

An Open Letter to Dan Brown

Dear Dan,

Before getting into the heart of this letter, as a nonfiction author myself, I am amazed at your gift for writing fiction. It's incredible to see how you get the reader involved; how you hold the reader's interest; how you paint such detailed word pictures; how you build to such intense, page-turning climaxes. And, as one who appreciates careful research, I love the work you put into your books. As you once explained, your publisher wants good books, not fast books.

I remember in the days when the *Da Vinci Code* took off that, on every flight I took, I saw a good number of people reading your book, after which people would ask me if what you wrote was true. That's what I call powerful fiction writing! I myself could not put the book down, even though I knew biblically and historically that the central thesis was false. Again, kudos to your literary skills.

But, to the point of this open letter.

I saw your recent TV interview where you expressed hope that your new book, *Origin*, would lead to dialogue between creationists and evolutionists, noting that "There is an enormous rift now between creationism and evolutionary science, a rift that needs to be bridged through dialogue." You even expressed the hope that your book could help spark such dialogue. More broadly, you stated, "I hope they [meaning, readers of your new book] take away a desire to have a dialogue with people whose ideas are not their own."

If I may be so bold as to ask: Are you willing to help lead the way in that dialogue? Are you willing to have your own views challenged, your own beliefs examined as you challenge and examine the beliefs of others?

While reading *Origin*, I kept asking myself, "What happened to Dan Brown as a child? There was something that took place that profoundly influenced him against 'traditional religious faith.' What was it?"

A few days later, a friend (who had no idea I was reading your book) pointed me to your interview on *CBS Sunday Morning* (October 1), and it answered my question loudly and clearly. In fact, after a few seconds of internet research, I found this was not the first time you told your story.

An AP article from May 18, 2012, recounted a talk you had just given in New Hampshire, containing these salient lines:

"I owe everything to my parents," said Brown, whose father was a math teacher and mother was a church organist and piano teacher.

Brown says he was encouraged to ask questions at home as a child. He believed both his mother's religion and his father's science, but became confused when the two conflicted. He told the crowd that one day, at age 13, he asked a priest how to go about reconciling those differences.

He said the priest replied, "Nice boys don't ask questions like that."

And, as you explained in the CBS interview, this was the beginning of your journey to find "your truth."

How unfortunate it was that the priest responded as he did. He should have said, "What an excellent question! I'm so glad you asked. Let's explore it together." Perhaps your life would have taken a very different direction had the priest encouraged honest inquiry and welcomed questions exploring apparent contradictions between religion and science.

To be sure, I imagine you're quite satisfied with your life so far—much of it, since the *Da Vinci Code*, must seem like a

dream come true—but what if you could have a beautiful relationship with your Creator—the Father of all fathers? What if you could do more than raise questions for your millions of readers? What if you could point to them to solid, redemptive, life-changing answers? How amazing would that be?

I truly appreciate that you're calling for dialogue between creationists and evolutionists. At the same time, you state that historically, "God does not survive science," perhaps unaware that, to this day, many scientific discoveries are made by people of great faith and, perhaps, unaware, that religious faith worldwide is growing, not declining. And, while claiming that religion has an important part to play in the world, you have stated clearly that you think eventually, religious faith will disappear, which you see as a positive, not a negative.

Of course, you're quite free to have these views and express them. My concern is that you seem to pick the worst of those you differ with compared to the best of those you agree with. In other words, when it comes to the so-called "brights"—atheists like Richard Dawkins—you write of them in *Origin* with esteem. When it comes to those who question Darwinian evolution, you point to a website you feel you can easily disparage.

Are you genuinely unaware of the large number of highly educated scientists and researchers—from physicists to biologists to astronomers to geologists and others—who reject Darwin's naturalism? Have you ever read a scholarly tome on intelligent design (written with no reference to religious belief at all) that makes the intellectual case for a creator? Have you spent a day with someone like John Lennox, a committed Christian who has debated men like Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, and who has served as professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford and fellow in mathematics and the philosophy of science at Green Templeton College, Oxford, with from Oxford and Cambridge in Mathematics

and in Science?

Or have you worked your way through an academic study of miracles, such as Prof. Craig Keener's two-volume work, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, which also discusses documented miracles today? Or have you visited countries in the developing world where Christian missionaries are the primary reason why some communities have running water and electricity, not to mention schools, hospitals and eternal hope?

I'm quite aware that the hero of your recent books, Robert Langdon, is not an aggressive atheist, and even in the lengthy climax to *Origin*, you raise the question of where the laws of physics came from (apparently not even e-wave figured that out yet). At the same time, I genuinely wonder what kind of dialogue you're looking for and, more importantly, if you're open to the possibility of the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent Creator.

So, rather than revile you as a heretic and an anti-Christ figure, I reach out to you as a fellow-lover of truth, inviting you to have some genuine interaction. Why not lead the way?