



# Abriding Science and Religion in *Angels and Demons*: Absolutism of Novel in Adaptation

M Caleb Theodar<sup>1</sup>, Dr Saranya P<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Tamil Nadu  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4275-6266

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Tamil Nadu  
ORCID: 0000-0002-3545-7145

Received: 22 Nov 2022; Received in revised form: 14 Dec 2022; Accepted: 22 Dec 2022; Available online: 29 Dec 2022

©2022 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Abstract**— *The assertive aim of this study is to foster a conceptual adaptation model focused on two literary categories: the book and the film. Regarding the study's discussion, eclecticism on film adaptation theories is applied to Dan Brown's famous mystery Angels and Demons. The impacts of the Vatican, the Catholic Church, and parish animosity, which become entwined with history and Christianity, and the layers that augment the idea of Science, will be scrutinised in the aforementioned perspectives of content and form via textual and visual descriptions on the aesthetic frame. When the reader is subtly acquainted with the dichotomy of element-meaning and religion-science among the lines of the novel, the director builds a prolific link between the visuals in the film. People typically see Science and Religion to be in conflict nowadays. However, it is also simple to find researchers and theologians who think they should coexist because they believe Science is limited in its ability to address moral issues. Some even went a step further and believed two domains could constructively express their views, as Ron Howard's adaptation of the book Angels and Demons envisions.*

**Keywords**— *Science and Religion, Christianity, Schism, Film Adaptation.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Dan Brown is a renowned American author for his original themes involving symbols and codes that the protagonist can decipher within twenty-four hours. Brown engages his readers by creating a clever, fast-paced narrative with intriguing twists. His books move quickly through unusual landscapes toward every improbable conclusion. Brown published his debut book, *Digital Fortress*, in 1998. Two more books followed *Angels and Demons* (2000) and *Deception Point* (2001), but *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), his fourth book, launched his career as a bestselling author. Because of the phenomenal popularity of both *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown finished this series by writing *The Lost Symbols* (2009) and *Inferno* (2013). These latter four novels deal with the theme of a conspiracy planned by really powerful secret societies. The protagonist,

Robert Langdon, resolves the conundrum and averts a catastrophe through extensive knowledge of these societies.

Three of the four novels begin with a 'Facts' page that lists the key ideas as factual information. The reader is made to feel that even though the books are works of fiction, they have undergone such extensive investigation that what they say may be taken as fact, no matter how surreal or voiceless it may be. Due to *The Da Vinci Code's* explosive religious argument- Jesus had wed Mary Magdalene, had a child with her and was making preparations for her to take over as head of Christendom—many researchers have written papers and made documentaries to disprove various claims Brown made in the book, from insignificant details to significant historical occurrences.

However, some contend that while debating compatibility, some scientific intellectuals frequently

disregard the perspectives of theological, intellectual leaders and instead argue against the less knowledgeable masses, defining religion by non-intellectuals and unfairly skewing the argument. They argue that opinions on evolution and thresholds of religiosity in various nations, as well as the availability of books that attempt to reconcile evolution and religion, show that individuals find it difficult to hold both beliefs simultaneously, showing incompatibility. According to them, the fundamental difference between Science and Religion is that scientific claims rely on experimental evaluation, whereas religious claims depend on faith. In light of these conflicts between perspectives to know and the availability of alternative credible, logical interpretations for events that Religion typically explains, Science and Religion are incongruous.

In *Angels and Demons*, an attempt has been made to reconcile Science and Religion without following the rigorous regulations established by the strict priests. According to Brown, this process gives people a legitimate opportunity to comprehend the divine.

## II. CONTRAST AND CONFLATION OF SCIENCE WITH RELIGION

The main contention in *Angels and Demons* is between Science and Christianity. The story is portrayed between the Roman Papal-dominance and an old brotherhood of Science-The Illuminati (the enlightened ones). And Robert Langdon, who once argued that there might not be a distinction between Divinity and humanity, is now forced to confess that he does not believe in God, and he was unsure of how to respond to the inquiry: "My church comforts the sick and dying. My church feeds the hungry. What does your church do? That's right, you don't have one." (Brown 254)

Theological concerns are undoubtedly raised by scientific findings. However, to do so would be to deny God's sovereignty over all of creation and to live in a separate theological universe unrelated to the physical realm that God created. Origin's concerns may be significant to some, but they diverge from the far more pressing daily scientific challenges that should be discussed in the science-faith debate. (Davies 34)

The perception that Science and Religion are at odds is nearly invariably the result of the 'conflation' of Science with blind belief systems and Scientism. Therefore, the contrast method emphasises that conflict can be prevented by avoiding the blending of Science and belief into an undifferentiated smear. In the seventeenth century, the Church's rulers condemned Galileo's revolutionary theories as encroaching on their territory because they refused to recognise the boundaries between Science and

Religion. This apparent misunderstanding resulted in a situation where many scientists today still harbour a great deal of animosity toward Religion. Western Science developed within a religious (Christian) cultural context, even if we identify Religion as irrational superstition. Galileo was a devoted Catholic, while Isaac Newton was undoubtedly a zealous follower of the faith. Although they both had issues with orthodoxy and church law, they were unquestionably religious.

Dan Brown, through his work, suggests all the potential outcomes of the dispute and a potential resolution, but he also suggests that it is all pure fantasy even as he makes an effort to close the gap. He claims that a vast disparity always separates Science and Christianity since the dawn of time (Brown 27). However, the conflict is the only way to show that the two can be related. Dan Brown says that while there is no connection between Science and Christianity, there is an intense desire for it to be. In contrast, Ron Howard handled this conundrum in the adaptation by concealing a portion of the novel's ending.

## III. FILM ADAPTATION

A Novel is a resource the filmmaker willingly exploits, and here is the moment at which the two media collide - the juncture at which they are in similitude. Being a reader-viewer, it is pivotal to recognise how well a screenwriter catches the storyline and components of the book, with the knowledge that some things will be amended or even deleted to allow for a broad audience purview. The novel's climax was never very cinematic, as its last chapters disclose a highly credible solution to an unresolved dilemma. The film's climax benefits from not necessitating the plot to confront the overt theme of heroism, so the cinematic ending resonates. Also, it takes minimal explanation, keeping the viewer on a good note.

The adaptation shows the Vatican full of intrigue, corruption, and mundane political ambition. The ultimate villain behind the abduction of the Pope and the priest-scientist experimenting with the 'antimatter' and massacring the four cardinals is the Pope's Camerlengo, who intended to be touted as the hero and redeemer of Christendom from ostensible enemies of the Church. All four cardinals are murdered in the novel, whereas in the movie, the final cardinal, who is also a doctor, lives and becomes Pope. This event may be viewed as the outset of science and Religion communion, symbolically breaking down the cliché to attain the zenith of the audience's enjoyment at the moment of catharsis through the art of film. It is the foresight of the director that sculpts the plot and character of the movie. The movie relatively portrays the Catholic Church as influencing cardinal to our age's

hegemony but also symbolises the assaulted Pope and the priest-scientist operating at the particle physics laboratory CERN as profound supporters in the power and licitness of Science to bridge Man and God, which is a brilliant move by the screenwriters David Koepp and Akiva Goldsman.

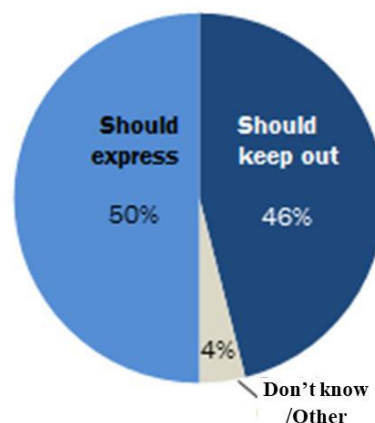
The visuals and verbals are so blended that the non-verbal art (film) coheres well to the space of vividly verbal art (novel) (Bazin 26). The duality that permeates both the novel and the movie from start to end, with the verbal and visual in the base and shell structure, enables the stitching and analysis of several strands of meaning over many symbolic planes.

#### IV. SCIENCE AND RELIGION: A SCHISM

Even though Science and Religion have a long and tumultuous history together, they almost met in the 16th century over an astronomical debate of whether the sun or the earth was the centre of the solar system. Even today, the conflict continues in different forms and takes up different influential spaces in reflecting or imparting perspectives to the minds of the followers. Considering the social issues, religious affiliation is just one of several factors that help to predict people's views. "It is the least religiously observant Americans who are most likely to perceive a conflict between science and religion", stated lead author Cary Funk in *Today's report*.

Researchers from Pew Research Center reported an article on Science and Religion and presented the results based on the survey conducted on Aug. 15-25, 2014, by landline and cellular telephone, among a nationally representative sample of 2,002 U.S. adults.

The general public is closely divided in its views about the role of religious organisations in science policy debates. Based on statistical modelling techniques that simultaneously parse multiple factors' independent effects, religious factors are central to public views on only a handful of science topics. Overall, half of the adults say churches should express their views on policy decisions about scientific issues, while 46% say churches should keep out of such matters. White evangelical Protestants and black Protestants are more inclined than people in other major religious groups to say churches should express their views on such topics. Most of those with no religious affiliation say churches should keep out of science policy debates.



Survey of U.S. adults, Aug 15-25, 2014.

Fig1: Public closely divided on the Role of Churches in Science Policy Debates by Pew Research

"Religion is flawed, but only because man is flawed." (Brown 366). Dan Brown's narrative has the distinctive esoteric aura shared by all his works, here, a compelling theme of Science and Religion. The narrative plot is revealed to be a complex scheme of destroying the Catholic Church by detonating an atom bomb of antimatter inside the Vatican. Robert Langdon learns that the conspirators are the mysterious Illuminati, a group of scientists who were forced into exile by the Catholic Church hundreds of years ago and now they are planning revenge. Langdon has just a few hours to locate the bomb before it goes off since the explosive has been hidden in Vatican City and unravels the person behind the Illuminati conspiracy. The underlying notion of the film adaptation is merely the discovery of a time bomb, and as a result, it mainly concentrates on this theme and creates an exciting treasure hunt without exposing the intention of the Illuminati act and sealing any contradiction to Christianity.

#### V. THE MAGNITUDE OF REALISM IN FICTION

The Bible is prone to misunderstanding. According to the Genesis story of creation, God created the world in six days. The 'days' of creation might have been metaphorically referring to the length of time- as 2 Peter 3:8 says, "With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years" (Brown 19). The biblical story may not exclude the likelihood that dinosaurs walked the planet before humans, and also, many other scientific theories may be just scientifically possible. Even while Brown frequently plays with Christianity, especially Catholicism, he does not always put Science against 'faith' or 'God'. His writings are neither anti-religion nor anti-

faith; instead, they are anti-dogma, anti-institutional, and anti-patriarchal.

The conflict-relation in Dan Brown’s narrative works because the author created complex characters that stand for opposing extremes. CERN’s director, Maximilian Kohler, is committed to ‘pure science’ and believes that all forms of religion are cancerous (Brown 17-19). In fact, he is convinced that Science will soon offer solutions to all queries, such as “what are we doing here?” and “what is the purpose of the universe?” (Brown 22). Later, it becomes clear that his disdain for religion was not solely the result of scholarly inquiry but was predominantly influenced by personal experience.

Dan Brown portrays Vittoria and her research colleague as part of a community of scientists who do not

necessarily consider their job at odds with religion. Vittoria disagrees with Kohler, stating that Science and logic are “bereft of moral obligation” (Brown 80), making her an optimist among the science-religion rivals.

Contrarily, Pontiffs Camerlengo gradually discloses that he is dubious of any scientific study that the Church does not sanction. He lost his mother in a church bombardment during a Church-Science conflict, which fueled his animosity toward scientific advancements. However, few findings are ‘pure science’ in the actual world; most have ethical, economic, philosophic, or even scriptural significance. Apart from political and social issues, the influence of the Church on the beliefs of Biological or Medicinal advancement is critical.

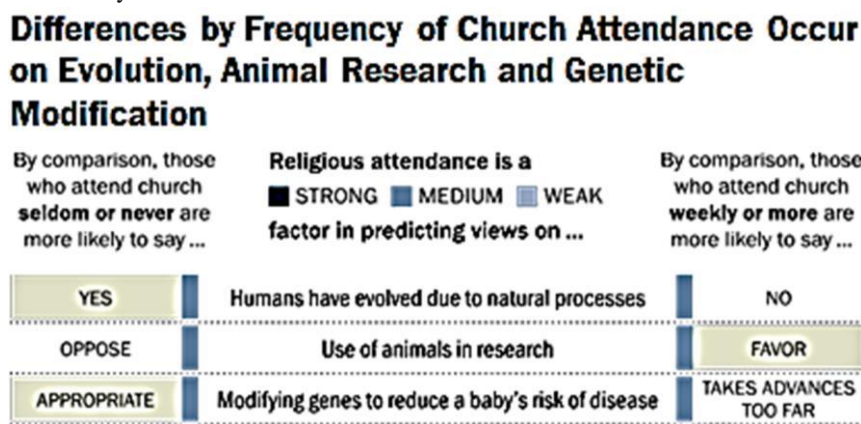


Fig 2.2 Differences of People in Scientific advancements by Pew Research

Power is a significant contributor to social control and conformity. As the supreme power structure, Christianity requires its adherents to acknowledge its doctrine, sacred text, and, most crucially, its sovereignty as truth through elements of confession and pastoral authority. Ideas and changes flow to society through the sieves of the Church’s political power. Similar to how they surrender to political and medical authorities, they voluntarily submit to the Church’s influence, as evident from the above report by the Pew Research Centre. (Funk).

**VI. COGNISANCE OF AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR**

Dan Brown’s fundamental views on interpretation, knowledge, universal truths and religious plurality inform and influence his worldview and books. It is clear that Brown is attempting to spark conversation as much as crafting narratives. As he says, “My sincere hope is that my novels, in addition to entertaining people, will serve as an open door for readers to begin their own explorations” (Tom Price)

The perspective on Christianity in Ron Howard’s *Angels and Demons* is more nuanced than in the book. Indeed, prominent members of the Catholic Church (as well as mainline Protestantism) have expressed a desire for a more wholesome discussion between Science and natural theology, which holds that Divinity is a part of the evolutionary process. Ultimately, the film *Angels and Demons* draws an exciting contrast between religious belief and scientific ‘truth,’ implying that the two are not mutually exclusive. When the film’s protagonist, Harvard professor Robert Langdon, says, “Faith is a gift that I have yet to receive” (Howard, 27:00 min in the Film *Angels and Demons*), his acceptance and prospective yearning give rise to the suggestion that faith in the divine, in the ultimate benevolence of the cosmos, is as much a question of ingrained subjective trust as it is of logical deliberation. The film’s restriction of the climactic scene wherein Camerlengo defends his actions demonstrates the director’s sincerity in preserving the divine enigma in his script. The practical world is not yet prepared to endorse the Pope bearing a child through artificial insemination. The apparent outburst of the general audience, when they view the



questionable purity of the Pope, will not be a Hollywood-preferred emotion and thus, the plot is aligned in a way where Camerlengo commits suicide at the very instance his mask comes off. Even though the sentiment behind Camerlengo's action pays off, showcasing it will disrupt the hero-villain balance resulting in an Avenger-Thanos scenario. However, Camerlengo's inclination toward violence over humanity will stain the image of Christianity; thus, the director made a wise decision to prevent the controversy.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The myth that Science and Religion conflict is more than just a historical misconception. Instead, it has evolved into an effective rhetorical device for political advantage. Despite the fact that there is no fundamental contradiction between Science and Religion, this myth allows for the construction of a dividing line, ensuring that Religion, not Science, continues to be regarded as authoritative in our culture by depicting the Church as dogmatic and anti-science.

According to this perspective, conflation is ineffective in preventing conflict by thoughtlessly blending Science and belief. Rather than honouring the stark contrasts between Science and faith, it is advisable to conflate them into a single fabric. For instance, many orthodox Christians now contend that the Bible is inerrant, divinely inspired, and provides the most reliable scientific data on the origins of the cosmos and life. Moreover, Scientism has no authority over human freedom; it only has control over matter and technology and has flushed modern culture of its religious depth (London), which is why the contrast approach helps remind us that Science may not be the enemy of Religion but rather Scientism. The failure to clearly distinguish between Science and Scientism fuels the misplaced hatred between Science and Religion. The revolution by Ron Howard in submerging the contradictory plot and bridging the possible gaps proved him to be an elite director in the adaptation industry. The movie respects the distinction and yet provides the means to understand and accept them equally. Thus the film wisely advises that faith should not conflict with what we know intellectually but that it comes mainly from the heart.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bazin, Andre, and Hugh Gray. *What Is Cinema?: Volume I*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2005. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt5hjhmcc>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.
- [2] Brooke, John H. "Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives." *Google Books*,

- <https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RSKCTddNf1oC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=research+on+science+and+religion&ots=gtODoLNmDg&sig=SSSyONMFJB0w5UVKN9LuemKREg#v=onepage&q=research%20on%20science%20and%20religion&f=false>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2022.
- [3] Brown, Dan. *Angels and Demons*. Random House. 2000.
- [4] Davies, Paul. *God and the New Physics*. Simon and Schuster, 1984, p. 34.
- [5] Funk, Cary. "What U.S. Religious Groups Think About Science Issues | Pew Research Center." *Pew Research Center Science & Society*, <https://www.facebook.com/pewresearch>, 22 Oct. 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2015/10/22/science-and-religion/>.
- [6] Elliott, Kamilla. "Rethinking Formal-Cultural and Textual-Contextual Divides in Adaptation Studies." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, no. 42(4), SALISBURY UNIVERSITY, 2014, pp. 576–93.
- [7] Guessoum, Nidhal. "SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN DAN BROWN'S 'ANGELS AND DEMONS' | NIDHAL GUESSOUM." *NIDHAL GUESSOUM*, 3 Sept. 2011, <http://nidhalguessoum.org/science-and-religion-in-dan-browns-angels-and-demons/>.
- [8] Haight, John F. "Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation." *Google Books*, [https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=1Y9JMBqvGlMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=science+and+religion+conflict&ots=zVLW4\\_8n4n&sig=fhl\\_wfIA6ReczJs6jvx5v\\_5MCE#v=onepage&q=science%20and%20religion%20conflict&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=1Y9JMBqvGlMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=science+and+religion+conflict&ots=zVLW4_8n4n&sig=fhl_wfIA6ReczJs6jvx5v_5MCE#v=onepage&q=science%20and%20religion%20conflict&f=false). Accessed 16 Nov. 2022.
- [9] Howard, Ron. *Angels and Demons*. Sony Pictures Studios, 2009.
- [10] Johnson, Larissa. "The Myth of Conflict in Angels & Demons." *CASE*, 30 June 2004, <https://www.case.edu.au/blogs/case-subscription-library/the-myth-of-conflict-in-angels-and-demons>.
- [11] London, Scott. Review of *Understanding the Present*, by Bryan Appleyard. Scott London, 1992, [www.scott.london/reviews/appleyard.html](http://www.scott.london/reviews/appleyard.html). Accessed 25 Nov. 2022.
- [12] Moritz, Joshua M. "Doubt, Deception, and Dogma: Science and Religion in Film." *Theology and Science*, no. 3, Informa UK Limited, Aug. 2009, pp. 207–12. *Crossref*, doi:10.1080/14746700903035066.
- [13] Murti, Bayu, et al. "Extra Causers: Their Construction of Conflict between Religion and Science in Angels and Demons by Dan Brown, and Their Pedagogical Values." *Learning & Technology Library, Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 24 Dec. 2019, <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/216538/>.
- [14] Price, Tom. "Dan Brown: Looking Behind the Code." *Bethinking.Org*, bethinking, 17 Mar. 2007, <https://www.bethinking.org/bible/dan-brown-looking-behind-the-code>.
- [15] Samanik, and Fita Lianasari. "Antimatter Technology: The Bridge between Science and Religion toward Universe Creation Theory Illustrated in Dan Brown's Angels and Demons." *TEKNOSASTIK*, no. 14(2), 2016, pp. 18–27,

<https://ejournal.teknokrat.ac.id/index.php/teknosastik/article/view/58/45>.

- [16] Schager, Nick. "Review: The Da Vinci Code - Slant Magazine." *Slant Magazine*, 18 May 2006, <https://www.slantmagazine.com/film/the-da-vinci-code/>.
- [17] Tom Price. "Dan Brown: Looking behind the Code." *Bethinking*, 17 Mar. 2007, [www.bethinking.org/bible/dan-brown-looking-behind-the-code](http://www.bethinking.org/bible/dan-brown-looking-behind-the-code). Accessed 1 Dec. 2022.
- [18] Wyard, Adrian. "Angels and Demons Topic: Science and Religion in Conflict." *About Counterbalance*, <https://counterbalance.org/angeldem/conflict-frame.html>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2022.