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SECRETS OF THE CODE

THE UNAUTHORIZED GUIDE
TO THE MYSTERIES BEHIND
THE DA VINCI CODE



EDITED BY

DAN BURSTEIN

SECRETS of the CODE

The Unauthorized Guide
to the Mysteries Behind
The Da Vinci Code

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Published by

CDS Books

In association with Squibnocket Partners LLC

*For Julie,
who represents the spirit of the sacred feminine
in my life every day
—D.B.*

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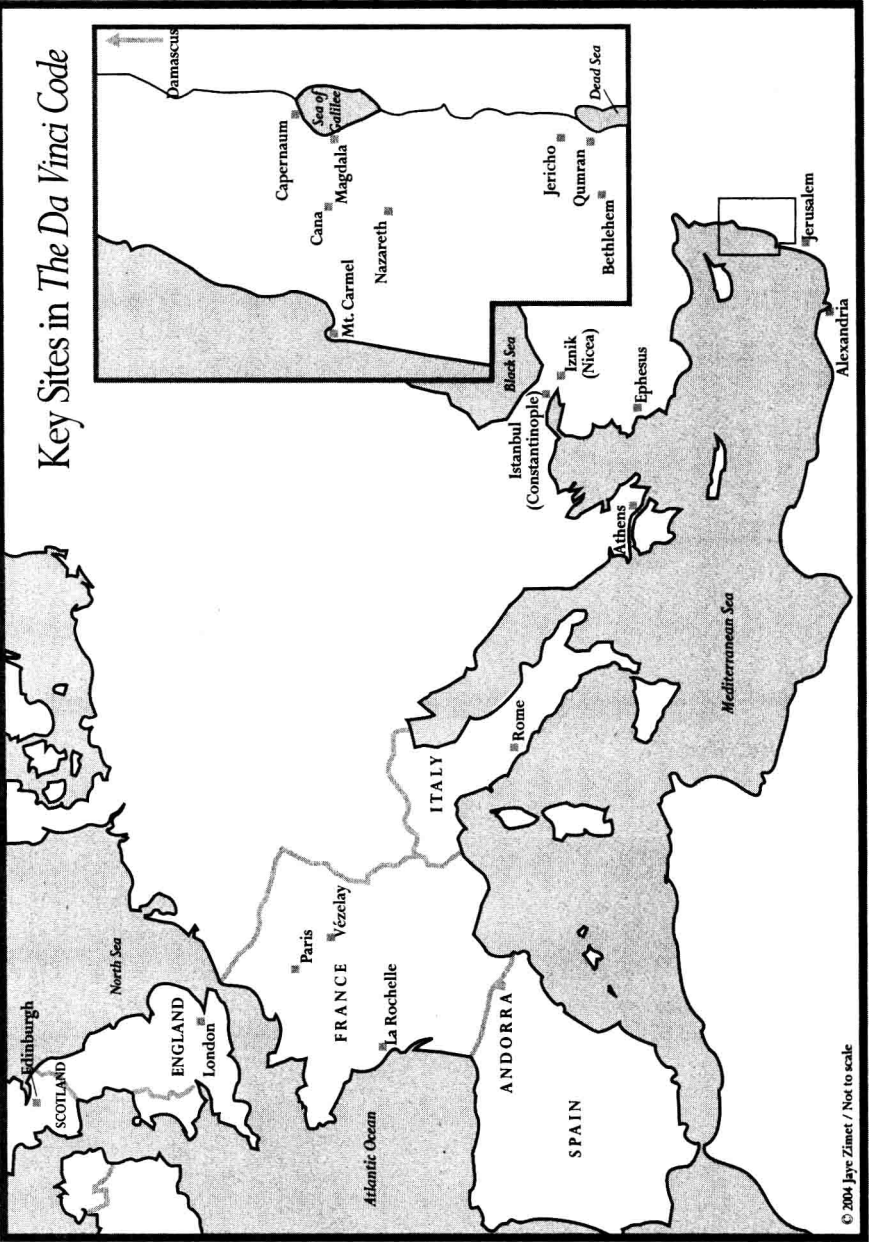
Cataloging-in-Publication Data for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

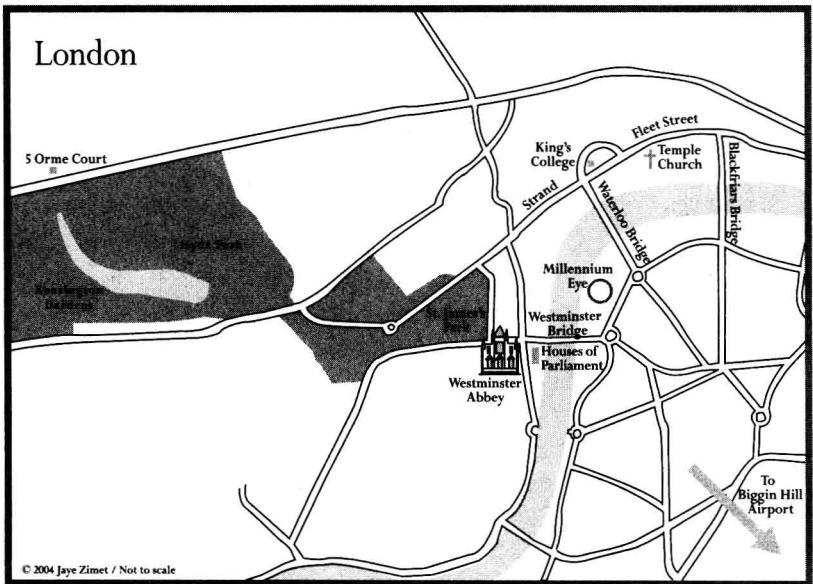
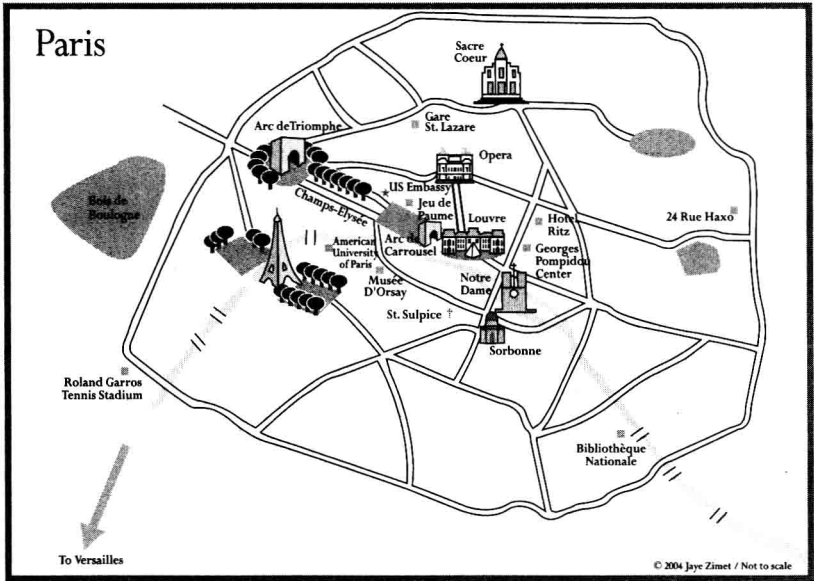
ISBN-10: 1-59315-273-6
ISBN-13: 978-1-59315-273-4

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Key Sites in The Da Vinci Code





Editor's Note

Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind The Da Vinci Code is a compendium of original thought and writing, excerpts from numerous books, websites, and magazines, and interviews with key writers and scholars active in their fields.

This paperback edition is much more than a reprint of the original hardcover. Three years have gone by since *The Da Vinci Code* was first published; two years since our own *Secrets of the Code* burst onto the scene—and the *New York Times* bestseller list. Yet the phenomenon around *The Da Vinci Code* shows no signs of slowing down. With the film version starring Tom Hanks arriving in theaters in May 2006, more people than ever will have questions and become engaged with the search for answers.

Indeed, the impact of the novel just seems to get bigger and go deeper into the collective cultural psyche—and we have tried to bring our readers along with us in this revised, updated edition of *Secrets of the Code*. What's new in this edition? Among other highlights:

- ☞ A mini-biography of Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, tracing his intellectual development and addressing the often-asked questions about where he gets his ideas, what he really believes, and what he is trying to accomplish with his novels.
- ☞ A revelatory advance look at the ideas, issues, themes, and symbols likely to be in *The Solomon Key*, Dan Brown's as-yet unpublished sequel to *The Da Vinci Code*. We crack the codes we found buried in the prior Dan Brown novels and “reverse engineer” his arguments, to show you the way he will mine the mysteries of early American history for the next novel, just as he mined the mysteries of early Christianity for *The Da Vinci Code*.
- ☞ Modern-day Holy Grail hunters: We look at real-life scholarship and research on new archeological finds and new interpretations of ancient documents. From the recently found *Genealogy of Jesus* in Wales to new finds involving ancient relics, we show you many of the new theories, ideas, and speculations about the life of Jesus and the world of the Holy Land two thousand years ago.

- ☞ *The Da Vinci Code* and Jewish culture: A prominent Rabbi with a flair for the mystical looks at the Jewish symbols and rituals discussed in *The Da Vinci Code*. These range from Kabbalah to the sacred feminine force of Shekinah, from the speculation about Jesus as a Jewish rabbi and whether he would or would not have been married, to the interpretation of the Star of David as an intertwined chalice and blade.
- ☞ We take you on the “Da Vinci Code tour” of the Louvre art museum, pairing you up for this excursion through Paris with an American art historian who shows you the treasures of the Louvre in a whole new light, from Mithras to Mary Magdalene to the *Mona Lisa*.
- ☞ The latest in Leonardo scholarship: several new Leonardo paintings have recently been found or attributed to the great Renaissance master, including a bare-breasted painting of Mary Magdalene that was recently displayed in Italy for the first time in many years. We catch our readers up on everything that has been happening in the world of Leonardo scholarship in the wake of *The Da Vinci Code*.
- ☞ From the *Village Voice* to the *Times of London*, from *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd to an investigation into Opus Dei by a reporter for *GQ*: the best things ever said about *The Da Vinci Code*.
- ☞ We analyze the charges of plagiarism that have swirled against Dan Brown. We know he borrowed heavily from works that preceded his, but did he borrow *too* heavily from prior books on similar topics?
- ☞ Why a powerful cardinal in the Vatican called for banning *The Da Vinci Code*—and how the world has reacted.
- ☞ More revelatory material about what Opus Dei really is and isn’t . . . Expanded interviews with key *Da Vinci Code* sources like Margaret Starbird . . . More in-depth commentary from Bart Ehrman, the leading academic expert on lost and alternative scriptures. . . . More insight from Notre Dame’s Rev. McBrien, a consultant to the filmmakers of *The Da Vinci Code*. . . . More on the hoax of the Priory of Sion, created in the 1950s by Pierre Plantard. . . . And the many ways *The Da Vinci Code* has had an impact upon our culture and our lives . . .

A few housekeeping notes to bear in mind as you wander through this rich library of history and mystery:

As with the original edition, this sequel contains a wide range of source materials, including transcriptions of ancient texts. We have tended to regularize spellings and naming conventions in our own work,

while leaving undisturbed the original spellings and conventions that appear in the many works that are excerpted here from other books or materials. In some cases, we have renumbered footnotes for ease of reading. The careful reader will enjoy some variations within the book. For example, references to the name Leonardo da Vinci within the text generally follow the convention art history has assigned to Leonardo, but when the name is reproduced as part of the title of *The Da Vinci Code*, the D is capitalized, as it was throughout Dan Brown's book. Elsewhere, some sources spell Magdalene with the final e, some without. Wherever possible, we have tried to leave original material from other sources untouched, even at the risk of inconsistencies.

We have taken great care to set off each type of material so that it will be clear when we are excerpting from previously published works and when we are providing our own original writing and speaking in our own editorial voice. Except for the essays that begin each chapter, which conform to the typestyle of the book as a whole, the editor's introductions and notes that precede the excerpted materials, essays, or interviews are set off in a notably different typestyle. So are the interstitial materials within excerpts from books. On the other hand, guest contributions, interviews, and excerpts from previously published materials are clearly identified with bylines and/or copyright and reprint permission notices. If we have inadvertently missed any explanations of the provenance of the material or otherwise misidentified any of the pieces in this text, the editors apologize in advance.

Throughout the book, we have tried to find short selections and excerpts from much larger bodies of works to give our readers a quick taste of the content in a certain book, or the ideas of a certain expert. It was incredibly difficult to make these editorial decisions and to leave so much great material on the cutting room floor. We want to thank all the authors, publishers, periodicals, websites, and experts who have so generously made their content available to us for this book. And we want to encourage readers to buy the books that are excerpted here, visit the websites that are mentioned, and pursue all the multitude of ideas referred to within these pages from the original sources.

We would also like to call the reader's attention to several other books the "Secrets" team has published since the original *Secrets of the Code*. The first is *Secrets of Angels & Demons*, which illuminates the historical labyrinth of conspiracies, cover-ups, and the ongoing conflict between science and religion touched on in Dan Brown's novel, *Angels &*

Demons published before *The Da Vinci Code*. We have also published *Secrets of the Widow's Son*, by David A. Shugarts, which is a fascinating "prequel" to the next Dan Brown book, *The Solomon Key*. And we will soon publish *Secrets of Mary Magdalene*.

Each of our books has its own website as well. Visit us at any of the following websites and share your own thoughts, questions, journeys, and explorations with us:

www.SecretsOfTheCode.com

www.SecretsOfAngelsAndDemons.com

www.SecretsOfTheWidowsSon.com

Introduction

Searching for Sophia

BY DAN BURSTEIN

Like many of you, I came across *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown in the summer of 2003. It was already the number one book on the *New York Times* bestseller list. It sat by my bedside for a while, along with dozens of other unread books, piles of magazines, business presentations I needed to review, and all the other things typical of the competition for mind share in the complex, chaotic, information-intense world in which we all live.

Then one day I picked up *The Da Vinci Code* and started reading. I read all night, fascinated. I literally couldn't put it down. It is an experience I used to have frequently, but not so often in this season of my life, as I was turning fifty. At one point, around 4 a.m., as I read Leigh Teabing's explanation to Sophie Neveu of why and how he saw Mary Magdalene in *The Last Supper*, I got out of bed and pulled the art books down from our library shelves. I looked at the Leonardo painting that I had encountered, of course, hundreds of times previously. *Yes, it really does look like a woman seated next to Jesus!* I thought.

By morning, when I had finished the book, I was as intellectually challenged as I had been by any book I had read in a long time. I wanted to know what was true and what was not, what was fact, what was fiction, what was informed speculation, and what was pure flight of literary fancy. As soon as my local bookstore opened, I was there, sipping latte and rummaging through scores of books that had been mentioned or alluded to in *The Da Vinci Code: Holy Blood, Holy Grail, The Templar Revelation, Gnostic Gospels, The Woman with the Alabaster Jar, The Nag Hammadi Library*, and many more. I discovered, to my surprise, that there were dozens of recent books about Mary Magdalene, goddess culture, the sacred feminine, the roots of Christianity, and about how the Bible was written and codified, as well as all the Gnostic and other alternative gospels. I found shelves full of occult books on Templar traditions, secret societies, and several places mentioned by *The Da Vinci Code* that I had never heard of

before, including Rennes-le-Château in France and Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland. I left the store with hundreds of dollars' worth of books and went home to absorb all this material, only later discovering that Dan Brown had a website with a bibliography on it.

For weeks, I continued to buy books that I discovered were relevant to *The Da Vinci Code*. I raced through Elaine Pagels's new book, *Beyond Belief*, having already had my eyes opened to the world of alternative scriptures through her path-breaking 1979 book, *The Gnostic Gospels*. I discovered a world of scholars who were experts in Coptic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and who had painstakingly translated and parsed ancient documents to discern new information and discover new possible interpretations of events described in the Bible. I read all of the books by Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Lynn Picknett, and others who have been mining much of the same raw material as Dan Brown for years. I soaked up the richly detailed book on Mary Magdalene by Susan Haskins that documented two thousand years of myth and metaphor about the woman who Dan Brown suggests was the bride of Christ.

I rediscovered books I had read previously: Jonathan Kirsch's powerful biography *Moses*, in which he tried to tease the true story of Moses's life out of oblique passages from the Old Testament, including fascinating references to the idea that Miriam was not the sister of Moses, as the Bible tells us, but a priestess with her own cult following and her own role in liberating the Jewish slaves from Egypt. I reread the following passage: "Some scholars argue that Miriam is real but Moses is made up. Others suggest that both of them existed but were not really brother and sister—Miriam, they argue, was a priestess and prophetess in her own right," who was ultimately merged into the Bible story as the "sister" of Moses as a kind of ancient form of politically correct storytelling. Perhaps this longstanding habit of biblical redactors—changing relationships, merging deeds performed by women with deeds performed by men, changing the earlier forms of the story to fit later political needs—had manifested itself in the way New Testament redactors edited the story of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the others in their circle.

I reread Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* (a literary pastiche and send-up of much of the same occult material treated in *The Da Vinci Code*). Eco would later tell interviewers from *Jesus, Mary, and da Vinci* (the ABC news special that was devoted to exploring Dan Brown's thesis) that *The Da Vinci Code*'s premises were based on nineteenth-century fairy tales

equivalent to Pinocchio and Little Red Riding Hood—"wrong theories," as false as believing that the world was flat.

I recommuned with Norman O. Brown's 1960s classic, *Love's Body*, a favorite of mine at an earlier time in my life, with all its brilliant synthesis of myth and archetype concerning the sacred feminine and the role of mythic ideas in the creation of Western consciousness. Many of the quotations from interdisciplinary fields and diverse cultures that Brown assembled seemed to be right up Robert Langdon's symbolological alley. Langdon sees chalices and blades as universal female and male symbols. And he sees them everywhere: from the adoption of the six-pointed Star of David in ancient Jewish history, to the interplay of the space between Jesus and the person seated next to him in *The Last Supper*, to I. M. Pei's downward- and upward-pointed pyramids at the Louvre. As Norman O. Brown argued, "All metaphors are sexual; a penis in every convex object and a vagina in every concave one." Langdon would have also appreciated Brown's frequent invocation of Yeats, seeking to understand how the sacred unity that was divided into male and female may someday be restored to a unified state: "Nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent."

I revisited a 1965 bestseller, *The Passover Plot*, that I remember my parents reading and discussing. The vintage copy I bought had these interesting words emblazoned on the flap copy: "*The Passover Plot* asserts—and presents detailed evidence from the Bible and from the newly discovered Dead Sea Scrolls to prove—that Jesus planned his own arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection, that he arranged to be drugged on the cross, simulating death so that he could later be safely removed and thus bear out the Messianic prophecies . . . Never before has so eminent an authority presented so challenging a thesis—or backed it up with such irrefutable evidence." Déjà vu all over again for readers of Dan Brown's bestselling book forty years later.

I read Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ* from half a century ago, and watched the Martin Scorsese movie adaptation of it, which I had never seen. These works certainly painted a vivid picture of a possible romantic relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene (or Willem Dafoe and Barbara Hershey, as the case may be).

As I absorbed all these books and materials and as I continued to talk to friends about their experience of reading *The Da Vinci Code* (DVC), the idea occurred to me that I should try to bring some of these diverse

strands together into a single volume, so that other *DVC* readers and enthusiasts could benefit from the same body of knowledge and criticism that I was exploring. Thus, the idea for this book was born.

Shortly after I decided to dig into this material with the vision of creating an unauthorized reader's guide to the novel, I read a report that indicated there were approximately ninety books that were selling better at bookstores around the country because of the proximity of their subject matter to *DVC*. I realized that other readers were indeed embarked on exactly the same quest that I was, reaffirming my instinct and desire to create this book. Fortunately, Gilbert Perlman and his colleagues at CDS shared my vision and moved heaven and earth to support the publication of this book on a time cycle sufficiently accelerated to provide relevant context to the thousands of new readers who were buying *The Da Vinci Code* with each passing day. Now, the millions of filmgoers who will see *The Da Vinci Code* movie will have *Secrets of the Code* as a resource as well.

In my "day job" as a venture capitalist, our firm often hears interesting but outlandish claims about new technologies and innovations. We then undertake what is known as the "due diligence" process to evaluate these claims. We look to see if, beneath all the hype, there is a real business that can be built successfully. Our approach usually begins with a list of questions.

My research on *The Da Vinci Code* was somewhat analogous. Here was my initial list:

- ☛ What do we really know about Mary Magdalene? Was she a prostitute, as Christian tradition has portrayed her? If she was not, why was she portrayed as such for so long in church history, and why did the Vatican change its mind in the 1960s?
- ☛ Is there real evidence that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married? When gospel accounts in the New Testament speak of a woman anointing Jesus with luxurious aromatic oils from an alabaster jar and drying his feet with her hair—was this Mary Magdalene or a different Mary, who may have actually been a reformed prostitute? And if it was Mary Magdalene who performed these acts, are they ritual acts of respect or metaphors for sexual relations?
- ☛ Does the *Gospel of Philip* found at Nag Hammadi really say that Jesus frequently kissed Mary Magdalene on the mouth—and if we have the right translation and the right words, is this too a metaphor? Or is it an actual reference to a romantic relationship?

- ☞ Is it possible Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a child and fostered a bloodline that continued into modern times? How valid are the many legends about Mary Magdalene's escape to France? Could her progeny have been the basis for the Merovingian kings? And what of the cults of the "black Madonna" in France and elsewhere? Could Mary Magdalene have possibly been a black woman from Egypt or Ethiopia?
- ☞ Was the historical Jesus essentially a Jewish rabbi, teacher, or spiritual leader and, as such, would it be likely and even probable that he would be married? Or was there already a tradition at that time of celibacy and asceticism among Jewish male leaders?
- ☞ Is it possible that Mary Magdalene was an important spiritual figure in her own right, the romantic companion and/or wife of Jesus, and the person whom he wished to lead his movement after his death? Is there a historical record of arguments and jealousies on the part of the male apostles over Mary Magdalene's role? Is the *DVC*'s assertion that Jesus was the "original feminist" plausible in any way?
- ☞ Are the Gnostic Gospels and other alternative scriptures credible—or at least as credible as the mainstream, traditional gospels? Do they really tell a significantly different story? What do they add to our understanding of the intellectual and philosophical ferment of the first few hundred years of the Common Era?
- ☞ Did leaders of the Roman church, from Constantine to Pope Gregory, carry out a concerted attack on alternative beliefs and scriptures? Did they edit what became the accepted canon for political purposes? Did they deliberately conflate Mary Magdalene with another Mary in the gospels who was, indeed, a prostitute?
- ☞ Did these early church fathers not only slander Mary Magdalene as a prostitute, but do so as part of a larger effort to cover up Christianity's archaic inheritances from goddess cults and in order to suppress the role of women in the church?
- ☞ Did the Gnostics practice sacred sexual rituals? Is there a tradition of *hieros gamos* that runs from Egypt through Greece, through early Christianity and on to the Templars and Priory of Sion members?
- ☞ Who were the Knights Templar and what might they have found in excavating the Temple Mount during the Crusades?
- ☞ How did the Templars gain power and influence and how did they lose it? Is there any evidence that the Templars ever found the Holy Grail?
- ☞ Is there any evidence that the Templars or other secret societies of that time believed the Holy Grail to be related not to a chalice or

wine cup, but to Mary Magdalene, her relics, documents about her role in the early church, her progeny, and the future of the Jesus-Mary bloodline?

- ☞ Is the Priory of Sion a real organization in history? If so, did it continue uninterrupted into modern-day France, with the involvement of the great figures of European culture alleged by *DVC* to have been its grand masters: Leonardo, Newton, Victor Hugo, Claude Debussy, Jean Cocteau, etc.?
- ☞ If, as seems more likely, the idea of the Priory of Sion as a secret society continuously operating into the modern era is a mid-twentieth-century hoax invented by Pierre Plantard, did Dan Brown fall for this story, not understanding that it was a hoax? Did he try to remarket it as “fact” knowing that it was fiction simply to spin a good yarn and sell more books? Or did he find in this strange brew of rural legend and manipulative fraud a literary device with sufficient mythopoetic power to entrance readers and induce them to contemplate much more important and meaningful issues?
- ☞ What is going on within the church today to reevaluate doctrine, reconsider fundamental principles, and rethink the role of women? Why do movies like *The Passion* stir such passion? How is the church responding to sex abuse and other scandals, and what does history tell us is likely to happen? What is Opus Dei, and what role does it play in the Catholic Church?
- ☞ Did Leonardo da Vinci embed secret symbolic messages in *The Last Supper* and other works? Does *The Last Supper* depict a female Mary Magdalene to the right of Christ, rather than the male apostle John? And whether this interpretation of *The Last Supper* has any validity or not, did Leonardo and his contemporaries have access to lost, secret, heretical knowledge of any type that they may have tried to communicate in one way or another through their artworks?

In this volume, readers will find materials that address all of these questions and more. The materials include excerpts from books, periodicals, websites, original articles, commentaries, and interviews with scholars, experts, and thinkers who have been working on aspects of these issues for years. It is my sincere hope that readers will find these resources as useful to the process of drawing their own conclusions and formulating their own ideas as I have found them to mine.

Before setting readers off into the stacks contained in this volume of what we like to call “Sophie’s Library,” I would like to share a variety of observations about why I think *The Da Vinci Code* has struck such a nerve among the reading public and resonates so deeply with the contemporary zeitgeist.

1) *DVC* is a novel of ideas. Say what you will about some of the ham-fisted dialogue and improbable plot elements, Dan Brown has wrapped large complex ideas, as well as minute details and fragments of intriguing thoughts, into his action-adventure-murder mystery. Our culture is hungry for the opportunity to feed the collective mind with something other than intellectual junk food. Even among much higher-brow, more literary writers, all too few are writing novels that deal with big philosophical, cosmological, or historical concepts. And among those who are, most of the books they are producing are simply too inaccessible for even the average sophisticated, educated reader. Dan Brown has given us an incredible array of fascinating ideas and concepts. We get to partake in all this with no academic prerequisites. We open the first page with Saunière staggering through the Louvre’s Grand Gallery at 10:46 p.m. and we then get swept away into Brown’s fast-paced scavenger hunt through the history of Western civilization. We never have to do any heavy mental lifting if we don’t want to, but for those who want to pursue the ideas, the novel leaves the key words at every turn.

2) Like James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, *DVC* takes place essentially in one twenty-four-hour period. Like Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, it ends where it begins. Clearly, Dan Brown takes literary form quite seriously. He may play faster and looser with facts than some would like, but his ability to compress extensive intellectual and religious arguments into quickly accessible sound bites is an art form. This is not to say that *DVC* is “great literature.” I am not certain it will stand the test of time, popular as it is right now. But our society should appreciate, more highly than it does, the artistry of the great mystery, spy thriller, and action-adventure novelists. Dan Brown, it will turn out, is this type of literary artist.

3) Our materialistic, technological, scientific, information-flooded culture is hungry, not only for the intellectual allure of big ideas, but for a sense of mission and meaning. People are looking for a recovery of their spiritual sensibility, or at least a context for their lives. *DVC*, like the Harry Potter novels that parallel it in this same zeitgeist, is a classic hero’s journey (only in this case the heroine is not only a full and equal

partner, she is actually more important). *DVC* can be read as a modern odyssey through myth, archetypes, symbolic language, and religious practice. The characters will not only save the most precious secrets from falling into the wrong hands, in the process they will gain knowledge of self, identity, and their place in the world.

4) Like other times in history—the legendary days of Arthur, the Crusades, the nineteenth century—we are living in an era when the romance of the hunt for the Holy Grail is being renewed. This is true in the narrow sense of a huge flourishing of new literature about the Holy Grail of Christian history. Dan Brown draws extensively on this body of occult, New Age, and mysterious work. But there is also a flourishing of the Holy Grail hunt in the widest, most metaphoric sense. The search to unlock the secrets of the human genome, to go to Mars, understand the Big Bang, and shrink communication into wireless digital bits—all of these are Holy Grail quests of a kind. Perhaps this is all a bit of delayed millennialism: when the actual change of the millennium occurred a few years ago, many trend-watchers were surprised at how little millennial fever was exhibited. But then came the shock of September 11, apocalyptic acts of terrorism, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, explosions of violence throughout the Middle East, all accented by religious extremism and Crusades-era rhetoric about faith and infidels. The birth of our new era has started to look more millennial after all. *DVC* strikes right into this vein, drawing its key plot elements from two thousand and one thousand years ago—the birth of the Christian era and the Crusades. In a remarkable book that came out shortly after *DVC*, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief*, Britain's leading medieval historian, Richard Barber, traces the role of the Holy Grail in firing artistic imaginations from Wagner to T. S. Eliot to Monty Python. He also charts the use of the phrase "Holy Grail" by mainstream newspapers not usually given to spending much time on religious matters. According to Barber, the *New York Times* mentioned the Holy Grail only 32 times in 1995–96, but 140 in 2001–02. The *Times* of London upped its Grail score from 14 in 1985–86 to 171 in 2001–02; *Le Figaro* from 56 in 1997–98 to 113 in 2001–02.

5) Women are a large constituency of *DVC* readers, and the book responds in many ways to new thinking about women in our culture. Dan Brown has rescued Mary Magdalene from her reputation of sin, penitence, and prostitution. In the book, even the smart, sophisticated Sophie Neveu still thinks of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute until Langdon and