

NOTHING BUT THE FACTS

THE DA VINCI HOAX UNCOVERED

By Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel

A frequent question asked by readers of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is "How much of the novel's depiction of historical events, people, artwork, and institutions is correct?" The short answer is "Not much." In fact, the only thing more amazing than Brown's consistent misrepresentation of facts is a widespread acceptance of his claims, with both reviewers and readers praising the "research" and "knowledge" supposedly evident in his novel. *The Da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in The Da Vinci Code* examines, in much detail, the lengthy list of claims made in the *Code*. Here is a brief look at just a few of the claims made in Brown's novel and on his web site.

OPUS DEI

One of Brown's "bizarre true facts" is that Opus Dei exists and "has recently completed construction of a \$47 million, 133,000-square-foot American Headquarters at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City." Why this is considered bizarre is, well, bizarre. Far more bizarre than the existence of a personal prelature of the Catholic Church - erroneously described as a "a church" in the *Code* - is the character of a murderous albino Opus Dei monk. Never mind that Opus Dei is not a religious order and that it consists of mostly lay people, with less than 2% of its members being priests. As others have noted, Brown's mythical Opus Dei has simply taken the place of the Jesuits, an order commonly depicted as murderous, vile, and corrupt by anti-Catholics writing in the 1800s and well into the 1900s.

CLEAR FACTS ABOUT MUDDY FICTION

The Da Vinci Code states that over a three hundred period in the medieval era, the Catholic Church was responsible for burning a total of five million women at the stake. That's quite a bit off of the best current estimate of 30,000 to 50,000 of men and women killed during the four hundred years from 1400 to 1800—certainly a significant number, but not comparable to the Holocaust or Stalin's purges. Many of those deaths didn't involve burning. Witches were hanged, strangled, and beheaded as well. In addition, witch-hunting was not woman-hunting: at least twenty percent of all suspected witches were male. Despite what the novel claims, midwives were not especially targeted; nor

were witches liquidated as obstacles to professionalized medicine and mechanistic science.

Another glaring error is found in character Robert Langdon's explanation of the origin of the tetragrammaton—YHWH (pronounced as Yahweh)—the sacred name of God, which observant Jews believe should not be uttered. Langdon claims that YHWH comes from the name Jehovah, which he insists is an androgynous union between "the masculine *Jah* and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve, *Havah*". A quick trip to the encyclopedia (or theological dictionary, if you prefer) shows that Langdon is wildly off the mark. The name "Jehovah" didn't even exist until the thirteenth century at the earliest (and wasn't common until the sixteenth century), and is an English word. It was created by artificially combining the consonants of YHWH (or JHVH) and the vowels of *Adonai* (which means "Lord"), the name substituted for YHWH in the Old Testament by Jews. The Hebrew—not "pre-Hebraic"—word for Eve is *havvâ*, (pronounced "havah"), which means "mother of all living". There is absolutely nothing androgynous about any of this, but that dubious assertion is in keeping with the neognostic flavor of the novel.

Possibly Brown's silliest mistake about the Templars is charging that Pope Clement V not only burnt hundreds of Templars but had their ashes "tossed unceremoniously into the Tiber River". That the statement is put in the mouth of his "Royal Historian" character, Teabing, only adds to its irony. The largest burnings of Templars actually took place in Paris, with smaller holocausts in three other French cities and possibly Cyprus. There's no record of Knights burnt at Rome. In any event, the pope couldn't have dumped any remains in the Tiber since he resided at Avignon in southern France and not in Rome. Also, the Templars had nothing to do with gothic architecture, despite Brown's claims that they had everything to do with it.

The Code claims that the Merovingians founded Paris. Nope. This is a mistake no educated Parisian would make, inasmuch as Paris was originally a Gallic village called *Lutetia Parisiorum* that was expanded into a city by the Romans.

On and on it goes, with faulty and often blatantly incorrect statements about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the Vatican, paganism, early Christianity, medieval Christianity, modern day Catholicism, the life and work of Leonardo, secret societies, the origins of the English language, Constantine, and much more. ❖

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