

**Tribhuvan University**

**A Study of Symbols in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

**By**

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**2011**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr Arun Rai has completed his thesis entitled, "A Study of Symbols in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*" under my supervision. He carried out his research work from January to August. I hereby co-commend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis titled “A Study of Symbols in Dan Brown’s *Angels and Demons*” submitted to the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr Arun Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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## **Acknowledgement**

I am highly indebted to teacher Dr. Rebati Neupane, Reader, Central Department of English , Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, for his scholarly guidance while completing this thesis.

My sincere gratitude also goes to Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, for his constructive suggestions.

September 2011

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## Abstract

Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* (2000) showcases a long-standing tension between the Illuminati and the Vatican respectively. Several religious and historical symbols have been introduced in the book to portray the centuries-old rivalry between the representative agencies of science and religion. This research tries to unfold the meanings of the cryptic symbols as they are crucial to understanding the historical context of the epic clash between knowledge and faith.

Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of religious and historical symbology, offers to help CERN, the European nuclear research facility to analyze a cryptic symbol seared into the chest of a murdered physicist. With the highly explosive antimatter stolen and the four cardinals, most likely succeed to dead Pole, abducted, speculation exists regarding whether the Illuminati, once-thought to be defunct, really are back to avenge all persecutions perpetrated by the Catholic churches against men of sciences.

As the plot unfolds, it is revealed that Camerlengo, who acts as the Illuminati ringleader in the name of Janus, and his aide Hassanin are involved in all these cases of abduction and killings. Moreover, Langdon is faced with a challenge of decoding several symbols including the All-Seeing Eye on one-dollar bill, ambigrams of primordial elements, and several other pagan and occult symbols along the Path of Illumination.

Langdon, however, successfully deciphers the meaning of the symbols by navigating sealed crypts, dangerous catacomb, deserted cathedral and the most secretive vault in and around the Vatican with their proper historical and religious references. These symbols and their meanings are central to understanding to the age-old antagonism between the two opposing forces, namely science and religion, as presented and interpreted in the novel.

## I. Symbols, Brown and His Works

Symbols are predominant in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* (2000), with the novelist encoding historical and religious symbols everywhere throughout the plot. A secret organization, the Illuminati, that tried to reconcile religion and science, has infiltrated the Vatican with intent of revenge. This research work tries to study the symbols and symbolism as presented in the book by religious and historical symbologist Professor Robert Langdon, the protagonist of the novel.

The novel begins with professor Langdon being woken up early in the morning by a message from the director of CERN, a European institution for particle research. The director's name is Maximilian Kohler. He tells Langdon that one of the most prominent scientists at CERN, Leonardo Vetra has been killed in a brutal way under mysterious circumstances. Kohler sends a fax to Langdon. The fax has an image of the naked, murdered man identified as Leonardo Vetra, lying on his back, with his head twisted 180 degrees facing the ground. His chest bears a mysterious symbol.

Robert instantly recognizes the symbol, an ambigram, as the mark of an ancient cult—the Illuminati. It is a term that signifies those who claimed to possess light directly communicated from a higher source or because of abundant human wisdom. The Illuminati are historically presented as a renaissance-era society of great thinkers, including prominent scientist Galileo, who dominated his era by his inventions and writings on physics, and artist Bernini.

The members of the society were expelled from Rome by the Vatican fearing possible effects of their scientific thoughts on the realm of Christian theology and hunted down ruthlessly. Historians recognize such a society was founded nearly a century later, in Bavaria, in 1776.

Kohler calls Langdon for his help and within an hour and a half. After showing some unwillingness at first, Robert finally agrees to lend his expertise help and subsequently lands at CERN after a Mach 15 flight in the prototype plane, Boeing X-33. He finally meets with Maximilian Kohler. He visits CERN as he is guided to the scene of the crime, which is Leonardo Vetra's own private laboratory. Then Leonardo Vetra's daughter, Vittoria, arrives and together with Kohler they go down to Leonardo Vetra's personal research facility. Vittoria, a scientist herself lectures them in their recent breakthrough in production of antimatter. The antimatter is a highly unstable material that explodes in a most disastrous way the moment it comes in contact with matter.

The barely visible, but extremely destructive antimatter is contained in the exact centre of a transparent canister the size of a tennis ball. It is suspended in mid-air by magnetism. They find that the storage room supposedly containing an even larger amount of antimatter has been broken into. To their horror, they also find the canister has gone missing.

At the same time in Rome, the ancient Vatican ceremony called conclave is taking place. It occurs every time a Pope dies, with the main purpose of replacing the dead Pope. Only a week ago, the recent Pope passed away under suspicious circumstances and now the four preferiti, the cardinals most likely to win the election, are missing, most likely kidnapped.

The Vatican City receives a bomb threat featuring the stolen antimatter canister. The Swiss guards responsible for the security in Vatican City are watching the canister's LED screen on a stolen security camera. It's hidden somewhere inside the Vatican, but they cannot figure out the exact location. The screen displays the amount of time until detonation as six hours

A wild hunt through sealed crypts, dangerous catacomb, deserted cathedrals, and the most secretive vault on the earth then begins. Robert and Vittoria have to follow a 400 years

old path made by Galileo Galilei through Rome. They try to track down the old brotherhood Illuminati who leave their mark by branding their victims with the symbols of four primordial elements, namely air, earth, fire and water. Teaming up with the beautiful Italian scientist Vittoria, Langdon races against the clock to decipher a trail of ancient symbols to save the Vatican before it's too late.

In literature, symbolism is an approach that emphasizes the primary importance of suggestions and evocation in the expression of the private mood or reverie. In it, symbols—words, places, characters or objects that mean something beyond what it is on a literal level—are used to evoke a subtle relations and affinities, especially between sound, sense, color and between the material and spiritual worlds.

The concept of symbol is vague. A symbol is a word, place, character or object that means something beyond what it is on a literal level. A symbol, although it is of interest in its own right, stands for or hints at something broader, deeper, higher, and more complex idea or set of ideas, attitudes and practices.

*The Oxford Dictionary* defines a symbol as “sign, mark, object, etc looked upon as representing something” (876), while in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* defines it as “a metaphor in which the vehicle—the image, activity, or concept used to represent something else—represents many related things (or tenors) or is broadly suggestive” (391). As an extended metaphor, a symbol serves as a concrete imagery to express abstract idea and emotions.

Symbols not only reveal meaning, they can also suggest meaning and conceal meaning. So they are a fascinating vehicle to evoke mystery and unfold hidden truths and concepts. A close scrutiny of the symbols on their entirety unravels the concealed meanings. Langdon's *Angels and Deomons* involves sleuthing of the meanings of symbolic clues derived from religious and historical pieces of arts as studied in symbology.

Liungman in *Dictionary of Symbols* writes;

The word symbol is derived from the Greek word *symbolon*. The use of the word *symbol* was widened to include the engraved shells that were employed by those initiated in the mysteries, both as marks of identification and as essential components in ritual gatherings. It was only a short step away to the word's eventual meaning, in which an object, either through a visual similarity or a common agreement between those using it, represented something other than itself (5)

The symbols can be ambiguous. If the meanings are not taught, or if there is more than one meaning associated with the symbol, there can be confusion or a lack of clarity. But it is this ambiguity that makes for the mystery and allure of Robert Langdon's scholarship. His knowledge of the meaning of ancient symbols enables him to do the detective work that solves the crime.

Along with such ambiguity, symbols also create mystery by unclear meanings and cognitive dissonance when symbols with opposite or conflicting meaning are intentionally placed in the same context. The pursuit of hidden meanings creates mystery and mystery creates interest.

As a distinct literary phenomenon, the term symbolism specifically applies to the works of late nineteenth century writers who reacted against the descriptive precision, objectivity of realism and the scientific determinism of naturalism. Symbolism was first and foremost a movement in French literature centered in Paris, and many of its central participants were French Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud.

Yet many artists and writers from elsewhere were also central to French symbolism. Maurice Maeterlinck, Émile Verhaeren, and Albrecht Rodenbach were Belgian, Jean Moréas was Greek, Téodor de Wyzewa was Polish, and Stuart Merrill and Edgar Allan Poe were

American. In addition, there were symbolist movements in Germany, Italy, Russia, and Belgium. Many scholars also see mid-nineteenth-century British aestheticism as a form of symbolism.

Proponents of symbolists rejected the notion that the purpose of the arts is to represent the world as it appears to one's senses. They argue concepts as being something that have universal presence in any work of art as opposed to sensory or objective description. Perhaps the universal human interest in the use of symbols is due to the very way that our minds work. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue "that most of our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured; that is, most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts" (56).

They proposed, instead, to create works that would use suggestive and often abstract forms, images, or sounds to embody transcendent and sometimes spiritual ideas and would, thus, offer their readers, viewers, or listeners an experience of truth, beauty, or the idea beyond the material realm and sensory perceptions.

In symbolism, everything has some meaning and purpose which at times seem to be vague and indefinite. It, however, leaves some trace or trail which is open to contemplation, investigation and interpretation. The interpretation hints at some definite meaning generally accepted and understood in a cultural domain. Betalanffy maintains that "in spite of the fact that symbolic activity is one of the most fundamental manifestations of the human mind...there is no generally accepted definition of symbolism" (42).

Symbolism characterized much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French poetry. Mallarme explained symbolism as the art of evoking an object 'little by little so as to reveal a mood' or, conversely, 'the art of choosing an object an object and extracting from it an e'tat' d'ame'. This mood, he contended, was to be extracted by a series of decipherings" (Cuddon 656).

At its basic, symbolism is the use of symbols to stand for something especially in art and literature. For example, rose symbolizes love, bull symbolizes power, dove symbolizes peace, gun symbolizes war, and cloud symbolizes rain. The familiar kind of symbolism is conventional and fixed. The meanings of such symbols are, more or less, understood by the members of a certain socio-cultural group having followed a particular set of conventions.

However, the symbols of the symbolists' school are usually chosen arbitrarily by the poets to stand for their special ideas. For example, writers might choose to use the moon, which has the conventional symbolic meaning of tranquility and calmness, as a symbol of aggression and rage. This kind of symbolism is private or personal.

Cirlot explains symbolism in all-encompassing way:

Symbolism, the basic and often complex artistic form and gestures used as a kind of key to convey religious concepts, and iconography, the visual auditory, and kinetic representations of religious, ideas and events have been utilized by all the religions of the world since time immemorial. (900).

Symbolism is prominent and most recurring theme in the Brown's *Angels and Demons*. The symbols are mostly conventional ones related to history and religion. From statues to money, there is encoding and decoding of symbols everywhere throughout the book. Protagonist Langdon, a Harvard professor of symbology, is much acquainted with the symbols and their meanings. He has special expertise in the study of the Illuminati and uses his knowledge of the history of religious and occult symbols to unravel the meanings of cryptic signs and symbols. Moreover, he pursues the Illuminati's "Path of Illumination" in Rome as it had been defined by the mysterious Illuminati.

Langdon knows that the four major locations in Rome associated with the Illuminati were connected with what many ancients believed to be the four primordial elements of the cosmos: earth, air, fire and water. He first sees the Illuminati ambigram branded into the

chest of a scientist. Later, while pursuing his symbolic clues, he finds murdered bishops—murdered in a way that reflects these four elements. As he deciphers the clues, he gains insights as to the whereabouts of the killer and the disastrous antimatter canister that poses a grave risk to the Vatican.

Dan Brown is an American thriller fiction writer, who was born on June 22 1964 and grew up in the US, in the small city of Exeter in New Hampshire. His father was a Presidential Award winning math professor and his mother a professional Christian musician. He was brought up in a home where both knowledge and faith were equally important and respected. This very impression might have led him to write a novel like *Angels and Demons*, where he profusely uses symbols to trace out and reconcile the tension between science and religion that has come down through ages.

After graduating from Philips Exeter Academy in 1982, he moved to Hollywood, Los Angeles. He briefly pursued a musical career, creating effects with a synthesizer, and self-producing a children's cassette. Later, he moved to Hollywood to in pursuit of a career as singer-songwriter and pianist as well before returning to Seville to study art history.

During his school days, he pursued advanced writing courses and was published in school literary magazines. The school, by chance, had a very strong tradition of writing and had a number of famous writers as alumni, including John Irving, Gore Vidal, Daniel Webster and Peter Benchley. At Exeter, Brown chose creative writing as his senior project. At Amherst, he applied for and was accepted to a special writing course with visiting novelist Alan Lelchuck.

Before becoming a full time writer, Brown under the pseudonym Danielle Brown, had penned a humor book *187 Men to Avoid: A Guide for the Romantically Frustrated Woman*, in collaboration with his wife, Blythe Newlon. A few months later, Brown and his

wife released *The Bald Book*, another humor book. It was officially credited to his wife, though primarily written by Brown.

Later on, in 1993 he returned to New Hampshire and was hired as a teacher at his old school, where he taught literature. As a literature teacher, he was frequently involved in analysis of books and novels that helped him a lot to enhance his writing skills as reflected in his novels.

He wrote his first thriller *Digital Fortress*, which he published in 1996. This was soon followed by *Angels and Demons* (2000), *Deception Point* (2001), *Da Vinci Code* (2003) and *The Lost Symbol* (2009). His novels are uniquely set in a 24-hour time-period. They have recurring themes of cryptography, symbols, codes and conspiracies theories. In his works, he also uses tales from various genres such as fantasy, mythology, religion and politics. His works tend to have central themes of puzzles, treasure hunts, secret organizations and academic lectures on obscure topics.

His narrative technique has mostly connected his book to magic realism, a narrative style in which reality merges with fantasy. With this, he amalgamates the elements of mythology, conspiracies, and controversial issues with the fact strangely blending and molding it in order to give a real feel of his hypothesized world.

His books have been translated into more than 40 major languages of the world, with two of them, *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code* already being adapted into feature films. Brown's novels that feature the lead character Robert Langdon also include historical themes and Christianity recurring motifs, and consequently have generated a range of controversies.

Brown has borrowed the key terms and title of the novel 'angels' and 'demons' from religious mythology. Etymologically, 'angel' has its root in Greek '*aggelos*', meaning 'messenger' (47). Angel is a spirit believed to be a messenger, or intermediary between God,

or the gods, and humankind whereas another word 'demon' has been derived from the ancient Greek term, '*daimon*', meaning 'being whose special powers placed them between people and the gods' (179). Currently, the term 'demon' is used as synonymous to 'devil' with full negative meaning.

The title of novel itself is symbolic. The terms have been used to portray two major but opposing discourses namely, science and religion. It is however up to readers to decide which term refers to science and which term represents religion. Brown's grand success lies in weaving the ancient secret brotherhood of Illuminati, the CERN physics lab, the Vatican's papal conclave, all mysterious symbols and cryptic signs into his stories. It is equally remarkable that the events are fast-paced, and his position is neutral while sketching the clash between the two philosophical forces.

One of the most unusual calligraphic techniques never before seen in a work of fiction that Brown has used is the employment of ambigrammatic portrayal of symbols. Ambigrams read the same upside down or right side up. They are an ancient art form and play heavily into the mysteries of *Angels and Demons*. The brands seared into the chests of the CERN physicist, and all the four cardinals are ambigrams. Ambigrams are very unnerving while looking at them first. The title of the novel on its hardcover is also found to be ambigrammatic.

Characters in the novel are often named after real people in his life. Like in *The Da Vinci Code*, author Brown has played with names in the novel *Angels and Demons* as well. Robert Langdon is named after John Langdon, the artist who created the ambigrams used for the *Angels and Demons* CD and novel. Camerlengo Carlo Ventresca is named after "*On a Claire Day*" cartoonist friend Carla Ventresca. In the Vatican Archives, Langdon recalls a wedding of two people named Dick and Connie, which are the names of his parents. Robert Langdon's editor Jonas Faukman is an ambigram of Brown's real life editor Jason Kaufman.

Brown's first three novels had little success but the fourth novel, *The Da Vinci Code* got a roaring success and became a runaway 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 some 70 million copies sold worldwide as of 2006. Its success has helped push sales of Brown's earlier books as well. In 2004, all four of his novels were on the New York Times list in the same week, and in 2005, he made *Time* magazine's list of the 100 Most Influential People of the year. *Forbes* magazine placed Brown at 12 on their 2005 celebrity 100 list. Currently, his novels have been translated into more than forty languages.

In Brown's own words:

Writing an informative yet compact thriller is a lot like making maple sugar candy. You have to tap hundreds of trees...boil vats and vats of raw sap...evaporate the water...and keep boiling until you've distilled a tiny nugget that encapsulates the essence. In many ways, editing yourself is the most important part of being a novelist...carving away superfluous text until your story stands crystal clear before your reader. For every page in a published novel, I wrote ten that ended up in the trash.

Brown has followed a very similar approach to researching and then writing each of his four novels. The first step is to select a theme generally the big idea. As his novels normally are research intensive, he almost took up two years' time to complete a single novel. Writing, for Brown, is a discipline much like playing instruments, as it requires constant practice and honing of skills. After the basic reading is done and any theme or big idea is in place, Brown starts researching and writing in earnest.

He erects the frame on which to build the plot; he tries to sketch out the overall shape of the story. Because his novels are very 'location driven', he always selects a series of key

settings that he wants to use in the novel. In context to his novel and his writing style, Dan Brown says:

I tried to write a book that I would love to read, I wanted every single chapter to compel the reader to turn the page. The action of my novel takes place within twenty-four hours. All of my novels take the concept of a simple hero pulled out of his familiar world and thrown into a world that he or she does not understand. I use strong female characters, travel and interesting locations, a romance between a man and a woman of complementary expertise. Structural elements are consistent in every book. The hard part of writing a novel is not the ideas but rather the nuts and bolts of the plot and language, and making it all work. (106)

Like the recurring theme in some demonic symphony, the cryptography, keys, codes, and treasure hunts return time and again in Brown's novels. In each of his books, the treasure is an object and the entire novel hovers round it. In *Digital Fortress*, the treasure is a golden ring, in *Angels and Demons*, it is antimatter, in *Deception Point*, it is a meteorite, and in *The Da Vinci Code*, it is the Holy Grail.

His first novel *Digital Fortress* (1998) is a thriller set within National Security Agency (NSA) and Spain. When the National Security Agency's invincible code-breaking machine encounters a mysterious code it cannot break, the agency calls in its head cryptographer, Susan Fletcher, a brilliant, beautiful mathematician. What she uncovers sends shock waves through the corridor of power. The NSA is being held hostage - not by guns or bombs, but by a code so complex that if released would cripple U.S. intelligence. Caught in an accelerating tempest of secrecy and lies, Fletcher battles to save the agency she believes in. Betrayed on all sides, she finds herself fighting not only for her country but also for her life, and in the end, for the life of the man she loves, David Becker.

Dan Brown's second novel *Angels and Demons* (2000), one of the most read and widely acclaimed masterpieces after the Holy Bible, is an explosive international thriller that careens from enlightening epiphanies to dark truth as the battle between science and religion turns to war. Brown has woven an ancient secret brotherhood, the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN), a papal conclave, mysterious ambigrams, a plot against Vatican, the increasingly heated clash between science and religion...into a single entwined colorful garland, *Angels and Demons*.

Pitting scientific terrorists against the cardinals of Vatican City, Langdon has made references of many historical and religious symbols in the novel. Harvard professor Robert Langdon, an expert in symbology and arcane codes, is summoned to a Swiss Research facility when Dr. Vetra, the scientist who discovered antimatter, is found murdered with the cryptic word "Illuminati" seared into his chest. What he discovers is unimaginable: a deadly vendetta against the Catholic Church by a centuries-old underground organization, the Illuminati.

These Illuminati were a group of Renaissance scientists, including Galileo, who met secretly in Rome to discuss new ideas in safety from papal threat but what the long-defunct association has to do with Dr. Vetra's death is far from clear. Vetra's daughter, Vittoria, makes a frightening discovery: a lethal amount of antimatter, sealed in vacuum flask that will explode in six hours unless its batteries are recharged, is missing. Almost immediately, the Swiss Guard discovers that the flask is hidden beneath Vatican City, where the conclave to elect a new pope has just begun.

Desperate to save the Vatican from a powerful time bomb, Vittoria and Langdon rush against time to recover the canister, but they are not allowed into the Vatican until it is discovered that the four principal papal candidates are missing. The terrorists who are holding

the cardinals call in regarding their pending murders, offering clues tied to ancient Illuminati meeting sites and runes.

Meanwhile, it becomes clear that a sinister Vatican entity with messianic delusions is in league with the terrorists. Packing the novel with sinister figures worthy of Medici, Brown sets an explosive pace as Langdon and Vittoria embark on a frantic hunt across a Michelin-perfect Rome through catacombs, deserted cathedrals, piazzas and even the most secretive vault on earth...the long-forgotten Illuminati lair to try prevent the incineration of civilization and find the antimatter before it explodes.

His third novel *Deception Point* (2001) revolves around the issues of morality in politics, human progress, national security and classified technology. The book explores organization such as National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). The crux of the novel is the link between NASA, the military and the political pressures of big budget technology.

Dan Brown's fourth novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) is a blockbuster perfection which has brought international as well as global fame to Brown and has set him to the pinnacle of the literary realm. The novel also drove Brown to court with the charges of plagiarism. In 2006, the novel was released as a film by Columbia Pictures, with director Ron Howard; the film starred Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, Audrey Tautou as Sophie Neveu and Sir Ian McKellen as Sir Leigh Teabing. It was considered one of the most anticipated films of the year, and was used to launch the 2006 Cannes Film Festival, though it received overall poor reviews.

Like his other books, the novel *Angels and Demons* is written in a prose style that is functional and fast-moving. Some critics describe the prose style as lacking fine-writing and being clumsy and that Brown's prose style "violates the rule of fiction that a fiction should show, not tell" (Chivers).

Much of criticism centers on numerous other scientific, technological and historical inaccuracies. For example, the book suggests antimatter can be produced in useful and practical quantities and will be a limitless source of power, reacting against which CERN has published a FAQ on *Angels and Demons*, stating that antimatter cannot be used as an energy source because creating it takes more energy than it produces.

On inaccuracies in locations of Rome, Greydanus writes:

*Angels & Demons* claims that a plaque in the Pantheon indicates that Raphael's body was only relocated to the Pantheon in 1758, and that he was originally buried in Urbino. No such plaque exists, for the excellent reason that Raphael was buried in the Pantheon from the start. Brown also places the body of Pope Alexander VII, Alexander Chigi, in the Chigi chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo. In fact, Alexander VII is buried in the tombs of St. Peter's Basilica.

Moreover, Brown's fictionalization of CERN, which is essentially an institutional that acts on facts of sciences, has created widespread concerns. James Gillies, head of the communication group at CERN, in *New Scientist* has explicitly conceded the effect of Brown's book on the nuclear research facility. (21)

However, critics have also immensely extolled Brown for the intrigue and suspense, he has used in his masterwork *Angels and Demons*. Some critics have compared him with Umberto Eco and Tom Clancy while others with Michael Crichton and Thomas Harris. Nancy Pearl in a library journal extols Brown's genius: "*Angels and Demons* is both literate and extremely well researched, mixing physics with religion...Right up to the riveting conclusion, and Brown clearly knows how to deliver the goods" (124).

Some critics interpret the conflict between science and religion regarding the origin of universe and mankind as a myth and argues that the myth is not simply a misunderstanding of

history, but instead, it has become a rhetorical tool, put to good use for a political purpose and asserts that “portrayal of church in the novel as dogmatic and anti-science helps ensure that science remains authoritative in our culture instead of religion” (Johnson).

Irrespective of criticisms, many historical and religious symbols dominate the novel encountered at Santa Maria del Popolo church, Piazza del Popolo, Saint Peter's Square, Santa Maria della Vittoria church, Piazza della Minerva, Piazza Navona, and Castel Sant'Angelo all along the Path of Illumination. The research will study the symbols and try to reveal disturbing ancient truths with references and interpretation made by protagonist Robert Langdo.

## **II. A Study of Symbols in *Angels and Demons***

Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* (2000) basically deals with the antagonism between science and faith that has come down through ages. The clash between the two is symbolized through the opposing organizations of the Illuminati, which claims to speak for free thought and science and the Vatican, which bulwarks two millennia of dedication to the Christian faith. In so doing, Brown introduces several symbols in the novel, the meanings of which are deciphered by the protagonist Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of religious symbology, through his academic expertise in arts history.

The plot of *Angels and Demons* takes place 400 years later, when the Illuminati, now a powerful and ruthless secret society, returns to avenge all atrocities perpetrated against it by the Vatican for centuries. Symbolically, the society of Illuminati represents scientific ambition and possibility, whereas the Vatican is the face of Christendom that has influenced human thoughts and actions all along human history.

The story starts with the brutal murder of a well respected scientist Leonardo Vetra. His body has been discovered in his private lab with an ambigram symbol branded into his chest. The symbol is that of the Illuminati, the secret brotherhood that was thought to have gone defunct four hundred years. Langdon is called in to help to establish whether the symbol

belonged to the Illuminati who have killed the scientist. Langdon goes on to unravel the mystery of the symbol and murder with several other Illuminati symbols to follow.

Langdon identifies the ambigram symbol as that of the secret society of the Illuminati. “The image was overpowering, possibly representing the epigraphical find of the century, a decade of his research confirmed in a single symbol....Langdon’s eyes were locked on the brand. *Illuminati*, he read over and over ” (7).

The word Illuminati means “the enlightened ones” (35). In modern symbology, the Illuminati emblems were legendary. An uncertainty about the authenticity surrounded the discovery of the emblem as nobody had ever actually seen it:

Ancient documents described the symbol as an *ambigram* — *ambi* meaning “both” — signifying it was legible *both* ways. And although ambigrams were common in symbology — swastikas, yin yang, Jewish stars, simple crosses — the idea that a *word* could be crafted into an ambigram seemed utterly impossible. Modern symbologists had tried for years to forge the word “Illuminati” into a perfectly symmetrical style, but they had failed miserably. Most academics had now decided the symbol’s existence was a myth. (39)

The group was founded in the sixteenth century by prominent scholars who were concerned about the Catholic Church's influence over science as Langdon says:

...But in the 1500s, a group of men in Rome fought back against the church. Some of Italy’s most enlightened men — physicists, mathematicians, astronomers — began meeting secretly 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.’(48)

The Catholic Church believed that science was the church's enemy and therefore wanted to stop the Illuminati. The Catholic Church tried to find out the identities of Illuminati members and eventually caught four members and brutally murdered them and dumped their bodies in the streets of Rome. After the murders, the Illuminati became more anti-Christian, and wanted revenge on the Catholic Church. They went underground, but at the same time they started to adopt new members.

The Illuminati went deep underground, where they began mixing with other refugee groups fleeing the Catholic purges — mystics, alchemists, occultists, Muslims, Jews. Over the years, the Illuminati began absorbing new members. A new Illuminati emerged. A darker Illuminati. A deeply anti-Christian Illuminati. (42)

The Vatican forbid Illuminati and called it *Shaitan*, which is the Islamic word for "enemy of God", and in several European languages known as Satan. They grew very powerful, employing mysterious rites, deadly secrecy, vowing someday to rise again and take revenge on the Catholic Church. The Vatican denounced the brotherhood as *Shaitan*. Thus Illuminati symbol also marks the resurgence of the Church-created notion of Satanism.

The rumors of satanic black-magic animal sacrifices and the pentagram ritual were nothing but lies spread by the church as a smear campaign against their adversaries. Over time, opponents of the church, who wanted to follow in footsteps of the Illuminati, began believing the lies. This triggered the birth of modern Satanism.

Outspoken scientists including Galileo and Copernicus were among the Illuminati. As Langdon says:

The symbol itself was created by an anonymous sixteen the century Illuminati artist as a tribute to Galileo's love of symmetry — a kind of sacred Illuminati logo. The brotherhood kept the design secret, allegedly planning to reveal it

only when they had amassed enough power to resurface and carry out their final goal.” (41)

Thus the symbols of Illuminati for many years were thought to be extinct until the appearance of the symbol on Leonardo Vetra's chest. This also hints at the fact that the Illuminati are possibly resurfacing to avenge brutalities and persecution of churches against the men of science.

The Illuminati's ultimately goal is to create a new world order, building on scientific information. They call their goal the Luciferian doctrine, named after Lucifer. According to the church, the mythological figure connotes devilish image but originally means the one who brings light, just as the illuminator. Illuminati would not kill a scientist, which happens to Leonardo Vetra in the novel but the symbol branded in the scientist's chest is the result of his vision to reconcile the two opposing forces, science and religion.

Leonardo Vetra's body is discovered and the killer has also taken away the antimatter by cutting out his eyeball to gain access to the optico-digitally secured laboratory . The substance is very volatile and has to be kept in a special container in a vacuum - if the antimatter was to explode, the consequences would be shocking. At its symbolic level, the antimatter epitomizes a material threat that reflects the superiority of scientific advancement over religion that heavily depended on unreasoned preachings and miracles to rule the world all along history.

Antimatter is a sheer scientific invention as it is nowhere to be found in nature. The Bible puts forth the theory special creation, saying that the god created the universe, while science attributes the beginning of every material world to the Big Bang theory as postulated by Georges Lemaitre in 1927 and later confirmed by Harvard astronomer Edwin Hubble.

In the novel, Leonardo Vetra and his daughter Vittoria, both of whom work for CERN, the scientific research facility in Europe make experiments with antimatter. The

antimatter could explode 1000 times more powerfully than nuclear power when it comes in contact with matter. It has a capacity to annihilate everything within a radius of one kilometer. The antimatter which is clandestinely placed beneath the Vatican symbolizes the newfound power of science that threatens to attack on the heart of the Catholic faith for all persecutions perpetrated by the Vatican against the scientific stalwarts all through ages.

The Vatican, the representative agency of religion in the novel, is one of the world's most secretive places. The catacombs below the Vatican have never been fully investigated. This at its symbolic level represents the obscurity and vagueness of spiritual doctrines that ever have tried to dominate a person's religious life with vague and uncertain preachings. The Vatican archive treasures the biggest collection of written works and historical documents. Some of them have not been seen in the last 200 years:

The Vatican Museum housed over 60,000 priceless pieces in 1,407 rooms — Michelangelo, da Vinci, Bernini, Botticelli. Many of the pieces were sculptures weighing tons. Not to mention, the greatest treasures were architectural — the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica, Michelangelo's famed spiral staircase leading to the *Musèò Vaticano* — priceless testaments to man's creative genius. (102)

The Catholic Church stores half of its values in the Vatican. Rare paintings, books, sculptures, valuable jewelry, gold bars and deeds in the safety deposit boxes of the Vatican Bank. The treasure appeals to the Vatican's enemy to choose the place to launch its revenge and settle the century-old scores.

With the Pope dead, the Vatican prepares selection of the new Pope. The preferretti, the four cardinals mostly likely to succeed the Pope are abducted by Hassasin at the behest of his master Janus. On the early part of the novel, Janus's identity is not revealed. The Vatican

receives the threat that all the four cardinals would be killed one every hour before blowing the Vatican Square at midnight with the antimatter.

Langdon, aided by beautiful CERN physicist Vittoria Vetra embarks on a race against time to locate the explosive and save the cardinals before it is too late. For this, they had to decipher the meanings of several historical and religious symbols encountered along what is called the Path of Illumination.

Bermini, who has created the ambigram of Illuminati was requested to make four sculptures, which should be in line with the other pieces of art around in Rome. Each of them needed to have a theme, as an ovation to the four primordial elements, namely earth, air, fire and water. The scientists in the seventeenth century believed that the universe was made of the four elements. As Langdon reminds of the fact:

Early alchemists believed the entire universe was made up of only four substances: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. The early cross, Langdon knew, was the most common symbols of four arms representing Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Beyond that, though, there existed literally dozens of symbolic occurrences of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water throughout history — the Pythagorean cycles of life, the Chinese Hong-Fan, the Jungian male and female rudiments, the quadrants of the Zodiac, even the Muslims revered the four ancient elements... although in Islam they were known as “squares, clouds, lightning, and waves. (166)

The churches across the Rome representing these four elements are called the Altars of Science, which is the expression Hassasin used, when he called to say that the cardinals would be the virgin victims on the Altars of Science. The churches are located in such a way that the position of one would lead to another, thus creating the Path of Illumination. The path

is a symbolic track that only the Illuminati would be able to trace with their knowledge of Illuminati symbols on their way to Church of Illumination.

The pieces blended into the sea of religious artwork all over Rome. By donating the artwork anonymously to specific churches and then using their political influence, the brotherhood facilitated placement of these four pieces in carefully chosen churches in Rome. Each piece of course was a marker... subtly pointing to the next church... where the next marker awaited. It functioned as a trail of clues disguised as religious art. If an Illuminati candidate could find the first church and the marker for Earth, he could follow it to Air... and then to Fire... and then to Water... and finally to the Church of Illumination. (167)

There is a prominent symbol of Illuminati that Langdon refers to while explaining his involvement with Illuminati—the Great Seal on the US one-dollar bill. The pyramid and all-seeing-eye on back of U.S. currency does not have any bearings on the history of the United States so as to makes their presence on our currency so remarkable. The pyramid is actually an Egyptian occult symbol. But also it is the central symbol of the Great Seal. Langdon said. “The pyramid is an occult symbol representing a convergence upward, toward the ultimate source of Illumination (159).”

The eye inside the triangle is a pagan symbol adopted by the Illuminati to signify the brotherhood's ability to infiltrate and watch all things. In addition, the triangle, the Greek Delta, is the scientific symbol for change. The shining delta is symbolic of the Illuminati's desire to bring about enlightened change from the myth of religion to the truth of science. Also supporting the theory that the Great Seal is tied to the Illuminati is the unsettling fact that the seal's inscription "Novus Ordo Seclorum" hints at the secular or non-religious, which stands in contrast with the existing theological belief.

Langdon asks the camerlengo for access to the archive with the most holy documents of Christianity. The archives are situated behind the Port of St. Anna in the opposite end of the Borgia square, and include more than 20.000 books. It is said that the disappeared diaries of Leonardo da Vinci and unpublished chapters of the Bible can be found in the archives. Langdon walks up the Via delle Fontamenta towards the archives. On the way there, he tells Vittoria, that he is looking for a book of Galileo, including the symbol Il Segno, the symbol for the Church of Illumination.

There is a reference to a numerical symbol that Langdon makes while he is trying to find clues in the archive about tracing the path of illumination to the Il Segno, which is also related to Galileo's famous treatise, *Diagramma*. As Langdon says, "About fifteen years ago, some historians at the Sorbonne and I uncovered a series of Illuminati letters filled with references to the *segno*. The sign. The announcement about the path and where it began." (178).

The number, 503, is an Illuminati code. In fact it was an Illuminati trick for concealing what was actually intended as a Roman numeral, DIII, which refers to three books written by Galileo—*Dialogue*, *Discourse* and *Diagram*. As Langdon argues:

DI and DII and DIII are very old abbreviations. They were used by ancient scientists to distinguish between the three Galilean documents most commonly confused... "*Diàlogo... Discorsi... Diagramma...* D-one. D-two. D-three. All scientific. All controversial. 503 is DIII. *Diagramma*. The third of his books.. They may have seen it and not noticed. Remember the Illuminati markers? Hiding things in plain view? Dissimulation? The *segno* apparently was hidden the same way — in plain view. Invisible to those who were not looking for it. And also invisible to those who didn't *understand* it. (181).

Galileo's most secretive book, *Diagramma*, which was printed on sedge papyrus and had a life span no more than a century, could be instrumental in tracing the trail of the Illuminati. It contained the clue, the Segno—the information about the Path of Illumination.

In the beginning of the 1630s, Galileo published a book, *Diàlogo*, where he joins the Copernican, heliocentric model of the solar system. The Vatican would not allow the publishing of the book, if Galilei did not include a just as convincing proof of the church's geocentric model, even though Galilei knew, that it was absolutely wrong.

However, *Diàlogo* was considered heretical by the Vatican, and they put him into house arrest. While he was in house arrest, he secretly wrote another less known book, *Discorsi*, which scientists often confuse with *Diàlogo*. Galilei also had written an obscure script, *Diagramma della Verita*. This would be the secret text, smuggled out of Rome and published in the Netherlands. The Vatican got to know about this, and started a book burning campaign, and the text disappeared from the face of the Earth. It is believed that only one copy did survive the 18th century. It was confiscated in the Netherlands, shortly after the death of Galilei.

While trying to figure out the path to the church of illumination *Diagramma della Verita* in a folio box, Langdon also makes a reference to a symbolic expression, *Lingua Pura*, the language of pure. Langdon refers specifically to it when Swiss Guard Commander Richter doesn't understand what Langdon means, the symbologist is frustrated.

'Geez,' *he sighs*, 'you guys don't even read your own history, do you? 1668: the church kidnapped four Illuminati scientists and branded each one of them on the chest with the symbol of the cross, to purge them of their sins. And they executed them, threw their bodies in the street as a warning to others to stop questioning church ruling on scientific matters. They radicalized them. The 'Purga' created darker, more violent Illuminati, one bent on retribution. (329)

Initially, Langdon thinks that the language should be something mathematical as Galileo had juridical problems as he described the movements of the planets as elliptic, while the Vatican praised the perfection of the circle and insisted upon the movements of the planets being solely circular.

The symbolic expression however refers to the four lines of the verse written English, While Vittoria turns the document around, she finds out that there is a poem, signed by John Milton, an English poet, who lived at the same time as Galilei, and is believed to have been a member of Illuminati.

The influential English poet who wrote *Paradise Lost* was a contemporary of Galileo's and a savant who conspiracy buffs put at the top of their list of Illuminatisuspects. Milton's alleged affiliation with Galileo's Illuminati was one legend Langdon suspected was true. Not only had Milton made a well-documented 1638 pilgrimage to Rome to "commune with enlightened men," but he had held meetings with Galileo during the scientist's house arrest, meetings portrayed in many Renaissance paintings, including Annibale Gatti's famous *Galileo and Milton*, which hung even now in the IMSS Museum in Florence. (198)

Though Latin was the official language in Rome at that time, the verse was written in English to hide it from the Vatica's gaze. In fact, Galileo was subtly restricting the readership away from the Vatican. Langdon reads the four lines of the verse in the direction of the sun: at the top, to the right, at the bottom and to the left. After having read them for the first time, he knows where the first cardinal will be killed. The Altars of Science has revealed itself with obviousness:

*From Santis earthly tomb with demon's hole,  
'Cross Rome the mystic elements unfold,*

*The path of light is laid, the sacred test,*

*Let angels guide you on your lofty quest. (277)*

Santi is the surname of the great renaissance painter Raphael. His tomb is inside Pantheon, the oldest Catholic Church in Rome. The church has a round opening in the roof, which the demon's hole in the verse could be symbolic to.

Pantheon's Greek name tells that it once was a temple to all gods. It was consecrated to Christianity by Bonifacius IV. The hole in the dome of Pantheon had been drilled by demons, who tried to escape from the building, when it was consecrated into Christianity.

The forty-three-meter wide arch is even larger than the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica. The demon's hole is in the middle of the dome. The dome is precisely half of the total height. The hole in the dome has a 9 meter diameter. The hole is not covered, and the rain is caught in a small well under the floor and led to the Tiber. In the church there are tombs, altars, pillars and alcoves. The kings of Italy have been buried here since 1870.

In the church, the tombs are placed slanting, in proportion to the architecture. "As Langdon moved toward the first recess, he passed the tomb of one of Italy's Catholic kings. The sarcophagus, like many in Rome, was askew with the wall, positioned awkwardly" (220). This is symbolic to the posture for worshipping the sun, which also means Christianity had something to do with worship of the sun, and that tombs have to face the east, an idea borrowed from the old, Egyptian religion of sun worshipping, as Langdon says, "Halos, like much of Christian symbology, were borrowed from the ancient Egyptian religion of *sun* worship. Christianity is filled with examples of sun worship" (221).

At its symbolic level, this therefore implies that Christianity is filled with examples of worshipping the sun: Christmas is the old pagan invictus-day, which is the same as winter solstice. Christianity has also borrowed the election of a saint from the old ritual of

Euhemerus about the making of a god, and the last supper has been borrowed from the Aztecs. As Langdon says:

Even the story about Jesus dying on the cross for the sake of our sins, are found in the ancient traditions of Quetzalcoatl. And God being presented as an old man with a white beard is borrowed from the chief of the Greek gods, Zeus—the god of the sky and thunder.

Christianity did not borrow only from sun worship. The ritual of Christian canonization is taken from the ancient ‘god-making’ rite of Euhemerus. The practice of ‘god-eating’ — that is, Holy Communion — was borrowed from the Aztecs. Even the concept of Christ dying for our sins is arguably not exclusively Christian; the self-sacrifice of a young man to absolve the sins of his people appears in the earliest tradition of the Quetzalcoatl. (221)

Though, the verse leads Landon to believe that Pantheon was the first altar of science where one of the four cardinals would be murdered, he was in fact mistaken. They soon realize that they are in the wrong place, and that the church where Santi was buried is Santa Maria del Popolo.

Piazza del Popolo is the square with the shape of an ellipse and a gathering place for the Romans. The name of the square refers to the poplar trees, which used to grow on the square. In the book some locals sit outside the famous Rosati Café. The square is filled with Illuminati-symbols. Besides having the shape of an ellipse, there is a tall stone obelisk in the middle, with a pyramid on top.

There is Porta del Popolo, the tall, arched stone gate at the other side of the square. In the middle of the arch, there is a symbolic engraving: “Langdon pointed to the imposing Porta del Popolo — the high stone archway at the far end of the piazza. The vaulted structure

had been overlooking the piazza for centuries. Dead center of the archway's highest point was a symbolic engraving" (236).

The pyramid also has the USA sickle and the mason symbols from the dollar note. It is Bernini, who has changed the original gate into a triumphal arch for Queen Kristina of Sweden, when she came to Rome in 1655 as a new catholic. The church of Santa Maria del Popolo is placed slantingly at the bottom of a slope in the south eastern corner of Piazza del Popolo. The church is from the 11th century and is erected on Emperor Nero's tomb. The interior of the church is a gloomy grotto with giant pillars, which prop up an arched roof. There is a plaque on the wall engraved with the same symbol seen from outside, decorated with a pyramid beneath a shining star:

*Coat of arms of Alexander Chigi  
whose tomb is located in the  
secondary left apse of this cathedral (240)*

The opening of the lines is symbolic to the fact that the wealthy patron Chigi had been an Illuminatus. A flat stone stands beside the Capella Chigi. At the top, an arched dome with a sea of stars lights up. The seven astronomical planets are painted, and underneath the twelve signs of the zodiac: pagan, earthly symbols with roots in the astronomy. The zodiac is directly tied up with earth, air, fire and water. The quadrant symbolizes power, intellect, passion and feelings. Down the wall there is homage to the four seasons. On each side of the chapel are two three meter tall marble pyramids. On the front of each pyramid there is an ellipse shaped gold medallion.

From the floor a skeleton is smiling contemptuously from a marble mosaic, symbolic to the escape of the death. In a hand the skeleton has a tableau with a picture of the same pyramid and the stars, as they saw outside. The mosaic has been made upon a stone with the form of a circle. The stone has been lifted from the floor and reveals a demon's hole. This is

where the body of cardinal Ebner is standing up, buried in earth to his waist. His mouth has been filled with earth, and his hands are tied on his back. Further more the body has been fire burned with the word earth. The fire burn mark is an ambigram, an Illuminati symbol that depicts the sacrifice of the cardinal at the first altar of science:

The killer had threatened to brand each victim with one of the ancient elements of science. The first element was *Earth*. From Santi's earthly tomb. Dizzy from the fumes, Langdon circled to the front of the body. As he did, the symbologist within him loudly reasserted the artistic challenge of creating the mythical ambigram. *Earth? How?* And yet, an instant later, it was before him. Centuries of Illuminati legend whirled in his mind. The marking on the cardinal's chest was charred and oozing. The flesh was seared black. *La lingua pura.*(250)

The church has several religious arts with sculptures of Virgin Mary, angels, prophets and pyramids by Bernini, whom Illuminati referred to as its maestro, the unknown master. In fact, it was Bernini who created the ambigrams and made the Path of Illumination. There is sculptures of Habakkuk, the prophet who predicted the annihilation of the earth, and the sculpture of the Angel. The angel points in one direction, while Habakkuk points in another direction, a symbolic gesture through which Langdon gets the idea of the direction of the Path of Illumination as mentioned in Galileo's Diagramma del Verita: *Let angels guide you on your lofty quest*. This leads Langdon to the Saint Peter Square the next point along the Path of Illumination.

Michelangelo designed Saint Peter's Basilica, while Bernini designed Saint Peter's Square. There is a marble brick, built into the square, at the foot of the obelisk in The Saint Peter's Square. It has the shape of an ellipse and has a picture of a breath of air, called *Respiro di Dio*, the breath of God, which symbolizes another primordial element, air and

another altar of science where the second cardinal is killed by puncturing his lungs and branded with Air, the second of the elements.

Langdon was already in motion. Grasping the man's shoulders, he rolled the body. As he did, the loose rags seemed to slough away like dead flesh. The man flopped limp onto his back. Dead center of his naked chest was a wide area of charred flesh. Langdon felt paralyzed, pinned somewhere between nausea and awe. The symbol had a terrifying simplicity to it. (273)

Santa Maria del Vittoria is the next point along the Path of Illumination, where cardinal Guidera is burned alive being branded with an Illuminati symbol, the ambigram of fire:

High above the chapel floor, Cardinal Guidera endured his last torturous moments of consciousness. As he looked down the length of his naked body, he saw the skin on his legs begin to blister and peel away. *I am in hell*, he decided. *God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He knew this must be hell because he was looking at the brand on his chest upside down... and yet, as if by the devil's magic, the word made perfect sense. (334)

There is another reference made of a symmetrical triangle, the Illuminati's one of the most used symbols. While trying to locate the fourth altar of sciences, Landon circles the three churches on the map.

Langdon looked at the map. A square, perhaps? Although a square made no symbolic sense, squares were symmetrical at least. Langdon put his finger on the map at one of the points that would turn the triangle into a square. He saw immediately that a perfect square was impossible. The angles of the original triangle were oblique and created more of a distorted quadrilateral. (556)

The reference was also earlier made with the Great Seal on the one-dollar bill — the triangle containing the all-seeing eye. However Langdon later ends up drawing a square. “He frowned. Diamonds were not an Illuminati symbol either. He paused. *Then again...*” (558). He finally is led to realize the fourth church to be the Saint Agnes in Agony, named for St. Agnes, a ravishing teenage virgin banished to a life of sexual slavery for refusing to renounce her faith.

The shape he was looking at was not intended as a diamond at all. The four points only formed a diamond because Langdon had connected *adjacent* points. *The Illuminati believe in opposites!* Connecting opposite vertices with his pen, Langdon’s fingers were trembling. There before him on the map was a giant cruciform. *It’s a cross!* The four elements of science unfolded before his eyes... sprawled across Rome in an enormous, city-wide cross. (358)

Also Langdon makes a reference of the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa, “the most unfit ornament ever to be placed in a Christian Church (306)” for its amorous look. The sculpture had an angel on her back in the throes of a toe-curling orgasm aiming arrow at the Triton fountain. The sculpture symbolizes a legendary tale in which St. Teresa, a nun was sainted after she claimed an angel had paid her a blissful visit in her sleep: “. . . his great golden spear... filled with fire... plunged into me several times... penetrated to my entrails... a sweetness so extreme that one could not possibly wish it to stop” (305).

Moreover, the statute especially the spear held by the angel on its back was symbolically pointing to the next church Santa Maria della Vittoria where the last of the four abducted cardinal was to be executed.

In the meantime, the logo of CERN is also related with Illuminati symbolism. Glick, one of the two BBC journalists covering the papal election, first traces it:

Although CERN had lots of accelerators, their logo showed only two. *Two is the Illuminati number of duality.* Although most accelerators had only one injection tube, the logo showed five. *Five is the number of the Illuminati pentagram.* Then had come the coup — the most brilliant point of all. Glick pointed out that the logo contained a large numeral “6 — clearly formed by one of the lines and circles — and when the logo was rotated, another six appeared... and then another. The logo contained three sixes! 666! The devil’s number! The mark of the beast! (364)

The fourth point is Piazza Navona. Outside the church Sant Agnese in Agone, Bernini has created one of his most famous sculptures: Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi—the four rivers fountain, a symbolic homage to the Nile, the Ganges, the Danube and Rio de la Plata, the four largest rivers in the ancient world.

It has elliptic shape square with the ancient stadium of Domitianis established around the year 86. The remains of the stadium can be seen behind Piazza Navona and inside the crypt of the church Sant Agnese in Agone. The four rivers fountain is placed in the middle of the square, sending up a jet of water. The bank is covered by pagan figures. At the top stands an obelisk. On the top there is a cross. But the fountain has no angel. It is pagan.

Langdon looks for a clue that can lead him to the Church of Illumination. He looks symbols, which Bernini could have placed among the hieroglyphs on the obelisk. Langdon found his eyes probing the figures in the fountain, looking for any clue as to the direction of the lair. *Let angels guide you on your lofty quest.* Almost immediately, though, he was overcome by an unsettling awareness. This fountain contained no angels whatsoever. It certainly contained none Langdon could see from where he was standing... and none he had ever seen in the past. *The Fountain of the Four Rivers* was a pagan work. The carvings were

all profane — humans, animals, even an awkward armadillo. An angel here would stick out like a sore thumb.

At the top, there is a bronze dove. A lonely dove is the pagan symbol for the angel of peace—a pagan symbol on a pagan fountain. The symbol created by Bernini was placed in such a way for some specific purpose. It was the final marker of the Path of Illumination. “Bernini had chosen the pagan symbol for the angel so he could disguise it in a pagan fountain. Let angels guide you on your lofty quest. The dove is the angel! Langdon could think of no more lofty perch for the Illuminati’s final marker than atop than this obelisk” (530).

Langdon crawls further up and sees the earlier points on the Path of Illumination set on a round castle in the west. It is inside a quadrant fortress, surrounded by a park with the shape of a pentagram.

At the top of the castle, a bronze angel sits enthroned. The angel stands with a sword pointing directly down on the castle—the Church of Illumination:

Staring at it now, Langdon could not believe the Illuminati lair had stayed hidden for so many years. The entire city seemed to fade away as he looked out at the monstrous stone structure across the river in front of him. The building was as famous as any in Rome. It stood on the banks of the Tiber River diagonally adjacent to the Vatican. The building’s geometry was stark — a circular castle, within a square fortress, and then, outside its walls, surrounding the entire structure, a park in the shape of a *pentagram*. (532)

Just outside the main entrance of the castle is the bridge Ponte Sant’Angelo, Bridge of the angel, as a gangway, decorated with twelve angels holding their heads high, created by Bernini. The central line of the cross in the Path of Illumination runs directly through the castle. The castle is Castel Sant’Angelo. Through centuries the building has been used by

the Vatican for tombs, fortress, home of the Pope and museum, the church was replete with Illuminati symbols. “The embellishments in the oblong room, though old and faded, were replete with familiar symbology. Pentagram tiles. Planet frescoes. Doves. Pyramids. The Church of Illumination. Simple and pure” (547).

Langdon encounters the Hassassin at the Church of Illumination. Clearly unaware of the other Illuminati symbol, Langdon is reminded of the sixth Illuminati symbol by the killer. As Hassassin says, the sixth Illuminati brand was “a perfect union of the ancient elements. The final brand is the most brilliant of all” (552).

During the conversation, Hassassin also informs that the final Illuminati symbol is held by Janus, the Illuminati leader and would be branded on an important person.

“The brand?”

“Not here. Janus is apparently the only one who holds it.”

“Janus?” Langdon did not recognize the name.

“The Illuminati leader is coming here?”

“To perform the final branding.” (553)

The person Hassassin was referring to later turns out to be the camerlengo. Though Hassassin is killed at the Church of Illumination during the scuffle with Langdon, the reference of the symbol made by him is proved true. The camerlengo is branded with the sixth Illuminati symbol, the final brand:

Both guards let out exclamations of horror when they saw the symbol seared on the camerlengo’s chest. The second guard saw the brand upside down and immediately staggered backward with fear in his eyes. Chartrand, looking equally overwhelmed by the symbol, pulled the camerlengo’s torn cassock up over the burn, shielding it from view...The brand seemed to be a perfect square, quite large, and had obviously come from the sacred center

compartment of the chest in the Illuminati Lair. *A sixth and final brand*, the Hassassin had said. *The most brilliant of all.* (583-584).

The camerlengo is the face of the Vatican until the new Pope is elected. His position signifies the influence of the Christianity all around the world. The final branding on the camerlengo depicts the growing control of science over the long-held spirituality preached by the Vatican. “A crippled scientist, in a final act of symbolic dominance, had flown into the Vatican City and branded the church’s highest official” (584).

The final brand actually is the Illuminati diamond, the symbol that consists of the four primordial elements: earth, air, fire, and water.

A flawless diamond, born of the ancient elements with such perfection that all those who saw it could only stare in wonder.”

Langdon knew now the myth was true.

Earth, Air, Fire, Water.

*The Illuminati Diamond.* (592)

It is however revealed that the camerlengo performed the branding on himself to convince the outside world that he was really after the cause of the whole Christians so that he could succeed the dead Pope. Also it is revealed that he ordered the execution of the four preferetti, the chose popes most likely to succeed the dead pope. In the meantime, Langdon and Vittoria becomes successful rescuing the Vatican from the antimatter that they together with the camerlengo manage to take it into the air when it is time to explode.

Clearly all the hustles and bustles that Langdon and Vittoria within the 24-hour of the day, the argument and counterargument in relation to the origin, influence, dominance by the church and scientific institution from the time of emergence of Illuminati to the CERN depicts the centuries-old rivalry between faith and knowledge, or say between science and

religion. In depicting the rivalry, Brown introduces several religious and historical symbols that could be traced throughout the plot of the novel.

The Illuminati symbols range from the Masonic emblem of pyramid in the US dollar note to the Illuminati diamond that comprises all four primordial elements of the universe—earth, fire, air, water. As we see in the text, there are several architectural and religious signs and symbols at various churches located across the Rome as traced and interpreted by Harvard sybologist Robert Langdon. These symbols are crucial in understanding the myths related with the Illuminati and interpretations made by the protagonist are key parts of the novel, in which symbols and symbolism are predominant.

### **III. Symbols Portray Tension between Faith and Knowledge**

Symbols are predominant in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*, with the novelist encoding historical and religious symbols everywhere throughout the plot. The novel basically deals with the antagonism between science and faith that has come down through ages. The clash between the two is symbolized through the opposing organizations of the Illuminati, which claims to speak for free thought and science and the Vatican, which bulwarks two millennia of dedication to the Christian faith. In so doing, Brown introduces several symbols in the novel, the meanings of which are deciphered by the protagonist Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of religious symbology, through his academic expertise in arts history.

At the outset, Langdon is summoned to a Swiss research facility to analyze a mysterious symbol seared into the chest of scientist Leonardo Vetra. Later he discovers the symbol belonged to the Illuminati, which at its symbolic level, represents man's scientific quest and ambition against the Vatican, a symbolic institution of spiritual doctrine and religious life. The Vatican at its symbolic level represents the obscurity and vagueness of spiritual doctrines that ever have tried to dominate a person's religious life with vague and uncertain preaching.

With the progression of the plot, the death of Pope revealed with subsequent abduction of the preferetti, the four cardinals most likely to succeed the dead Pope. It is also revealed that the antimatter at the CERN is stolen. At its symbolic level, the anti-matter epitomizes a material threat that reflects the superiority of scientific advancement over religion that heavily depended on unreasoned preaching and miracles to rule the world.

The research facility symbolizes scientific innovation and resurgence of man's scientific quest and progress. Langdon also discovers that the motive behind the murder, abduction and stealth of the antimatter is the revenge the Illuminati has been seeking for

centuries for all atrocities perpetrated against men of science including the pioneering astrophysicists Galileo, Copernicus all along the history.

Langdon, aided by beautiful CERN physicist Vittoria Vetra embarks on a race against time to locate the explosive and save the cardinals before it is too late. For this, they had to decipher the meanings of several historical and religious symbols encountered along the Path of Illumination.

Bermini, who has created the ambigram of Illuminati, was requested to make four sculptures, which should be in line with the other pieces of art around in Rome. Each of them needed to have a theme, as an ovation to the four primordial elements, namely earth, air, fire and water. Assassins execute the four cardinals at the four churches, symbolic to the four primordial elements, called the Altars of Sciences. All of the cardinals were branded with the ambigrams of the four elements into their chest. Besides, there is also a reference of the Illuminati diamond, the symbol which Camerlengo sears into his own chest before his identity as Janus is revealed.

Langdon along with Vittoria encounters several of Illuminati symbols. In so doing, Langdon makes a reference of a prominent Illuminati symbol, the Great Seal on the US one-dollar bill. It is an Egyptian occult symbol representing a convergence upward, toward the ultimate source of Illumination.

In the novel, there is also a reference of numerical symbol, 503, an Illuminati trick for concealing what was actually intended as a Roman numeral, DIII, which refers to three books written by Galileo—*Dialogue*, *Discourse* and *Diagram*. At the Vatican library, Langdon refers to a symbolic expression *Lingua Pura*, the language of pure that the Illuminati used to refer to the four lines of the verse written in English by John Milton, a great English poet who himself was an Illuminati.

In the novels there are references of several symbols including the Angel at Santa Maria del Popolo, the demon's hole at Pantheon, the arched stone gate at Porta del Popolo, pagan, the twelve stars at Capella Chigi and the pagan symbol of dove at Ponte Sant'Angelo.

The Illuminati symbols ranging from the Masonic emblem of pyramid in the US dollar note to the Illuminati diamond that comprises all four primordial elements of the universe—earth, fire, air, water, symbolizes the long-standing rivalry between the science and religion. Several architectural and religious signs and symbols encountered along the path of illumination as traced and interpreted by Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon are predominant throughout the novel. These symbols are crucial in understanding the historical background and epic clash between science and religion that represent knowledge and faith respectively.

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