoy a work of fiction — as in a theater, when the audience forgive a backdrop painted in a summary manner, accepting that it is a forest, or reading about Little Red Riding Hood^{iv} the reader temporarily accepts the existence a wolf who speaks.

Stage magic is the only art not to request such suspension: the magician using a wire to make an object fly, must be clever enough not to make viewers see the trick. It is his job to suspend disbelief of the spectator, and it succeeds only when it is really good. During a poor performance, the thread may be seen. In this case, in order to enjoy the show, the audience would be forced to ignore it voluntarily. When everything is running smoothly, the one observing a magician in action is able to witness the impossible without actively suspend his critical spirit.

Dan Brown has a similar approach to writing. The passionate reader can travel the streets of Florence with his book in hand and check the manic topographic accuracy. The same precision is found in most of the historical elements with which the protagonists of his novels have to deal with. *The Da Vinci Code* readers were all surprised by the effeminate face of John the Evangelist on the Last Supper by Leonardo, and the suspicion that it was Mary Magdalene - raised in the novel - captured also such readers, living outside the novel.

The combination of mystery, history, conspiracy and the use of romantic locations and figures have made each of Brown's books a popular piece of fiction. His plots have intrigued its readers and raised many questions about the history of early Christianity. Readers have felt

spiritually benefited from reading these books and that means many people are being influenced by his claims, even though its genre is fiction.

The portrayal of the camerlango, one of the highest echelon of power within the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope's closest aide in *Angels and Demons*, as the mastermind behind the villainous plot is shocking to readers who are surprised to see the persona who is forever acclaimed as 'the good guy' or 'the pure Christian' in the Christian sensibility suddenly became the devil incarnate. Readers became more horrified with *The Da Vinci Code's* claims regarding the divinity and chastity of Jesus Christ. For Christians and non-Christians alike, the conspiracy theory of this novel claiming Jesus Christ was mere mortal and was married to Mary Magdalene with whom He had children and that His lineage exists to this day, is both shocking and fascinating.

The denial of the holiness of the Christian *Holy Bible* in *The Lost Symbol* has brought immense interest and attention towards the novel. The projection of *The Bible* as somehow, just an important piece of history, belittling It as being only a book with rich wisdom is perceived as an insult to Christians while it serves as an interesting and convincing theory for others.

As such, Brown's novel has been met with spate of books written by outraged Christians and Catholics, taking Brown to task for his conception of everything from the Holy Grail to Mary Magdalene's relationship to Jesus to the validity of the non-canonical Gospels. Brown has welcomed these debates, insisting that apathy is the enemy of true faith and discussion is the life blood of any religion. Brown states on his website that his books are not anti-Christian, though he is on a 'constant spiritual journey' himself and has said that the issues that preoccupy the characters in his novels matter to him on a personal level. He has repeatedly insisted that his

books are meant to spark further discussion about the mission and place of the Church and not to inspire denunciation of the Church. Furthermore, Brown does not claim that everything the characters discuss is the absolute truth and suggests that these books may be used "as a positive catalyst for introspection and exploration of our faith." (Kaplan, 2009)

Brown writes "My goal is always to make the characters and plot be so engaging that readers don't realize how much they are learning along the way." (Dan Brown Official Website, n.d)

"The best teachers make you curious. If that's all my books do, I'm thrilled"

(Trachtenberg, 2009)

In conclusion, the study has evinced that power works in multiple layers within the Christian Church and the Christian belief system. The plots and characters in Brown's novels clearly portray the existence of the immense aura of power that revolves within Christianity. This is evident from Brown's works in a way that his books relentlessly pillories the authenticity of the *Bible* and that of the Christian beliefs but these Christian themes, in turn, have attracted worldwide attention towards Brown's works and have credited to his novels being on the top best seller lists. Brown himself maybe deemed as a 'confused Christian' with his ambiguous loyalty towards both Christianity and science but his novels clearly emphasize the power Christianity has on readers, both Christians and non- Christians, as well as both Brown's fans and critics alike.

Notes

ⁱ Renaissance man is a man who has broad intellectual interests and is accomplished in areas of both the arts and the sciences.

ⁱⁱ Samuel Coleridge was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He coined many familiar words and phrases, including the celebrated suspension of disbelief. He was a major influence on Emerson, and American transcendentalism.

ⁱⁱⁱ Willing suspension of disbelief is a term coined in 1817 by the poet and aesthetic philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who suggested that if a writer could infuse a "human interest and a semblance of truth" into a fantastic tale, the reader would suspend judgement concerning the implausibility of the narrative.

^{iv} Little Red Riding Hood is an European fairy tale about a young girl and a Big Bad Wolf.

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APPENDICES

<u>NAME OF CANDIDATE</u>	: Zorinsangi
<u>DEGREE</u>	: M.Phil.
<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	: English
<u>TITLE OF DISSERTATION</u>	: Situating Christianity and Power in Select Novels by Dan Brown.
<u>DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION</u>	: 01.08.2013
(<u>Commencement of First Semester</u>)	
<u>COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION</u>	: 01.01.2014
<u>APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL –</u>	
1. BOS	: 30. 04. 2014
2. SCHOOL BOARD	: 09.0 5. 2014
3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE	: MZU/M.Phil./163 of 09.05.2014
4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION	: 02.12.2014
5. EXTENSION IF ANY	: N.A

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Educational Qualification:

Class	Board/ University	Year of Passing	Division/ Grade	Percentage
X	MBSE	2005	Distinction	87.8%
XII	MBSE	2008	I	62%
B.A	Mizoram University	2011	II	54%
M.A	Mizoram University	2013	II	53.63%
M.Phil.	Mizoram University	Course work completed in 2013	I 'A' Grade awarded. 10 pt. scale grading system, 'A' corresponds to 6.00-6.99 pts.	Corresponds to 63% in terms of percentage conversion.

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Other relevant information:

- i) Currently working on M.Phil. dissertation entitled, “Situating Christianity and Power in Select Novels by Dan Brown” under the supervision of Dr. Margaret L. Pachuau, Associate Professor, Department of English, Mizoram University.
- ii) Awarded the UGC-MZU Fellowship for a tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 1st August 2013.
- iii) Visited the following out-of-state libraries for the purpose of the research:
 - a. British Council Library (Camac Street, Kolkata)
 - b. Jadavpur University Library (Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick Road, Kolkata)
 - c. National Library of India (Alipore, Kolkata)
 - d. Presidency College Library (College Street, Kolkata)
 - e. The American Library (Nehru Road, Kolkata)
 - f. University of Calcutta (College Street, Kolkata)

ABSTRACT

Situating Christianity and Power in Select Novels by Dan Brown

Submitted by

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M.Phil.

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2014

This study has attempted to portray the power of Christianity through a careful study of the selected works of the American novelist Dan Brown. By analyzing the power paradigm within the stories of Brown's novels and also by evaluating the influence of Christian themes and motifs of the selected works, the purpose of the research has been to project how power is exercised by Christianity.

Dan Brown is the author of numerous bestselling novels which have become the subject of intellectual debate among readers and scholars around the world. As the world discovered in *Angels & Demons*(1998), *The Da Vinci Code*(2003), and *The Lost Symbol*(2009), Dan Brown's novels are brilliant tapestries of veiled histories, arcane symbols, and enigmatic codes. In his novels, Brown challenges readers with an intelligent, lightning-paced stories that offer surprises at every turn and accelerate through startling landscapes toward each unthinkable finale.

The controversy revealed in Brown's, *Angels and Demons* is that the Catholic Church has had an unfortunate history of persecuting scientists and this centuries-old underground organization known as the Illuminati has supposedly resurfaced to carry out the final phase of its legendary vendetta against its most hated enemy, the Catholic Church. (Newman, n.d) The novel follows Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, as he tries to stop the Vatican City from being destroyed with the newly-discovered power of antimatter, an extremely deadly substance with destructive potential comparable to the most powerful nuclear weapons in existence.

In *Angels and Demons*, the conflict between Christianity and science is the key issue as it focuses entirely on the relationship between modern science and Roman Catholicism. Dan

Brown denotes, through this novel, that science and Christianity cannot be tied together but that the wish of it being possible is tremendous. Dan Brown's personal point of view too, is inherently enigmatic and there is an ambiguity in terms of the conflict between Christianity and science. His novels, till date, continue to deliberate on this aspect.

The Da Vinci Code became a cultural phenomenon and triggered a series of debate due to many of the statements about Jesus Christ. The book refers to cryptic messages that supposedly were incorporated by Leonardo Da Vinci into his artwork. According to the novel, true Christianity was started by Jesus Christ whom many people viewed as 'just another prophet'. He allegedly made no claims of divinity. Moreover, he was married, and his wife was none other than Mary Magdalene, who not only bore his child when he was crucified, but who also was handpicked by him to lead the Church. The story involves a quest for a redefined Holy Grail. Rather than being the cup used by Christ during the Last Supper, Brown's book claims the grail is Mary Magdalene.

The Lost Symbol is about the pursuit of 'ancient mysteries' hidden in Washington DC by the Freemasons. The book's plot is based on the premise that an ancient treasure of unimaginable value was hidden in Washington D.C. by the nation's forefathers. It has much to impart about the mind-body problem as filtered through the works of Dr Katherine Solomon, who conducted experiments in Noetic Science where it was discovered that matter is a manifestation of thought and that understanding this concept plays a profound role in what man is capable of. Katherine herself, made experiments to denote and explain the concept of prayer through this field of science and also made the startling discovery of how to actually weigh the soul of a human being.

Biblical references abound in the book, and central to the plot is the notion that mankind can become gods through discovering the 'Ancient Mysteries,' and Brown selects strategic passages to imply that the *Bible* secretly supports this idea. Along the way, there are enough references to denote Jesus as a mythical figure who healed the sick through the focusing of His mental energy.

Despite Brown's reluctance to accept the validity of the Bible and the basic tenants of the Christian faith, his books open a worldwide discussion into God's existence, as he intended. His novels include historical and scientific themes and Christianity as motifs, and as a result, have generated controversy as Brown uses the medium of the book - like Leonardo Da Vinci uses his art - to communicate his own personal views.

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, agrees that the Church is a "superb instrument of power for itself. Entirely woven through with elements that are imagery, erotic, effective, corporal, sensual, and so on." (Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 107). For him, it was a struggle for power and domination. Faith, which is the basic tool for religion is unfounded and pointless when it comes to controlling or changing a culture. What was more important to Foucault was the dominant power, which the Church was gradually reaching for.

Christianity as the ultimate power structure imposes an obligation upon its followers to accept its dogma, its sacred text and, most importantly, its authority as truth through aspects of confession and the pastoral power. People willingly submit to this much in the same way as they submit to governmental and medical authority. In *Angels and Demons*, Maximilian Kohler's life was destroyed by blind faith in religion. His parents did not want the doctors to give him medicine because they thought that it was against God's will. They only prayed that their son

would get better soon, but they did not realise that he was struggling for life. Had a doctor not given him an injection, he would have died. Nevertheless he was rendered paralysed because his parents refused medication consistently. In *The Da Vinci Code*, Silas is a religious fanatic, a monk of Opus Dei, and the murderer of Jacques Sauniere. He pursues his desire to please God and act on behalf of the Church to cloud his judgment, and he is willing to murder as long as he believes that he is supporting the Church. Similarly, Lee Teabing believes so strongly in finding and revealing the Sangreal documents (the Holy Grail) that he is willing to murder for his cause.

Foucault recognised that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society.

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true. (Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 65).

Therefore, power is given to that which is known and understood. Characters in Brown’s novels have consistently rendered elements of power to the forces, be it Christianity or science. Each character is driven by these forces which have full power over them.

Like many other writers, Dan Brown has faced law suits and his prose style has been criticized as clumsy. Much criticism also centers on Brown's claim found in the preface to each of his novels that they are based on fact and that the references to all descriptions of artwork and documents and all rituals and monuments are accurate. A contributing factor for Brown winning these cases, is that such authors who sued him presented their works as non-fiction, whereas

fiction writers like Dan Brown himself often draw upon non-fiction resources for content research.

Dan Brown's basic beliefs about knowledge, interpretation, true-for-all truths and religious pluralism inform and affect his entire view of the world and his novels. The combination of mystery, history, conspiracy and the use of romantic locations and figures have made each of Brown's books popular piece of fiction. His plots have intrigued its readers and raised many questions about the history of early Christianity. Readers have felt spiritually benefited from reading these books and in a way, it signifies that many people are being influenced by his claims, even though its genre is fiction.

The portrayal of the camerlango, one of the highest echelon of power within the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope's closest aide in *Angels and Demons*, as the mastermind behind the villainous plot is shocking to readers who are surprised to see the persona who is forever acclaimed as 'the good guy' or 'the pure Christian' in the Christian sensibility suddenly became the devil incarnate. Readers became more horrified with *The Da Vinci Code's* claims regarding the divinity and chastity of Jesus Christ. For Christians and non-Christians alike, the conspiracy theory of this novel claiming Jesus Christ was mere mortal and was married to Mary Magdalene with whom He had children and that His lineage exists to this day, is both shocking and fascinating.

The denial of the holiness of the Christian *Holy Bible* in *The Lost Symbol* has brought immense interest and attention towards the novel. The projection of *The Bible* as somehow, just an important piece of history, belittling It as being only a book with rich wisdom is perceived as an insult to Christians while it serves as an interesting and convincing theory for others.

As such, Brown's novel has been met with spate of books written by outraged Christians and Catholics, taking Brown to task for his conception of everything from the Holy Grail to Mary Magdalene's relationship to Jesus to the validity of the non-canonical Gospels. Brown has welcomed these debates, insisting that apathy is the enemy of true faith and discussion is the life blood of any religion. Brown has repeatedly insisted that his books are meant to spark further discussion about the mission and place of the Church and not to inspire denunciation of the Church. Furthermore, Brown does not claim that everything the characters discuss is the absolute truth and suggests that these books may be used "as a positive catalyst for introspection and exploration of our faith." (Kaplan, 2009)

"The best teachers make you curious. If that's all my books do, I'm thrilled"

(Trachtenberg, 2009)

In conclusion, the study has evinced that power works in multiple layers within the Christian Church and the Christian belief system. The plots and characters in Brown's novels clearly portray the existence of the immense aura of power that revolves within Christianity. This is also evident from Brown's works in a way that his books relentlessly pillories the authenticity of the *Bible* and that of the Christian beliefs but these Christian themes, in turn, have attracted worldwide attention towards Brown's works and have credited to his novels being on the top best seller lists. Brown himself maybe deemed as a 'confused Christian' with his ambiguous loyalty towards both Christianity and science but his novels clearly emphasize the power Christianity has on his readers.

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