

RELIGION



Actors Audrey Tautou and Tom Hanks in a scene from the suspense thriller "The Da Vinci Code," based on the novel by Dan Brown.

Da Vinci Controversy Builds to Crescendo

Movie version of disputed novel

(AP)—A line from Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code" tells you why it's easily the most disputed religious novel of all time: "Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false."

With 46 million copies in print, "Da Vinci" has long been a headache for Christian scholars and historians, who are worried about the influence on the faith from a single source they regard as wrong-headed.

Now the controversy seems headed for a crescendo with the release of the movie version of "Da Vinci" May 17-19 around the world. Believers have released an extraordinary flood of material criticizing the story - books, tracts, lectures and Internet sites among them. The conservative Roman Catholic group Opus Dei, portrayed as villainous in the story, is among those asking Sony Corp. to issue a disclaimer with the film.

Bart Ehrman, religion chair at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, likens the phenomenon to the excitement in the 19th century when deluded masses thought Jesus would return in 1844.

The novel's impact on religious ideas in popular culture, he says, is "quite unlike anything we've experienced in our lifetimes."

Assaults on "Da Vinci" don't just come from evangelicals or from Roman Catholic leaders such as Chicago's Cardinal Francis George, who says Brown is waging "an attack on the Catholic Church" through preposterous historical claims.

Among more liberal thinkers, Harold Attridge, dean of Yale's Divinity School, says Brown has "wildly misinterpreted" early Christianity. Ehrman details Brown's "numerous mistakes" in "Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code" and asks: "Why didn't he simply get his facts straight?"

Brown told National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition" during a 2003 publicity tour - he declines interviews now - that his characters and action are fictional but "the ancient history, the secret documents, the rituals, all of this is factual." Around the same time, on CNN he said that "the background is all true."

Church Sponsors Fellowship

Area residents are invited to the two nights of fellowship during the Episcopal Regional Training Institute, Thursday, May 18 and Friday, May 19 at the Hilton Vancouver Washington Hotel and Convention Center, 301 W. Sixth St.

The 14th annual event is sponsored by Community A.M.E. Zion Church of Vancouver and Rev.

Robert F. Kemp.

Attending will be representatives from God in Charge Ministry Production Co., the United of Praise Choir, the A.M.E. Zion Conference Choir and a liturgical-praise dance presentation by Kendra Young.

For more information, call 360-693-4566.

Bringing Local History to Life

continued from Metro

other students will also be exhibited at local stores.

In yet another facet of the project, the students are working with artist Joseph Becker and the City Repair Project to construct a bench outside Grace Academy. The bench will be made of cobb, a material consisting of straw, clay and sand covered with plaster and paint.

Another one of the woodcuts and poems is by Kierra Davis of Grant High School, a three-year Grace Academy veteran. They depict people dancing to a jazz band at a night club on Northeast Skidmore Street in 1957.

"I like jazz music and I like to dance," Davis says.

Mopia Bowles of Beaumont Middle School, in her first year at Grace, created a painting of two people, one white and one black, eating together at a lunch counter in 1953, the first year that this simple act became legal in Oregon. The white person is Martina Gangle Curl, a noted artist and political activist.

Beasley, who studies at Fernwood Middle School, came to Grace Academy two years ago after her mother told her about the program. Cannaday, her "unsung hero, was not only a lawyer but also publisher of The Advocate, one of

Portland's earliest African-American newspapers. In her poem, Beasley imagines herself performing this role.

In fact, she says, she has some ambition to be a writer.

"I'm keeping a journal, and I write in it every day," she says.

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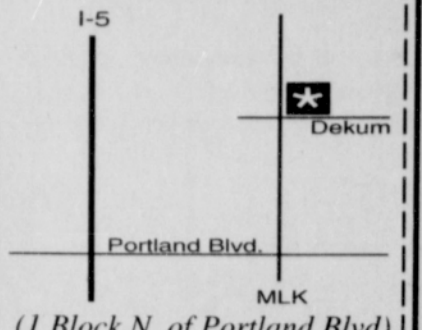
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