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After the death of Galileo Galilei, intellectual and scientific luminaries allegedly formed a group known as the "Illuminati," a secret society of individuals at issue in the book *Angels & Demons*.

Rome - long called the Eternal City - is filled with mysterious places. Known for its city of the dead (the catacombs) and a dead city (the Forum), it's also home to fantastic art treasures, famous buildings (like the Pantheon, where Raphael is buried) and beautiful churches.

Not to be forgotten are the stunning frescoes (art on the walls) and mosaics (art on the floors) which one finds throughout the city itself. And, lest we forget, there is the Vatican (really a city within a city) which has more art treasures than any single museum in the world. (More about that later.)

Rome, as a city (and separate from its former empire), is a place where artists thrived and ideas flourished throughout the centuries. Yet ... there was often great tension between acceptable thought (according to the Catholic Church) and unacceptable thought (resulting from scientific theories and discoveries). Take, for example, the story of Galileo.

Galileo was a well-known math professor at the University of Padua when he learned about an interesting discovery - the telescope. Fascinated with the device, Galileo improved its original design, ultimately magnifying by twenty-one times what could be seen through the glass.

Then he did something unusual: He turned his new telescope up - toward the moon and other objects in the sky. What he saw (such as the planet Jupiter) forever changed how mankind views the heavens - except ... leaders of the contemporary Catholic Church disagreed with his findings.

As Galileo looked through his telescope, in 1610, he was surprised to see that Saturn seemed to have objects on either side. As he continued to study this planet - the most distant known at the time - he initially drew it as a cup with handles. (He could not have known he was looking at Saturn's rings.)

Among his other findings, Galileo (a believing Catholic) concluded that Copernicus was right - the Earth orbited the Sun (not the other way around). Such a conclusion, said Catholic-Church authorities, could not be right (since the Earth was the center of the universe).

In 1633, Galileo was tried for - and convicted of - heresy by Cardinals of the Roman Inquisition.

Spared a death sentence (Giordano Bruno had been executed, in 1600, on likely similar charges), Galileo knew he was right - despite the conflict with Church dogma. At some point, exactly when is disputed, Galileo reportedly said: "Eppur si muove" (still it moves) after he'd recanted his beliefs to the Inquisition.

Although Galileo endured house arrest, as his punishment, the Catholic Church continued to persecute individuals whose scientific theories were at odds with official theological positions. (It wasn't until 1992 that the Church acknowledged its mistakes in the Galileo case.)

In opposition to Catholic-Church restrictions on scientific inquiry, the Illuminati (a group of intellectuals, including the German writer Goethe) formed (according to historians) sometime after Galileo's death. Dan Brown talks about the Illuminati (and his research regarding them) in his Witness Statement to Britain's High Court:

Angels & Demons, like all my books, weaves together fact and fiction. Some histories claim the Illuminati vowed vengeance against the Vatican in the 1600's. The early Illuminati - those of Galileo's day - were expelled from Rome by the Vatican and hunted mercilessly. The Illuminati fled and went into hiding in Bavaria where they began mixing with other refugee groups fleeing the Catholic purges --mystics, alchemists, scientists, occultists, Muslims, Jews.

From this mixing pot, a new Illuminati emerged. A darker Illuminati. A deeply anti Christian Illuminati. They grew very powerful, infiltrating power structures, employing mysterious rites, retaining deadly secrecy, and vowing someday to rise again and take revenge on the Catholic Church. Angels & Demons is a thriller about the Illuminati's long awaited resurgence and vengeance against their oppressors. But most of all, it is a story about Robert Langdon, the Harvard symbologist who gets caught in the middle. Much of the novel's story is a chase across modern Rome - through catacombs, cathedrals, piazzas, and even the Vatican's subterranean Necropolis.

Speaking of the Vatican, let's take a virtual trip to the city of Popes and the center of the Roman Catholic Church. Along the way, we can reflect on this fact: Not every pope who ever headed the Catholic Church was a good man. A notable example was Rodrigo Borgia who became Alexander VI.

Even Church writings refer to his evil ways.

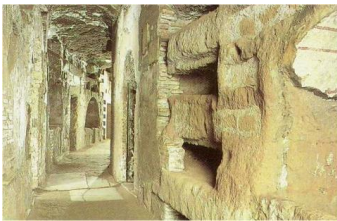
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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ROME-GALILEO-and-the-ILLUMINATI-Angels-Demons>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ROME-GALILEO-and-the-ILLUMINATI-Angels-Demons>

Media Stream



Catacombs of Rome - Ancient Burial Sites

Image online, courtesy Rome Connection.

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Roman Forum - City of Ruins

Image online, courtesy Dr. David Rosen, Regents Professor, University of Arizona.

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Pantheon - Oldest Large-Dome Building in Rome

Image online, courtesy Rome Hotels.

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Pantheon - Tomb of Raphael

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Michelangelo Fresco - Jonah and the Whale

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Ancient Mosaic - Beware of the Dog

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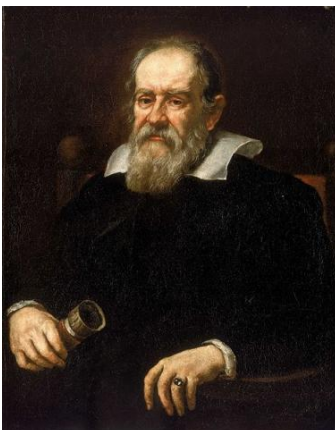
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Aerial View - Vatican City

Image online, courtesy Satellite Imaging Corp.

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Galileo Galilei

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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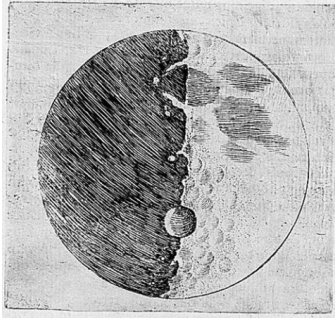


Galileo - Drawings of Saturn from 1610 and 1616

Image online, courtesy NASA. Quoted passage online, courtesy NASA's web site on Saturn.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galileo-Drawings-of-Saturn-from-1610-and-1616>



Galileo - Drawing of the Moon

Image online, courtesy NASA.

Translated passage online, courtesy Trinity College, [University of Cambridge](http://www.trinity.edu/~trinity/ucambridge/).

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Galileo - Still it Moves

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Quoted passage from *Galileo at Work*, by Stillman Drake, [page 357](http://www.google.com/books?id=...) - online, courtesy Google Books.

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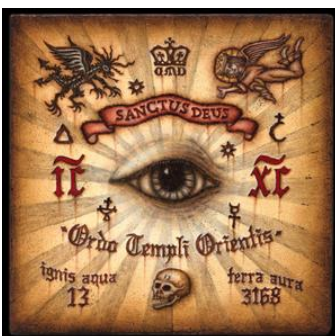


Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Portrait of Goethe, at age 70, painted in 1828 by Joseph Karl Stieler - online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Quoted passage from *Conversations with Goethe* (also known, in German, as *Gespräche mit Goethe*), by Johann Eckermann - published, 1836.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Johann-Wolfgang-von-Goethe>



ROME, GALILEO and the ILLUMINATI

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Rodrigo Borgia - Pope Alexander VI

Clip from the 1981 BBC series, "The Borgias." Copyright BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes to understand the life and times of Pope Alexander VI (born as Rodrigo Borgia).



Producer - Mark Shivas

Writers - John Prebble and Ken Taylor

Starring

Rodrigo Borgia/Pope Alexander VI - Adolfo Celi

Cesare Borgia - Oliver Cotton

BBC, 1981 - Originally broadcast on BBC Two

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rodrigo-Borgia-Pope-Alexander-VI>

Galileo - Summary of His Career

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[Transcript of entire program](#) online, courtesy NOVA.



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David Axelrod

Directed by:

Peter Jones

Narrated by:

Liev Schreiber

Starring:

Simon Callow - Galileo

Laura Nardi - Maria Celeste

John Fraser - the Inquisitor

Alexa Jago - Voice of Maria Celeste

Cornelius Garrett - Voices of the Ambassador and Castelli

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galileo-Summary-of-His-Career>

Galileo - Early Professional Life

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Galileo - Telescopic Findings and the Starry Messenger

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Galileo - At Odds with Authorities

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Galileo - In Trouble with the Catholic Church

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Galileo - The Inquisitor, Robert Cardinal Bellarmine

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Galileo - "Dialogue Concerning Two Chief World Systems"

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Galileo - Dealing with the Roman Censor

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Galileo - Accusations and Trial

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Galileo - Post-Trial Punishment and Work

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Galileo - Laws of Motion and His Rehabilitation

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