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Nag Hammadi Gospels. Some radical critics of the New Testament (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM) claim that the Gnostic gospels are equal to those in the New Testament, and that they do not support the resurrection of Christ (*see* MIRACLE ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). The Jesus Seminar places *The Gospel of Thomas* in their otherwise severely truncated Bible. Both of these conclusions are a serious challenge to the historic Christian Faith.

The Gnostic gospels were discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, near Cairo in 1945 and translated into English in 1977. *The Gospel of Thomas* (140–170) has 114 secret sayings of Jesus.

Credibility of the Gnostic Gospels. The best way to evaluate the credibility of these gospels is by comparison to the New Testament Gospels, which the same critics have grave doubts about accepting (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS). Against the canonical gospels, the Gnostic gospels come up seriously short.

Late Writings. The attested dates for the canonical Gospels are no later than 60–100 (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF). Gnostic gospels appeared nearly a century later. O. C. Edwards asserts “As historical reconstructions there is no way that the two can claim equal credentials” (Edwards, 27).

Historical Worth. The earliest Christians meticulously preserved Jesus’ words and deeds. The Gospel writers were close to the eyewitnesses and pursued the facts (cf. Luke 1:1–4). There is evidence that the Gospel writers were honest reporters. They also present the same overall picture of Jesus (*see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).

New Testament Canon. Contrary to the critics, the New Testament canon with Gospels and most of Paul’s Epistles was formed by the end of the first century. The only books in dispute, the *Antilegomena*, have no apologetic effect on the argument for the reliability of the historical material used to establish the deity of Christ.

The New Testament itself reveals a collection of books in the first century. Peter speaks of having Paul’s Epistles (2 Peter 3:15–16), equating them with Old Testament Scripture. Paul had access to Luke’s Gospel, quoting it (10:7) in 1 Timothy 5:18 .

Beyond the New Testament, canonical lists support the existence of a New Testament canon (see Geisler and Nix, 294). Indeed, all the Gospels and Paul’s basic Epistles are represented on these lists.

Even the heretical canon of Marcion (ca. 140) accepted the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul’s Epistles (*see* BIBLE, CANONICITY OF).

Support of Church Fathers. A common body of books was cited by Fathers in the second century. This includes the six books crucial to the historicity of Christ and his resurrection, the Gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians. Clement of Rome cited the Gospels in 95 (*Corinthians*, 13, 42, 46). Ignatius (ca. 110–115) quoted Luke 24:39 (*Smyrnaeans* 3). Polycarp (ca. 115) cites all Synoptic Gospels (*Philippians* 2, 7). The *Didache* (early second century) cites the Synoptic Gospels (1, 3, 8, 9, 15–16). The *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 135) cites Matthew 22:14. Papias (*Oracles*, ca. 125–140) speaks of Matthew, Mark (chronicling Peter), and John (last) who wrote Gospels. He says three times that Mark made no errors. The Fathers considered the Gospels and Paul’s Epistles to be on par with the inspired Old Testament (cf. Clement’s *Corinthians* [47]; Ignatius’s *Ephesians* [10]; *To Polycarp* [1, 5]; and Polycarp’s *Philippians* [1, 3–4, 6, 12]).

The Fathers vouched for the accuracy of canonical Gospels in early second century. This is long before gnostic gospels were written in the late second century.

Gnostic Resurrection Accounts. There is no real evidence that the so-called “Q” (*Quelle*, source) document posited by the critics ever existed (see Linneman; *see* Q DOCUMENT). It is an imaginary reconstruction, so the allegation that it has nothing about the resurrection is pointless.

The Gospel of Thomas does exist, even though it is from the late second century. Nonetheless, contrary to the critics who support this composition, it acknowledges Jesus’ resurrection. In fact, it is the living, post-death (34:25–27; 45:1–16) Christ who allegedly speaks in it. True, it does not stress the resurrection, but this is to be expected because it is primarily a “sayings” source, rather than a historical narration. Further, the Gnostic theological bias against matter would downplay bodily resurrection.

Earliest Christian Creeds. Since the critics acknowledge the authenticity of 1 Corinthians 15, which is dated ca. 55–56 A.D., it is impossible to deny the historicity of the resurrection. This is only twenty-two or twenty-three years after Jesus died (1 Cor. 15:6). What is more, 1 Corinthians 15:1 alludes to a possible creed confessing the death and resurrection of Christ that would be even earlier. Even on the minimal assumption that the creed was ten or twelve years old, that would place it within ten or twelve years of the events themselves. Few ancient events have this immediate, contemporary verification.

Conclusion. The evidence for the authenticity of the Gnostic gospels does not compare with that for the New Testament. The New Testament is a first-century book. *The Gospel of Thomas* is a mid-second-century book. The New Testament is verified by numerous lines of evidence, including other references in the New Testament, early canonical lists, thousands of citations by the early Fathers, and the established earlier dates for the Gospels.

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Natural Law. *See* LAW, NATURE AND KINDS OF ; REVELATION, GENERAL ; MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF .

Natural Theology. *Theology* is the study (*logos*) of God (*theos*). *Natural theology* (*see* LAW, NATURE AND KINDS OF) is the study of God based on what one can know from nature (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL). *Natural theology* is set in contrast with *supernatural theology* which is dependent on a *supernatural revelation* (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL) from God, such as the Bible.

Natural theology depends on the rational arguments for God's existence (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) and nature (*see* GOD, NATURE OF). Most natural theologians, following Thomas Aquinas, believe that one can know the existence, unity, and general nature of God from natural revelation. However, the *trinity of God* (*see* TRINITY), *incarnation of Christ* (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF), and *redemption* (*see* "HEATHEN," SALVATION OF) can only be known by *supernatural revelation*. These are known as *mysteries of the Faith* (*see* MYSTERY).

Naturalism. Philosophical or metaphysical *naturalism* refers to the view that nature is the "whole show." There is no supernatural realm and/or intervention in the world (*see* MATERIALISM ; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST). In the strict sense, all forms of nontheisms are naturalistic, including *atheism* , *pantheism* , *deism* , and *agnosticism* .

However, some theists (*see* THEISM), especially scientists, hold a form of *methodological naturalism*. That is, while acknowledging the existence of God and the possibility of miracles, they employ a method of approaching the natural world that does not admit of miracles (*see* SCIENCE OF ORIGINS). This is true of many theistic evolutionists (*see* EVOLUTION ; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL), such as Douglas Young (*see* Young) and Donald MacKay (*see* MacKay). They insist that to admit miracles in nature to explain the unique or anomalous is to invoke "the God of the gaps." In this sense they are bedfellows with the *antisupernaturalists*, who deny miracles on the grounds that they are contrary to the scientific method.

Forms of Metaphysical Naturalism. *Metaphysical naturalists* are of two basic kinds: *materialists* and *pantheists*. The *materialist* reduces all to matter (*see* MATERIALISM) and the *pantheist* reduces all to mind or spirit. Both deny that any supernatural realm intervenes in the natural world. They differ chiefly about whether the natural world is composed ultimately of matter or of mind (spirit). Those who hold the latter often admit the possibility of *supernormal* events by tapping into this invisible spiritual Force (*see* MIRACLE ; MIRACLES, MAGIC AND). However, these are not supernatural events in the theistic sense of a *supernatural* being intervening in the natural world he created.

Bases for Naturalism. *Metaphysical naturalists* reject miracles outright. They vary only in the basis for their criticism of the supernatural. *Benedict Spinoza* believed miracles are impossible because they are irrational. *David Hume* claimed that miracles are incredible. *Rudolph Bultmann* held that miracles are unhistorical and mythical (*see* MIRACLES, MYTH AND ; MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT). Based on the unrepeatability of the miraculous, *Antony Flew* argued that miracles are unidentifiable. *Immanuel Kant* contended that miracles are not essential to religion. All of these allegations have been carefully analyzed and found to be without foundation in the articles MIRACLE and MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST .

Evaluation. *Theistic Inadequacy of Naturalism.* *Naturalistic* views either admit that a *deistic* sort of God exists or deny or doubt existence of any divine Being. But the alleged disproofs for God are notoriously unsuccessful (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF). The evidence that God exists is strong (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). As for views that admit the existence of a supernatural God but deny miracles (such as *deism*), many critics have pointed out their basic incoherence. For if God can and has performed the greatest supernatural act of all—creating the world out of nothing (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF), then there is no reason to deny the possibility of lesser supernatural events (i.e., miracles). For making water out of nothing (as God did in Genesis 1) is a greater supernatural event than making water into wine (as Jesus did in John 2).

Scientific Insufficiency. *Modern science* has pointed to its own miracle—the origin of the material universe out of nothing. The evidence for the big bang origin of the universe is strong. This evidence includes the second law of thermodynamics (*see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF), the expanding universe, the radiation echo and the discovery of the large mass of energy predicted by the big bang theory (*see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). If so, then matter is neither eternal nor all there is. And if there is a Creator of the whole universe from nothing, the greatest miracle of all has occurred.

Philosophical Insufficiency. Two premises common to all forms of secular humanism (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR) are nontheism and naturalism. These can be treated together, since if there is no supernatural being (Creator) beyond the natural universe, then nature is all there is. Often naturalism means that everything can be explained in terms of chemical and physical processes. At a minimum it means that every event in the universe can be explained in terms of the whole universe (the whole system). Naturalists believe there is no need to appeal to anything (or Anyone) outside the universe to explain any event in the universe nor to explain the whole universe itself.

But the very scientific naturalists who insist on explaining *everything* in terms of physical and chemical laws cannot explain their own scientific theories or laws in terms of mere physical and chemical processes. For a “theory” or “law” about physical processes is obviously not itself a physical process. It is a nonphysical *theory* about physical things. A physics professor was once asked: “If everything is matter, then what is a scientific theory about matter?” His response was, “*It is magic!*” When asked his basis for believing that, he replied “Faith.” It is interesting to note the inconsistency that a purely materialistic worldview resorts to faith in “magic” as the basis of their materialistic beliefs.

Another argument revealing the inconsistency of pure naturalism was offered by C. S. Lewis . Quoting Haldane, Lewis wrote: “If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motion of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms” (Lewis, 22). If naturalism is claiming to be true then there must be more than mere natural processes; there must be “reason,” which is not purely a natural physical process.

Another way to state the inconsistency of naturalism is to show that a basic premise of science, which even naturalists hold, is contrary to their conclusion that every event in the universe can be explained in terms of the whole universe. This premise that “every event has a cause” is at the philosophical heart of scientific research (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF). For scientists—certainly naturalistic ones—are trying to find the natural explanation or cause for all events. But if *every* event has a cause, then it follows that the *whole* universe has a cause. For the universe as conceived by modern science is the sum total of all events at a given time. But if *each* event is caused, then *every* event is caused. And if the universe is the sum total of every event, then the whole universe is caused. For instance, if each tile on the floor is brown, then the whole floor is brown. And if each part of the table is wooden, then the whole table is wooden. Likewise, if every event in the universe is an effect, then adding up all the events (effects) does not equal a cause. Rather, the sum total of all caused events needs a cause to explain it (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

It is not sufficient for the naturalist to say there is something “more” to the universe than the sum of all the events or “parts,” for then he is not really explaining *everything* in terms of the physical “parts” or events but in terms of something beyond them. It is, however, perfectly consistent for the nonnaturalist to insist that all the events of the universe cannot be explained *solely* in terms of the physical universe of events. But naturalism is not able to explain either itself or the universe on a purely naturalistic premise.

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Near-Death Experiences. *See* IMMORTALITY .

Neopaganism. *Neopaganism* (lit. “New-paganism”) is a revival of ancient paganism (*see* MITHRAISM). It is a form of polytheism that arose in the wake of the “death of God” movement (*see* ALTIZER, THOMAS ; NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH). Neopaganism is also manifest in witchcraft (wicca), occultism, and other religions that fit under the New Age umbrella (*see* Geisler).

Mark Satin has contrasted new paganism with primitive forms of the religion. Citing Andrea Dworkin, he noted that the “old religion”:

- celebrated sexuality, fertility, nature, and women’s place in it.
- worshiped a hairy, merry deity who loved music and dancing and good food.
- was nature- and woman-centered, with priestesses, wise women, midwives, goddesses, and sorceresses.
- had no dogma. Each priestess interpreted the religion in her own fashion.

Not all of this could be reestablished in New Age society, writes Satin, but neopagans could adapt nature-and woman-centeredness to fit new priorities. “Nature-centeredness has an obvious parallel in our growing recognition that the quality of our connection to the environment—both natural and people-made—has a lot to do with our spiritual health and spiritual growth” (Satin, 113–14).

Roots of Neopaganism. Neopaganism is not a monolithic movement. It springs from the soil of paganism, Hinduism , wicca, and, indirectly, atheism, and other systems. Modern atheism fertilized the soil out of which contemporary neopaganism grew. David Miller describes it as rising from the ashes of the “death of God” heralded by Thomas Altizer and others in the 1960s and 1970s. “The death of God gives rise to the rebirth of the gods,” according to Miller. When God died in modern culture, the ancient gods rose again. Monotheism was holding back paganism.

Ancient Polytheism. Of course, the main root of Neopaganism is ancient Greek and Roman polytheism. Miller noted that ancient polytheism remained underground or in the countercultural tradition of the West throughout the 2000-year reign of monotheistic thought. This tradition may be behind recent interest in the occult, magic, extraterrestrial life, Eastern societies and religions, communes, new forms of multiple family life, and other alternative life-style meaning systems that seem so foreign (ibid., 11). He adds that, for racial-cultural traditions, Western Europeans still draw on gods and goddesses of ancient Greece (ibid., 6, 7, 60, 81).

Hinduism. Not all modern paganism comes from Greece. The revival of Buddhism and especially Hinduism, with its multi-millions of gods, also supports New Age religion and Neopaganism. Hinduism has infiltrated virtually every level of Western culture, tailored to fit Western humanism by teaching that each of us is a little god.

Witchcraft (Wicca) and Radical Feminism. Another stream is the religion of wicca. This movement, popularly known as witchcraft, has a strong overlap with the feminist movement. Wiccans have an abhorrence to monotheism (*see* THEISM). Feminist witch Margot Adler expresses this view. Adler refers to monotheism as one of the totalistic religious and political views that dominate society (Adler).

Occultism and Star Wars. George Lucas' *Star Wars* "religion of the Jedi" has roots in the Mexican sorcerer, Don Juan. Lucas biographer Dale Pollock notes that "Lucas' concept of the Force was heavily influenced by Carlos Castaneda's *Tales of Power* . This is an account of a supposed Mexican Indian sorcerer, Don Juan, who uses the phrase 'life force' " (Pollock, 10). The director of Lucas' movie, *The Empire Strikes Back* , Irvin Kershner, is a Zen Buddhist. He admitted of the film: "I want to introduce some Zen here because I don't want the kids to walk away just feeling that everything is shoot-em-up, but there's also a little something to think about here in terms of yourself and your surroundings" (Kershner, 37). Whatever the source of the Force of *Star Wars* , it clearly is similar to the Force believed in by neopagan witches. Lucas himself referred to the force as a religion in the first movie of his *Star Wars* trilogy (Lucas, 37, 121, 145). The character, Luke Skywalker, was engaging in white magic when he tapped into the "light side of the Force," the Force was "God." Lucas claimed in an interview with *Time* (see source list) that "the world works better if you're on the good side" of this occult Force. Lucas' sorcery is even more evident in the hero of Lucas' subsequent film, *Willow* , whose life goal is to be a sorcerer.

Characteristics of Neopaganism. Obviously a variety of beliefs are practiced under the broad neopagan heading. There are some generally shared characteristics and beliefs that draw on polytheism, the occult, relativism, and pluralism.

Polytheism. Neopagans are free to worship any gods and goddesses, ancient or modern, from the East or West. Some worship Apollo and Diana. Author-philosopher Theodore Roszak (*Where the Wasteland Ends*) is an animist. He believes that "the statue and sacred grove were transparent windows . . . by which the witness was escorted through to sacred ground beyond and participated in the divine" (*see* Adler, 27). Most neopagans revive one of the Western forms of polytheism. The names of the gods may differ, but most often they are Celtic, Greek, or Latin.

Some neopagans debate about the ontological state of their "gods," assigning an idealistic or aesthetic role to them. But as one put it, "All these things are within the realm of possibility. It has been our nature to call these 'gods.' " God is an eternal being; so are we. Then in a sense, we, too, are god. Adler notes that there are two deities of most wicca groups: The god is the lord of animals and of death and beyond; and the goddess has three aspects: Maiden, Mother, and Crone. Each of her aspects is symbolized by a phase of the moon. The Maiden is the waxing crescent, the Mother is the full moon, and the waning crescent is like the woman who is past childbearing. Adler suggests that neopagans might be considered "duotheists," though feminist witches are often monotheists, worshiping the goddess as the one god (ibid., 35, 112). Neopagans sometimes describe themselves as monotheistic polytheists. Morgan McFarland, a Dallas witch, declared: "I see myself as monotheistic in believing in the Goddess, Creatrix, the Female Principle, but at the same time acknowledging that other gods and goddesses do exist through her as manifestations of her, facets of the whole" (ibid., 36). By her own definition, the use of *monotheistic* here is misleading. She and other neopagans look to a many-faceted (polytheistic) manifestation of pantheism. Each manifestation, of course, is finite (*see* POLYTHEISM).

The Radical Feminist Connection. Neopaganism closely connects with radical feminism. Not all neopagans are feminists, nor are all feminists neopagan. Nonetheless, neopaganism has drawn many feminists. Adler describes the dynamics this way: "Many feminist Witchcraft covens have . . . attracted women from all walks of life. But even there, most of these women have already been strengthened by the feminist movement, or by consciousness-raising groups, or by an important experience such as divorce, separation, or a homosexual encounter"(ibid., 37). One neopagan feminist said, "We have found that women working together are capable of conjuring their past and reawakening their old ascendancy. . . . This does not seem to happen when men are present . . . it seems that in mixed covens, no matter how 'feminist' the women are, a kind of competition begins to happen. Among the women alone, none of this occurs, and a great reciprocity develops, unlike anything I have seen before" (ibid., 124).

Some were witches before they were feminists. A neopagan from Los Angeles said her spiritual journey began when she observed her mother talking to the dead. "I saw her go into a trance and feel presences around her. She is an artist, and her art often reflects Sumerian influences. . . . She tells fortunes and can still the wind." But the daughter, like the mother, found herself in the traditional role of wife and mother and felt limited and enslaved. While attempting suicide she had a vision that confirmed her occult beliefs. Her awareness as a witch and feminist perspective met in the attempt to liberate her womanhood from perceived oppression (ibid. 76–77).

One draw to witchcraft for women is that their gender has equal, and often superior, status. As far back as the 1890s, a social observer named Leland wrote that in times of intellectual rebellion against conservatism and hierarchy, there is a feminist struggle for superiority. He noted that in witchcraft the female is the primitive principle. "The perception of this [tyranny] drove vast numbers of the discontent into rebellion, and as they could not prevail by open warfare, they took their hatred out in a form of secret anarchy, which was, however, intimately blended with superstition and fragments of old tradition" (ibid., 59).

Occultism. Almost inevitably neopagans are involved in the occult. They believe in an impersonal force, energy, or power, into which they can tap to do supernormal things. Luke Skywalker of *Star Wars* is the classic model for this belief. Attempts to cast spells are another example.

Pluralism and Relativism. Neopagans are strongly pluralistic. Polytheism by its nature leaves room for more gods or goddesses. All forms of worship of whatever god one may choose are legitimate. Such belief rejects absolute truth in favor of an irrationalism in which opposites can both be true. Miller denies that any system operates “according to fixed concepts and categories” and that all are controlled by either-or categories of logic. He rejects the idea that something is true or false, beautiful or ugly, good or evil (ibid., 7).

Consistently, many neopagans flatly reject the idea of *The Witches’ Bible*, fuming at the word *the*. Modern pagans remain anti-authoritarian, taking pride in being “the most flexible and adaptable of religions, . . . perfectly willing to throw out dogmas” (Adler, ix, 126, 135). A neopagan “creed,” therefore, is an oxymoron. They are noncreedal by definition.

Evaluation. Many criticisms of neopagan, polytheistic, and relativist (*see* TRUTH, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF) religion are treated elsewhere. See the articles DUALISM ; FINITE GODISM ; GNOSTICISM ; GOD, NATURE OF ; HINDUISM, VEDANTA ; MONISM ; NOSTRADAMUS ; PANTHEISM ; PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ; TRUTH, NATURE OF ; ZEN BUDDHISM . A few central points can be briefly discussed here:

Irrationality. Neopagans claim we should discard reason as normative in life. But if this is done, then opposites could both be true. This violates the fundamental laws of thought (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES). The person who claims that opposites can both be true does not really believe that the opposite of that statement also is true.

Relativism. Neopagans are relativists. But all truth cannot be relative. That very claim is presented as a nonrelative truth claim. There cannot be one and only one God (monotheism) and more than one god (polytheism) at the same time and in the same sense (*see* PLURALISM).

Pluralism. The pluralistic desire to embrace all forms of religion runs into the same problem. Everything cannot be true, including opposites. This violates the Law of Noncontradiction (*see* LOGIC ; FIRST PRINCIPLES). Either polytheism is true or monotheism is true. Both cannot be true. Neopagans cannot use either-or statements to affirm both-and thinking. Polytheists have to deny pluralism in order to affirm it, for they do not believe the opposite of pluralism is true. But if opposites are not true, pluralism is false.

Inclusivism. The claim that we must be inclusive, holding all religions to be true, is also self-defeating. It is a non-inclusive (exclusivist) claim to assert that only inclusivism is true and all exclusivism is false. While they claim to allow total diversity of expression, the neopagan practice is quite restrictive. The very existence of *secret* covens reveals the exclusivistic nature of the group. Some refer to wicca as *the* religion. Even proponents believe in a universal element in neopaganism, insisting on universality of content but not of form (ibid., 116, 145). The existence of an initiation rite is an earmark of exclusivism. Witches claim their rite is a way to

protect the institution from those who are insincere, evil, or who would give the craft a bad name (ibid., 98). But if they must protect their institution from evil or the insincere, there must be a genuine form to preserve. Adler claims that witchcraft was once the *universal religion*, which has been driven underground (ibid., 66). This is a claim to universality and implicit exclusivism to be *the* religion.

One controversy in which wiccans condemned a couple who were charging money for lessons in witchcraft, further shows exclusivity. Those who voiced disapproval insisted that “this violates Craft Law,” indicating that there is a universal craft law that defines right and wrong. If it does not, witchcraft can be done in any way one wishes. Even the “Principles of Wiccan Belief” adopted by the Council of American Witches on April 11–14, 1974, has a strong statement excluding the belief that Christianity is “the only way.” They frankly acknowledged this as part of “our animosity toward Christianity” (ibid., 103).

All-inclusive groups fail to realize that every truth claim is exclusive. If Christianity is true, then of necessity all non-Christian beliefs are false. If witchcraft is true, all nonwitchcraft beliefs are false. Neopaganism is just as exclusivistic as any other religion that claims to have discovered truth about reality.

Neopagans admit that “polytheism always includes monotheism. The reverse is not true” (ibid., viii). *Includes* is not the proper word here. Polytheism is willing to *absorb* or *swallow* monotheistic beliefs, but polytheism must be extremely exclusive of all orthodox forms of monotheism. These worldviews cannot share the same belief system. Under a cloak of inclusive language, neopaganism believes that the only way is to deny that there is an only way.

Failure to Explain Origins. Some pagan religions speak of origins, but few ask ultimate questions about them (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). There are gods acting, but how did they get us to this point? What caused it all to be? C. S. Lewis remarked that to bring God and nature into relation, also separates them. What makes and what is made are two, not one. “Thus the doctrine of Creation in one sense empties nature of divinity” (Lewis, 79–80). That destroys paganism.

Failure to Explain Unity. If the pagan realized that nature and God are distinct, that the one made the other; one ruled and the other obeyed, gods would not be worshiped, but rather the Creator God. C. S. Lewis observed, “The difference between believing in God and in many gods is not one of arithmetic. . . . God has no plural” (Lewis, 78, 82). Herein is revealed the depravity of polytheism, for they prefer to worship a god they make, rather than the God who made them. One neopagan concluded, “I realized it wasn’t so outrageous, and that we could choose what deities to follow. . . . [for] the element of Christianity that bothered [me] . . . was its requirement to be submissive to the deity.” He adds that his gods have human characteristics. They are flawed and so more approachable (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 December 1985, 2A). In biblical language this is a vivid confession of the fact that pagans “suppress the truth in unrighteousness . . . and change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man” (Rom. 1:18, 23).

Anticreedalism. Their protest notwithstanding, neopaganism has its own creeds and dogmas. Adler admits: “I’ve seen a lot of people in the Craft get hung up on fragments of ritual and myth. Some people accept these fragments as a dogma.” While protesting creeds, Adler lays down a set of “basic beliefs” she claims “most people in this book share” (Adler, 88, ix). She seems unaware that she is thereby defining a creed.

The creed she confesses is informative: “The world is holy. Nature is holy. The body is holy. Sexuality is holy. The mind is holy. The imagination is holy. You are holy. . . . Thou art Goddess. Thou art God. Divinity is immanent in all Nature. It is as much within you as without” (ibid.). There are several standard doctrines of neopaganism in this creed, including pantheism, polytheism, animism, self-deification, and, covertly, free sexual expression. In the creed they called “Principles of Wiccan Belief,” the Council of American Witches listed thirteen basic principles. These beliefs include moon worship, harmony with nature, the creative power in the universe manifest in male and female polarities, and sex as pleasure. Interestingly, they disavowed Devil worship and the belief that Christianity is “the only way” (ibid., 101–3).

Mission. Neopagans claim to seek no converts. “You don’t *become* a Pagan,” they insist; “You *are* a Pagan.” They claim that no one converts to Wicca. Yet they admit that people are drawn into paganism by “word of mouth, a discussion between friends, a lecture, a book, or an article.” Regardless of their purpose, what are these but means of evangelism. To claim that these people were always pagan and that they just “came home” (ibid., x, 14, 121) is like Christian missionaries denying that they evangelize, since those who believe have simply “come back to God.” Like anyone else who believes he or she has found truth or reality, the neopagans cannot resist the urge to propagate their faith. Why else does the experience of enlightenment lead new wiccans to proclaim with the zeal of a new convert: “I was turned on to the Goddess. It was the religion” (ibid., 116)?

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Neotheism.

Meaning of the Term. Proponents of this view variously describe themselves as holding the “openness of God” view or “free will theism,” by which they mean God is open to change and that humans have free will as opposed to any divine determinism of the future in advance. Nonetheless, “neotheism” appears to be a more appropriate, simpler, and more descriptive term. By their own confession, they see themselves as theists but have adopted some of the tenets of pantheism or process theology (*see* WHITEHEAD, A. N .).

Some Proponents of Neotheism. Proponents of neotheism include Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger (see Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God*). Others who have written in defense of the position include Greg Boyd, Stephen T. Davis, Peter Geach, Peter Lang, J. R. Lucas, Thomas V. Morris, Ronald Nash, A. N. Prior, Richard Purtill, Richard Swinburne, and Linda Zagzebski.

Some Basic Tenets of Neotheism. In their own words neotheists believe that “1. God not only created this world *ex nihilo* but can and at times does intervene unilaterally in earthly affairs. 2. God chose to create us with incompatibilist (libertarian) freedom—freedom over which he cannot exercise total control. 3. God so values freedom—the moral integrity of free creatures and a world in which such integrity is possible—that he does not normally override such freedom, even if he sees that it is producing undesirable results. 4. God always desires our highest good, both individually and corporately, and thus is affected by what happens in our lives. 5. God does not possess exhaustive knowledge of exactly how we will utilize our freedom, although he may very well at times be able to predict with great accuracy the choices we will freely make” (Pinnock, 76–77).

Neotheism can best be described by noting what it holds in common with traditional or classical theism (*see*) and also what it holds in distinction from it.

Tenets Held in Common with Theism. In accord with classical theism , neotheists believe that God is a personal, transcendent, all-powerful Being who created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF), and who can and has performed supernatural acts within it. God is in charge of the universe, but he has given human beings the power to make free choices.

Tenets Held in Distinction from Theism. By way of contrast with traditional theism, neotheism holds that God does not have an infallible knowledge of future free acts. In addition, he can and does change his mind in response to our prayers. Furthermore, God is not absolutely simple nor is he nontemporal or eternal. Thus, he is not able to completely control or predict exactly the way things will turn out.

An Evaluation of Neotheism. Positive Features. There are many positive dimensions of neotheism. These include all the things its adherents hold in common with classical theists.

Creation ex nihilo. One of the signature beliefs of classical theism, in contrast to other worldviews, is that God created the universe out of nothing. This clearly distinguishes the view from pantheism and places its adherents in the broad theistic camp.

Affirmation of miracles. Unlike pantheists and like theists, neotheists affirm miracles. This places them alongside traditional theism and in contrast to naturalism and current neoclassical theism known as process theology.

Emphasis on God's relatability with creation. Neotheists are deeply concerned, and rightly so, to preserve God's relatability with the world. A God who cannot hear and answer prayer is less than personal and is not the God described in the Bible.

Stress on Free Will. Along with classical theists, neotheists desire to defend free choice against forms of determinism that would eliminate genuine free will. This is commendable.

Along with this should be mentioned that neotheists are right in stressing that there are some things that are impossible for God to do, once he has decided to make free creatures. He cannot, for example, force them to freely choose something. Forced freedom is a contradiction in terms (see FREE WILL ; EVIL, PROBLEM OF).

Negative Critique. On the negative side of the ledger, neotheists are to be criticized in part for creating God in their own image (see Geisler, all). They have in fact bought too deeply into pantheism and are subject to many of the same criticisms.

Neotheism is unbiblical. Since Christian neotheists claim to accept the authority of the Bible, they can be judged by its standards (Geisler, chap. 4). And the Bible, in contrast to neotheism, clearly affirms that God cannot change. The self-existent I AM (Exod. 3:14) of Scripture says "I the Lord change not" (Mal. 3:6 ; Heb. 1:12 ; James 1:17). and who "knows the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10). God is "infinite in understanding" (Ps. 147:5) and, hence, "foreknows" the elect (Rom. 8:29 ; 2 Peter 1:2). He "is not a man that he should change his mind" (1 Sam. 15:29).

When the Bible speaks of God "repenting" it is only from our perspective, as when there is a repentance on the part of man (Jonah 3). For example, when one reverses course after peddling his bike against the wind, it was not the wind that changed. Even neotheists admit there are anthropomorphisms in the Bible.

Neotheism is incoherent. For example, neotheists believe God created the temporal world out of nothing. If so, then he must be prior to time and not temporal himself. But neotheists deny that God is a nontemporal Being. This is inconsistent, for if God created time, then he cannot himself be temporal, any more than God can be a creature if he created all creatures (see Geisler, chap. 6).

Likewise, neotheists admit God is a necessary Being yet they deny he has Pure Actuality. But here again they cannot have it both ways. For a necessary Being has no potentiality for

nonexistence. If it did, then it would not be necessary in its being. But if it has no potentiality not to exist, then its existence must be Pure Actuality (with no potentiality).

Finally, if God is a Necessary Being, then he cannot change in his Being. For a Necessary Being must necessarily be what it is; it cannot be other. However, neotheists claim God can change, that is, he is not immutable. But both these things held by neotheists cannot be true.

Neotheism undermines infallibility. Although many neotheists claim to believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, this is inconsistent with their basic beliefs. If God cannot know the future infallibly, then the predictions in the Bible that involve free acts (as most do) cannot be infallible. That is, some of them may be wrong. Further, we have no way of knowing which ones. Thus, neotheism undermines the infallibility of all biblical predictions (see PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

Neotheism destroys a biblical test for false prophets. The Bible declares (in Deut. 18:22) that a false prophecy is a test of a false prophet. But, as just noted, according to neotheism there may be false predictions in the Bible. If this is so, then a false prediction cannot be a test of a false prophet, since even God himself could make false predictions.

Neotheism undermines confidence in unconditional promises. If neotheism is correct, even God's unconditional promises cannot be trusted, including the answer of prayer (see Geisler, chaps. 5, 6). For as well-meaning as God may be in making the promise, if the fulfillment in any way depends on human free choices (which most do), then God may not be able to deliver on his promise.

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New Testament Apologetic Concerns. The historicity of the New Testament is based on the evidence that history can be known, the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts, and the reliability of the New Testament witnesses (NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF). The witnesses include the New Testament writers who were first-hand eyewitnesses and/or contemporaries of the events and other early secular sources.

These issues are part of a crucial link in the overall Christian apologetic (see APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF). Without a reliable New Testament, we have no objective, historical way to know what Jesus said or did. We cannot establish whether he was God, what he taught, or what his followers did and taught. There are two basic steps in the argument for the reliability of the New Testament documents. First, we must show that the manuscripts were written early enough and with enough attention to detail to be faithful records. A side issue, also important, is whether the New Testament books have been passed down accurately, so that we can know for sure what was written in the original copies or *autographs* . Second, we must know if the sources or witnesses used by the authors were reliable.

It may surprise those unfamiliar with the facts that there is more documentary evidence for the reliability of the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. Evidence will be surveyed in three articles:

NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF discusses in general what is and is not known about when the Gospels, Epistles, Acts, Hebrews, and The Revelation of John were first penned. Further information on dating is available in the articles ACTS, HISTORICITY OF ; BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; JESUS SEMINAR , and Q DOCUMENT .

The articles NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS , and NEW TESTAMENT, NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES cover more general concerns of the accurate transmission of documents.

New Testament, Dating of. When the New Testament was written is a significant issue as one assembles the overall apologetic argument for Christianity (see APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF). Confidence in the historical accuracy of these documents depends partly on whether they were written by eyewitnesses and contemporaries to the events described, as the Bible claims. Negative critical scholars (see BIBLE CRITICISM) strengthen their own views as they separate the actual events from the writings by as much time as possible. For this reason radical scholars argue for late first century, and if possible second century, dates for the autographs (see JESUS SEMINAR). By these dates they argue that the New Testament documents, especially the Gospels, contain mythology (see MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT). The writers created the events contained, rather than reported them.

Arguments for Early Dates. Luke and Acts. The Gospel of Luke was written by the same author as the Acts of the Apostles, who refers to Luke as the “former account” of “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). The destiny (“Theophilus”), style, and vocabulary of the two books betray a common author. Roman historian Colin Hemer has provided powerful evidence that Acts was written between A.D . 60 and 62 (see ACTS, HISTORICITY OF). This evidence includes these observations:

1. There is no mention in Acts of the crucial event of the fall of Jerusalem in 70.
2. There is no hint of the outbreak of the Jewish War in 66 or of serious deterioration of relations between Romans and Jews before that time.
3. There is no hint of the deterioration of Christian relations with Rome during the Neronian persecution of the late 60s.
4. There is no hint of the death of James at the hands of the Sanhedrin in ca. 62, which is recorded by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* (20.9.1.200).
5. The significance of Gallio’s judgment in Acts 18:14–17 may be seen as setting a precedent to legitimize Christian teaching under the umbrella of the tolerance extended to Judaism.
6. The prominence and authority of the Sadducees in Acts reflects a pre-70 date, before the collapse of their political cooperation with Rome.
7. The relatively sympathetic attitude in Acts to Pharisees (unlike that found even in Luke’s Gospel) does not fit well in the period of Pharisaic revival that led up to the council at Jamnia. At that time a new phase of conflict began with Christianity.
8. Acts seems to antedate the arrival of Peter in Rome and implies that Peter and John were alive at the time of the writing.

9. The prominence of “God-fearers” in the synagogues may point to a pre-70 date, after which there were few Gentile inquirers and converts to Judaism.
10. Luke gives insignificant details of the culture of an early, Julio-Claudian period.
11. Areas of controversy described presume that the Temple was still standing.
12. Adolf Harnack contended that Paul’s prophecy in 20:25 (cf. 20:38) may have been contradicted by later events. If so, the book must have appeared before those events.
13. Christian terminology used in Acts reflects an earlier period. Harnack points to use of *Iusous* and *Ho Kurios* , while *Ho Christos* always designates “the Messiah,” and is not a proper name for Jesus.
14. The confident tone of Acts seems unlikely during the Neronian persecution of Christians and the Jewish War with Rome during the late 60s.
15. The action ends very early in the 60s, yet the description in Acts 27 and 28 is written with a vivid immediacy. It is also an odd place to end the book if years have passed since the pre-62 events transpired.

For additional proofs of the accuracy and early date of Acts, see the article ACTS, HISTORICITY OF . If Acts was written in 62 or before, and Luke was written before Acts (say 60), then Luke was written less than thirty years of the death of Jesus. This is contemporary to the generation who witnessed the events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. This is precisely what Luke claims in the prologue to his Gospel:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. [Luke 1:1–4]

Luke presents the same information about who Jesus is, what he taught, and his death and resurrection as do the other Gospels. Thus, there is not reason to reject their historical accuracy either.

First Corinthians. It is widely accepted by critical and conservative scholars that 1 Corinthians was written by 55 or 56. This is less than a quarter century after the crucifixion in 33. Further, Paul speaks of more than 250 eyewitnesses to the resurrection who were still alive when he wrote (15:6). Specifically mentioned are the twelve apostles and James the brother of Jesus. Internal evidence is strong for this early date:

1. The book repeatedly claims to be written by Paul (1:1 , 12–17 ; 3:4 , 6 , 22 ; 16:21).

2. There are parallels with the book of Acts.
3. There is a ring of authenticity to the book from beginning to end.
4. Paul mentions 500 who had seen Christ, most of whom were still alive.
5. The contents harmonize with what has been learned about Corinth during that era.

There also is external evidence:

1. Clement of Rome refers to it in his own *Epistle to the Corinthians* (chap. 47).
2. *The Epistle of Barnabas* alludes to it (chap. 4).
3. *Shepherd of Hermas* mentions it (chap. 4).
4. There are nearly 600 quotations of 1 Corinthians in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian alone (Theissen, 201). It is one of the best attested books of any kind from the ancient world.

Along with 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Galatians are well attested and early. All three reveal a historical interest in the events of Jesus’ life and give facts that agree with the Gospels. Paul speaks of Jesus’ virgin birth (Gal. 4:4), sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21), death on the cross (1 Cor. 15:3 ; Gal. 3:13); resurrection on the third day (1 Cor. 15:4), and post-resurrection appearances (1 Cor. 15:5–8). He mentions the hundreds of eyewitnesses who could verify the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6). Paul rests the truth of Christianity on the historicity of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12–19). Paul also gives historical details about Jesus’ contemporaries, the apostles (1 Cor. 15:5–8), including his private encounters with Peter and the apostles (Gal. 1:18–2:14). Surrounding persons, places, and events of Christ’s birth were all historical. Luke goes to great pains to note that Jesus was born during the days of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1) and was baptized in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests (Luke 3:1–2).

Acceptance of Early Dates. There is a growing acceptance of earlier New Testament dates, even among some critical scholars. Two illustrate this point, former liberal William F. Albright and radical critic John A. T. Robinson

William F. Albright. Albright wrote, “We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D . 80, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today” (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands* , 136). Elsewhere Albright said, “In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century (very probably sometime between about A.D . 50 and 75)” (“Toward a More Conservative View,” 3).

This scholar went so far as to affirm that the evidence from the Qumran community shows that the concepts, terminology, and mind set of the Gospel of John is probably early first century (“Recent Discoveries in Palestine”). “Thanks to the Qumran discoveries, the New Testament proves to be in fact what it was formerly believed to be: the teaching of Christ and his immediate followers between cir. 25 and cir. 80 A.D.” (*From Stone Age to Christianity* , 23).

John A. T. Robinson. Known for his role in launching the “Death of God” movement, Robinson wrote a revolutionary book titled *Redating the New Testament* , in which he posited revised dates for the New Testament books that place them earlier than the most conservative scholars ever held. Robinson places Matthew at 40 to after 60, Mark at about 45 to 60, Luke at before 57 to after 60, and John at from before 40 to after 65. This would mean that one or two Gospels could have been written as early as seven years after the crucifixion. At the latest they were all composed within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. Assuming the basic integrity and reasonable accuracy of the writers, this would place the reliability of the New Testament documents beyond reasonable doubt.

Other Evidence. Early Citations. Of the four Gospels alone there are 19,368 citations by the church fathers from the late first century on. This includes 268 by Justin Martyr (100–165), 1038 by Irenaeus (active in the late second century), 1017 by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155–ca. 220), 9231 by Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254), 3822 by Tertullian (ca. 160s–ca. 220), 734 by Hippolytus (d. ca. 236), and 3258 by Eusebius (ca. 265–ca. 339; Geisler, 431). Earlier, Clement of Rome cited Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians in 95 to 97. Ignatius referred to six Pauline Epistles in about 110, and between 110 and 150 Polycarp quoted from all four Gospels, Acts, and most of Paul’s Epistles. Shepherd of Hermas (115–140) cited Matthew, Mark, Acts, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Didache (120–150) referred to Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Papias, companion of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, quoted John. This argues powerfully that the Gospels were in existence before the end of the first century, while some eyewitnesses (including John) were still alive.

Early Greek Manuscripts. The earliest undisputed manuscript of a New Testament book is the John Rylands papyri (P52), dated from 117 to 138. This fragment of John’s Gospel survives from within a generation of composition. Since the book was composed in Asia Minor and this fragment was found in Egypt, some circulation time is demanded, surely placing composition of John within the first century. Whole books (Bodmer Papyri) are available from 200. Most of the New Testament, including all the Gospels, is available in the Chester Beatty Papyri manuscript from 150 years after the New Testament was finished (ca. 250). No other book from the ancient world has as small a time gap between composition and earliest manuscript copies as the New Testament (*see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS).

Jose O’Callahan , a Spanish Jesuit paleographer, made headlines around the world on March 18, 1972, when he identified a manuscript fragment from Qumran (*see* DEAD SEA SCROLLS) as a piece of the Gospel of Mark. The piece was from Cave 7. Fragments from this cave had previously been dated between 50 B.C . and A.D . 50, hardly within the time frame established for New Testament writings. Using the accepted methods of papyrology and paleography, O’Callahan compared sequences of letters with existing documents and eventually identified

nine fragments as belonging to one Gospel, Acts, and a few Epistles. Some of these were dated slightly later than 50, but still extremely early:

text	fragment	approx. date
Mark 4:28	7Q6	A.D . 50
Mark 6:48	7Q15	A.D . ?
Mark 6:52 , 53	7Q5	A.D . 50
Mark 12:17	7Q7	A.D . 50
Acts 27:38	7Q6	A.D . 60 +
Rom. 55:11 , 12	7Q9	A.D . 70 +
1 Tim. 3:16 ; 4:1–3	7Q4	A.D . 70 +
2 Peter 1:15	7Q10	A.D . 70 +
James 1:23 , 24	7Q8	A.D . 70 +

Conclusion. Both friends and critics acknowledge that, if valid, O’Callahan’s conclusions will revolutionize New Testament theories. If even some of these fragments are from the New Testament, the implications for Christian apologetics are enormous. Mark and/or Acts must have been written within the lifetimes of the apostles and contemporaries of the events. There would be no time for mythological embellishment of the records (*see* MYTHOLOGY AND NEW TESTAMENT). They must be accepted as historical. Mark could be shown to be an early Gospel. There would hardly be time for a predecessor series of Q manuscripts (*see* Q DOCUMENT). And since these manuscripts are not originals but copies, parts of the New Testament would be shown to have been copied and disseminated during the lives of the writers. No first-century date allows time for myths or legends to creep into the stories about Jesus. Legend development takes at least two full generations, according to A. N. Sherwin-White (see Sherwin-White, 189). Physical remoteness from the actual events also is helpful. Neither are available here. The thought is utterly ridiculous with a ca. 50 or earlier Mark. Even putting aside O’Callahan’s controversial claims, the cumulative evidence places the New Testament within the first century and the lives of eyewitnesses.

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New Testament, Historicity of. Thomas Paine, one of America’s founding fathers and author of *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason*, said of Jesus Christ, “There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even such a man” (Paine, 234). In his essay *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Bertrand Russell wrote, “Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we know nothing about him” (Russell, 16). A recent book by G. A. Wells concludes that even if there was a historical Jesus, he is not the Christ of the New Testament.

Yet Christianity depends entirely on the historical person of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15). Since the New Testament is the primary source of information about the words and works of Christ, if it is not accurate then we do not possess a first-hand presentation of Jesus’ claims,

character, and credentials. The historical integrity of the New Testament is crucial to Christian apologetics.

Evidence for the historicity of the New Testament documents presupposes the knowability of history in general and the believability of miracle history in particular. There are those who believe no history can be objectively known. Their position is answered in the article *History, Objectivity of*. Such a radical skepticism eliminates the possibility of knowing anything about the past. Immediately, all university history and classical departments are swept away. No sources about past events could be trusted. By analogy such skepticism would eliminate all historical science, such as historical geology (paleontology), archaeology, and forensic science (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF). They too depend on examining and interpreting remains from the past.

Since everything not occurring now is history, such a view would eliminate all eyewitness testimony. Even living witnesses can only testify to what they saw at a separate point in reality. On the other hand, if their testimony can be accepted while they are living, the valid records they leave behind are just as credible.

Some critics object only to miracle history. This is discussed in detail in the article *MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST*. This view clearly begs the question by assuming that no miracle story is credible in advance of looking at the evidence. No one looking for the objective truth should assume that a report of an unusual event is not to be trusted before even considering the matter. Both in science (*see* BIG BANG ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ; EVOLUTION, COSMIC) and in history the evidence has shown that radical singularities have occurred (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ; VIRGIN BIRTH).

The first step in establishing the historicity of the New Testament is to show that the New Testament documents have been accurately transmitted from the time of their original composition. This is demonstrated in the article *NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS*.

The second step is to show that they were written by reliable eyewitnesses or contemporaries of the events. For this, see *NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF*. Contrary to critics, there is more evidence for the historicity of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ than for any other event from the ancient world (*see* *NEW TESTAMENT, NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES*).

To reject the historicity of the New Testament is to reject all history. But we cannot reject all history without engaging in some history of our own. The statement that “The past is not objectively knowable” is itself an objective statement about the past. Hence, the position against the knowability of history slits its own throat (*see* *HISTORY, OBJECTIVITY OF*).

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New Testament Manuscripts. The fidelity of the New Testament text is an important link in the apologetic for Christianity (see APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF), and there is overwhelming evidence in support of the reliability of the New Testament text.

The Story of the Manuscripts. Testimony to the fidelity of the New Testament text comes primarily from three sources: Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, and quotations of Scripture by Christian writers.

Greek manuscripts are the most important and are found in four classes, *papyri*, *uncials*, *minuscules*, and *lectionaries*. These designations can be rather confusing to follow, for *papyri* refers to the woven material on which the writing was made. *Uncials* and *minuscules* refer to the way letters were formed in the writing style of the manuscript, and *lectionaries* are collections of Scripture texts bound for use in worship. What is confusing is that *papyri* manuscripts are written with the rounded, cursive capital letters of uncial script. More than 200 *lectionaries* were written in uncial letters. Still, scholars try to catalog their finds according to the most distinguishing characteristic of each. A *papyrus* comes from a particular era and region. The *papyri* Greek manuscripts tend to be compared with one another and used extensively in comparing the Greek used in the text. Those manuscripts placed in the categories of *uncials* and *minuscules* are differentiated by the style of writing and by being written on vellum or parchment. So, for example, an uncial *papyri* manuscript is in the *papyri* category; an uncial vellum manuscript is called an *uncial*. Minuscule script is small, plain, cursive and did not develop until medieval

times. So there are far more minuscule manuscripts, but they are later, between the ninth and fifteenth centuries.

Another term frequently used in reference to ancient and medieval manuscripts is *codex*. While Jewish worship has traditionally preferred Scriptures bound as scrolls, Christians in Greek culture mostly used the bound book form that was gaining acceptance in the first century. Therefore, most Scripture manuscripts, even early ones, are bound codices.

More Manuscripts. Catalogued Greek texts include eighty-eight *papyri* manuscripts, 274 uncial manuscripts, and 245 uncial *lectionaries*. Those early uncial manuscript witnesses are extremely valuable in establishing the original text of the New Testament. The other 2795 manuscripts and 1964 *lectionaries* are minuscule.

This is an astounding number and variety. It is not uncommon for classics from antiquity to survive in only a handful of manuscript copies. According to F. F. Bruce, nine or ten good copies of Julius Caesar's *Gallic War* survive, twenty copies of Livy's *Roman History*, two copies of Tacitus' *Annals*, and eight manuscripts of Thucydides' *History* (Bruce, 16). The most documented ancient secular work is Homer's *Iliad*, surviving in 643 manuscript copies. Counting Greek copies alone, the New Testament text is preserved in some 5686 partial and complete manuscript portions that were copied by hand from the second (possibly even the first) through the fifteenth centuries (see Geisler, chap. 26).

In addition to the Greek manuscripts there are numerous translations from the Greek, not to mention quotations of the New Testament. Counting major early translations in Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Latin, and other languages, there are 9000 copies of the New Testament. This makes a total of over 14,000 copies of the New Testament. What is more, if we compile the 36,289 quotations by the early church Fathers of the second to fourth centuries we can reconstruct the entire New Testament minus 11 verses.

Earlier Manuscripts. One mark of a good manuscript is its age. Generally, the older the copy, the closer to the original composition and the fewer copyist errors. Most ancient books survive in manuscripts that were copied about 1000 years after they were composed. It is rare to have, as the *Odyssey* does, a copy made only 500 years after the original. Most of the New Testament is preserved in manuscripts less than two hundred years from the original (P45, P46, P47), some books of the New Testament dating from little over one hundred years after their composition (P66), and one fragment (P52) comes within a generation of the first century. The New Testament, by contrast, survives in complete books from a little over 100 years after the New Testament was completed. Fragments are available from only decades later. One fragment, the John Ryland *papyri* (P52), is dated 117–138. See the article NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF.

Many critics reject the identifications, arguing that they are too fragmentary for certain identification. O'Callahan, however, is a respected paleographer and he defends his work as consistent with that by which other ancient fragments are identified. Critics have not come up with viable alternate writings from which the fragments could have come without changing the usual procedures. If they are New Testament fragments, these early dates would revolutionize New Testament critical studies.

More Accurate Manuscripts. Muslims make a point that the *Qur'an* has been accurately preserved (see QUR'AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF). But while the *Qur'an* is a *medieval book* from the seventh century, the New Testament is the most accurately copied book from the *ancient world*. Of course, the important factor is not the precise accuracy in the copies but whether the original is the Word of God (see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR).

There is widespread misunderstanding among critics about the “errors” in the biblical manuscripts. Some have estimated there are about 200,000 of them. First of all, these are not “errors” but variant readings, the vast majority of which are strictly grammatical. Second, these readings are spread throughout more than 5300 manuscripts, so that a variant spelling of one letter of one word in one verse in 2000 manuscripts is counted as 2000 “errors.” Textual scholars Westcott and Hort estimated that only one in sixty of these variants has significance. This would leave a text 98.33 percent pure. Philip Schaff calculated that, of the 150,000 variants known in his day, only 400 changed the meaning of the passage, only fifty were of real significance, and *not even one* affected “an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching” (Schaff, 177).

Most other ancient books are not nearly so well authenticated. New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger estimated that the *Mahabharata* of Hinduism is copied with only about 90 percent accuracy and Homer’s *Iliad* with about 95 percent. By comparison, he estimated the New Testament is about 99.5 percent accurate (ibid.).

Islamic scholars recognize the textual scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon as an authority on ancient manuscripts. Yet Kenyon concluded that:

The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world. [55]

The Manuscript Witnesses. *Manuscripts on Papyrus.* The date of the earliest alleged New Testament manuscripts is disputed. One known as the “Magdalen” fragment contains a reference to Mary Magdalen (in Matt. 26). This bit of papyrus is found in the Oxford University library. The German papyrus expert, Carsten Thiede, argued that it could be an eyewitness account of Jesus. Other experts date it in the second century or later (see Stranton, *Gospel Truth?*).

Other Gospel fragments are dated as early as A.D. 50. These were originally found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (see). Jose O’Callahan, a Spanish Jesuit paleographer, identified a manuscript fragment from Qumran (see DEAD SEA SCROLLS) as the earliest known piece of the Gospel of Mark. Fragments from Cave 7 had previously been dated between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50 and listed under “not identified” and classified as “Biblical Texts?” The nine fragments from Qumran are listed as follows:

Mark 4:28	7Q6?	A.D. 50
Mark 6:48	7Q15	A.D. ?
Mark 6:52, 53	7Q5	A.D. 50

Mark 12:17	7Q7	A.D. 50
Acts 27:38	7Q6?	A.D. 60
Romans 5:11, 12	7Q9	A.D. 70+
1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1-3	7Q4	A.D. 70+
2 Peter 1:15	7Q10	A.D. 70+
James 1:23, 24	7Q8	A.D. 70+

O’Callahan’s critics object to his identification and have offered other possible sources for them. The fragmentary nature of the manuscript makes it difficult to be dogmatic about their true identification (see O’CALLAHAN, JOSE).

Eighty-eight undisputed papyri manuscripts have so far been found, of which the following are the most important representatives. The papyri witness to the text is invaluable, because it comes from within the first 200 years after the New Testament was written. Papyri manuscripts or fragments are identified with a “P,” followed by a superscript number of 1 through 88.

John Rylands Fragment. The John Rylands Fragment (P52), a two-by-three-inch papyrus fragment from a codex, is the earliest undisputed copy of a portion of the New Testament. It dates from the first half of the second century, probably 117–38. Adolf Deissmann argues that it may be even older (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 39). The papyrus piece, written on both sides, contains portions of five verses from the Gospel of John (18:31–33, 37–38). Because it was found in Egypt, far from Asia Minor where John by tradition was written, this portion tends to confirm that the Gospel was written before the end of the first century. The fragment belongs to the John Rylands Library at Manchester, England.

Bodmer Papyri. The most important discovery of New Testament papyri since the Chester Beatty manuscripts was the acquisition of the Bodmer Collection by the Library of World Literature at Culagny, near Geneva, Switzerland. This also has three sections, designated P66, P72, P75. Dating from about 200 or earlier, P66, contains 104 leaves of John 1:1–6:11; 6:35b–14:26; and fragments of forty other pages from John 14–21 (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 40). P72 is the earliest known copy of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter. Also included is a hymn fragment, Psalm 33, and Psalm 34, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter, plus several apocryphal books: *The Nativity of Mary*, *Correspondence of Paul to the Corinthians*, *Eleventh Ode of Solomon*, *Melito’s Homily on the Passover*, and *The Apology of Phileas*. This third-century papyrus was apparently a private codex measuring six by five inches, prepared by some four scribes (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 40–41). P75 is a codex of 102 pages (originally 144), measuring ten by five and one-third inches. It contains most of Luke and John in clear, carefully printed uncials, and is dated between 175 and 225. It is the earliest known copy of Luke (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 42).

Chester Beatty Papyri. This papyrus dates from about 250 or later. Thirty of the leaves are owned by the University of Michigan. An important collection of New Testament papyri (P45,

P46, P47), now resides in the Beatty Museum near Dublin. The Chester Beatty Papyri consist of three codices, containing most of the New Testament. P45 is made up of pieces of thirty leaves of a papyrus codex: two from Matthew, six from Mark, seven from Luke, two from John, and thirteen from Acts. The original codex consisted of some 220 leaves, measuring ten by eight inches each. Several other small fragments of Matthew from those papyri have appeared in a collection at Vienna (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 37). P46 consists of eighty-six slightly mutilated leaves (eleven by six inches), from an original that contained 104 pages of Paul's Epistles, including Romans, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians. Portions of Romans and 1 Thessalonians, and all of 2 Thessalonians, are missing from the manuscripts, which were arranged in descending order according to size. Like P45, P46 dates from about 250. P47 is ten slightly mutilated leaves of the book of Revelation, measuring nine by five inches. Of the original thirty-two leaves, only the middle portion, 9:10–17:2, remains.

Uncials on Vellum and Parchment. The most important manuscripts of the New Testament are generally considered to be the uncial codices that date from the fourth and following centuries. These appeared almost immediately following the conversion of Constantine and the authorization at the Council of Nicea (325) to freely copy the Bible.

There are 362 uncial manuscripts of sections of the New Testament, of which some of the more important are noted below, and 245 uncial lectionaries. The most important of the uncial manuscripts are A, B, C, and Aleph, which were not available to the King James translators. The only good Greek uncial manuscript available in 1611 was D, and it was used only slightly in the preparation of the King James Version. That fact alone indicated the need for the Revised Version, based on earlier and better manuscripts.

Codex Vaticanus. The Codex Vaticanus (designated B) is perhaps the oldest uncial on parchment or vellum (ca. 325–350), and one of the most important witnesses to the text of the New Testament. It was probably written by the middle of the fourth century, but it was not known to textual scholars until after 1475, when it was catalogued in the Vatican Library. For the next 400 years scholars were prohibited from studying it. A complete photographic facsimile was made in 1889–90, and another of the New Testament in 1904.

It includes most of the Old Testament Septuagint and the New Testament in Greek. Missing are 1 Timothy through Philemon, Hebrews 9:14 to the end of the New Testament, and the General Epistles. The Apocrypha is included with the exceptions of *1 Maccabees*, *2 Maccabees*, and the *Prayer of Manasse*. Also missing is Genesis 1:1–46:28, 2 Kings 2:5–7 and 10–13, and Psalms 106:27–138:6. Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11 were purposely omitted from the text.

This codex was written in small and delicate uncials on fine vellum. It contains 759 leaves measuring ten inches square—617 in the Old Testament and 142 in the New. Codex Vaticanus is owned by the Roman Catholic Church, and is housed in the Vatican Library, Vatican City.

Codex Sinaiticus. Codex Sinaiticus or *Aleph*, a fourth-century Greek manuscript, is generally considered to be the most important witness to the text because of its antiquity, accuracy, and lack of omissions.

The story of the discovery of *Aleph* is one of the most fascinating in textual history. It was found in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai by Count Lobegott Friedrich Constantine von Tischendorf (1815–1874). On his first visit (1844), he discovered forty-three leaves of vellum, containing 1 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Esther, in a basket of scraps that the monks were using to light their fires. He secured this Septuagint text and took it to the University Library at Leipzig, Germany. It remains there, known as the Codex Frederico-Augustanus. Tischendorf's second visit in 1853 proved unfruitful, but in 1859, just as he was about to return home empty-handed, the monastery steward showed him an almost complete copy of the Scriptures and some other books.

This manuscript contains over half of the Septuagint, and all of the New Testament except Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11. The Apocrypha, with the addition of the *Epistle of Barnabas* and a large portion of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, are also included.

This codex was written in large, clear Greek uncials on 364 pages (plus the forty-three at Leipzig), measuring thirteen by fourteen inches. In 1933 the British government purchased it for the British Museum. In 1938 it was published in a volume titled *Scribes and Correctors of Codex Sinaiticus* (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 42–45).

Codex Alexandrinus. Codex Alexandrinus (A) is a well-preserved manuscript that ranks second only to Sinaiticus as representative of the New Testament text. Though some have dated this manuscript in the late fourth century (Kenyon, 129), it is probably the work of fifth-century scribes of Alexandria. In 1621 it was taken to Constantinople by Patriarch Cyril Lucar. Lucar gave it to Thomas Roe, English ambassador to Turkey in 1624, to present to King James I. James died before it reached England, and the manuscript was given to Charles I in 1627, too late for use in the King James Version of 1611. In 1757, George II presented it to the National Library of the British Museum.

It contains the whole Old Testament, except for several mutilations in Genesis 14–16; 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 12–14, and Psalms 49:19–79:10. Only Matthew 1:1–25:6; John 6:50–8:52 and 2 Corinthians 4:13–12:6 are missing from the New Testament. The manuscript also contains 1 and 2 Clement and the Psalms of Solomon, with some parts missing.

The manuscript contains 773 ten-by-twelve leaves, 639 of the Old Testament and 134 of the New. The large square uncials are written on very thin vellum. Codex Alexandrinus is in the possession of the National Library of the British Museum. The text varies in quality (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 47, 49).

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus. The Ephraemi Rescriptus Codex (C) probably originated in Alexandria, Egypt, in about 345. It was brought to Italy by John Lascaris at about 1500 and later was purchased by Pietro Strozzi. Catherine de Medici, the Italian political power broker and wife

and mother of French kings, acquired it about 1533. At her death, the manuscript was placed in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, where it remains.

Most of the Old Testament is missing from this codex, except parts of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and two apocryphal books, *Wisdom of Solomon*, and *Ecclesiasticus*. The New Testament lacks 2 Thessalonians, 2 John, and parts of other books (Scrivener, 1:121). The manuscript is a *palimpsest*. Because paper was so valuable, early manuscripts were often rubbed out and the material reused. With care, scholars can sometimes discern both the original text and the *rescriptus* or rewritten text. So a palimpsest can have added value.

These leaves originally contained the Old and New Testaments, but they were erased by Ephraem, who wrote his sermons on the leaves. By chemical reactivation, Tischendorf was able to decipher the almost invisible writing (Lyon, 266–72). Only 209 leaves survive: sixty-four from the Old and 145 (of an original 238) from the New Testament. The pages are nine by twelve inches, with one wide column of forty to forty-six lines (usually forty-one). C mixes all the major textual types, agreeing frequently with the inferior Byzantine family.

Codex Bezae. Written between 450 and 550, Codex Bezae (also called Codex Cantabrigiensis or D) is the oldest known bilingual manuscript of the New Testament. It was written in Greek and Latin and may have originated in southern Gaul (France) or northern Italy. It was found in 1562 by Théodore de Bèze (Beza), the French theologian, at St. Irenaeus Monastery, Lyons, France. In 1581 Beza gave it to Cambridge University.

D contains the four Gospels, Acts, and 3 John 11–15, with variations from other manuscripts indicated. Missing from the Greek text are sections of Matthew 1, 6–9, and 27; John 1–3, and Acts 8–10, 21, and 22–28. In Latin, missing sections are from Matthew 1, 6–8, 26–27; Acts 8–10, 20–21; and 22–28, and 1 John 1–3. The 406 leaves are eight by ten inches, with one column of thirty-three lines to each page. The manuscript is located in the Cambridge University Library. It is remarkable for some unusual variations from the normal New Testament text (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 50).

Codex Claromontanus. Codex Claromontanus is a ca. 550 text that is designated D2 or Dp2. The latter stands for Dpaul because it supplements D (Codex Bezae) for the Pauline Epistles. It contains much of the New Testament missing in Codex Bezae. Like D, D2 is a bilingual manuscript, and it contains 533 pages, seven by nine inches. D2 seems to have originated in Italy or Sardinia (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 207–8; Souter, 28).

Claromontanus was named after a monastery at Clermont, France, where it was found by Beza. After Beza's death, the codex was owned by several private individuals. Finally, Louis XIV purchased it for the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris in 1656. Tischendorf fully edited it in 1852.

It contains all of Paul's Epistles and Hebrews, although verses from Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 14 are missing in Greek, and verses from 1 Corinthians 14 and Hebrews 13 are missing in the Latin. It was artistically written in a single column of twenty-one lines on thin,

high quality vellum. The Greek is good, but the Latin is grammatically inferior in some places. The manuscript is now located in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Other Codices. Codex Basilensis (E) is an eighth-century manuscript of the Gospels on 318 leaves. It is in the library of the University of Basel, Switzerland.

Codex Laudianus (E2 or Ea) dates from the late sixth or early seventh century. It was edited by Tischendorf in 1870. E2 contains Acts in Greek and Latin, arranged in very short lines of one to three words. It is the earliest known manuscript containing Acts 8:37.

Codex Sangermanensis (E3 or Ep) is a ninth-century copy of D2 in Greek and Latin, so it has no independent value for the textual critic.

Codex Boreelianus (F) contains the four Gospels, dates from the ninth century, and is located at Utrecht.

Codex Augiensis (F2 or Fp) is a ninth-century manuscript of Paul's Epistles in Greek and Latin (with large omissions), but Hebrews is in Latin only. It is now at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Also called Codex Harleianus, Codex Wolfii A (G) dates to the tenth century. It contains the four Gospels with many omissions.

Dating from the ninth century, Codex Boernerianus (G3 or Gp) contains Paul's Epistles in Greek with a literal Latin translation between the lines. Evidently it once included a copy of the apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans. It is possibly of Irish origin.

Codex Wolfii B (H) contains the four Gospels, but with many omissions. It dates from the ninth or tenth century and now resides in the Public Library, Hamburg.

Codex Mutinensis (H2 or Ha) is a ninth-century copy of Acts (seven chapters missing), now in the Grand Ducal Library at Modena, Italy. The text is Byzantine.

Codex Coislinianus (H3 or Hp) is an important codex of Paul's Epistles, dating from the sixth century. The forty-three leaves known to exist today are divided among the libraries at Paris, Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Turin, and Mount Athos.

Codex Washingtonianus II (I) is a manuscript of the Pauline Epistles in the Freer Collection at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. There are eighty-four surviving leaves of the original 210. It dates from the fifth or sixth century and has portions of Hebrews and all of Paul's letters, except Romans.

Codex Cyprius (K) is a ninth- or tenth-century complete copy of the four Gospels.

Codex Mosquensis (K2 or Kap) is a ninth- or tenth-century codex of Acts, the General Epistles, and Pauline Epistles with Hebrews.

Codex Regius (L) is an eighth-century codex of the Gospels. Its unique feature is the presence of two endings to the Gospel of Mark. The first is the shorter ending, reading as follows: "But they [the women] reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation" (Mark 16:8 RSV). The second ending is the traditional verses 9–20 .

Codex Angelicus (L2 or Lap) is a ninth-century copy of Acts, the General Epistles, and the Pauline Epistles.

Codex Pampianus (M) contains the four Gospels. It dates from the ninth century.

Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus (N), written in the sixth century in silver letters on purple vellum, is a deluxe parchment of the Gospels. Of the 462 original leaves, some 230 known leaves are scattered around the world.

Codex Sinopensis (O) is another sixth-century deluxe edition of the Gospels, written with gold ink on purple vellum. It is now in Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. It contains forty-three leaves of Matthew 13–24 .

Codex Porphyrianus (P2 or Papr) is one of the few uncial manuscripts containing the book of Revelation. It also contains Acts and the General and Pauline Epistles, with omissions. It is now in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Now in the British Museum, Codex Nitriensis (R) is a palimpsest of Luke from the sixth century, over which an eighth- or ninth-century treatise of Severus of Antioch was written. It also contains four thousand lines of Homer's *Iliad*. The text is Western.

Codex Vaticanus 354 (S) is one of the earliest self-dated manuscripts of the Gospels and was prepared in 949. It resides in the Vatican Library.

Codex Borgianus (T) is a valuable fifth-century fragment of Luke 22–23 and John 6–8 . The text closely resembles that of Codex Vaticanus.

Now in Moscow, Codex Mosquensis (V) is a nearly complete copy of the four Gospels from the eighth or ninth century. The manuscript is in uncials to John 8:39 , where it shifts to thirteenth-century minuscules.

Codex Washingtonianus I (W) dates from the fourth or early fifth century. Professor H. A. Sanders, of the University of Michigan, edited it between 1910 and 1918. The manuscript contains Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Psalms, the Gospels, Hebrews, and portions of all the Pauline Epistles except Romans. Some psalms are missing, along with text from Deuteronomy 5–6 , Joshua 3–4 , Mark 15 , John 14–16 , and some Epistles. The Gospels manuscript has 187 leaves, 374 pages of good vellum. Each page is five and five-sixths by eight inches and has one

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column of thirty lines, consisting of small but clearly written, slanting uncials. The Gospels include Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark, in that order. The long ending of Mark (16:9–20) is attached, with a most noteworthy insertion after 16:14 : "And they excused themselves, saying, 'This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal thy righteousness now'— thus they spoke of Christ. And Christ replied to them, 'The term of years for Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven' " (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 54; *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 122–28). The manuscript of Deuteronomy and Joshua has 102 leaves (ten by twelve inches), with two columns on each thick vellum page. The mutilated manuscript of Psalms has portions of 107 leaves that originally measured eleven by fourteen inches, written in single columns. This codex is located in the Smithsonian Institution. The text is mysteriously mixed, as though it were compiled from manuscripts representing different textual traditions or families.

Codex Dubliensis (Z [*Zeta*]) is a palimpsest of 299 verses from Matthew. It dates from the fifth or sixth century.

Codex Sangallensis (*Delta*) is a ninth-century Greek-Latin interlinear manuscript of the four Gospels (John 19:17–35 missing).

Codex Koridethi (*Theta*) is a ninth-century copy of the Gospels. The text of John differs in tradition from that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is akin to the third- or fourth-century text used by Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea.

Codex Tischendorfianus III (*Lambda*) contains the text of Luke and John. The ninth-century manuscript is located at Oxford University.

Codex Zacynthius (*Xi*) is a twelfth- or thirteenth-century palimpsest preserving most of Luke 1:1–11:33 . It is the earliest known New Testament manuscript with a marginal commentary.

Codex Petropolitanus (*Pi*) is an almost complete ninth-century copy of the Gospels.

Codex Rossanensis (*Sigma*) is a sixth-century copy of Matthew and Mark. It is the earliest known Bible adorned with watercolor pictures.

Codex Beratinus (*Phi*) is a sixth-century deluxe edition of Matthew and Mark, with large gaps.

Codex Athous Laurae (*Psi*) is an eighth- or ninth-century manuscript containing the Gospels from Mark 9 on, Acts, the General Epistles, Pauline Epistles, and Hebrews. It carries the same unusual ending of Mark as Codex Regius.

Codex Athous Dionysiou (*Omega*) dates from the eighth or ninth century and is a virtually complete copy of the four Gospels. It is one of the oldest examples of the textual tradition known as the Byzantine text.

Minuscule Manuscripts. As the dates from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries would indicate, most minuscule manuscripts do not possess the high quality of the earlier uncials. However, that is not always the case. Some minuscules are late copies of good early texts. Their main importance rests in the comparison they provide for the textual families. There are 2795 minuscule New Testament manuscripts and 1964 minuscule lectionaries. They are referred to by manuscript number.

The Alexandrian family is represented by manuscript 33, dating from the ninth or possibly the tenth century. It contains the entire New Testament except for Revelation and is now in the possession of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Although it is predominantly Alexandrian text-type, it shows traces of Byzantine in Acts and the Pauline Epistles.

Some scholars find a Caesarean family text-type in some manuscripts of the Gospels. It harks back to the Caesarean text used in the third and fourth centuries. An Italian subfamily of Caesarean is represented by about a dozen manuscripts known as family 13. These manuscripts were copied between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. One of their interesting characteristics is that they contain the section about the adulterous woman (John 7:53–8:11) following Luke 21:38 instead of after John 7:52 .

Some individual minuscules include:

Manuscript 61 consists of the entire New Testament, dating from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It was the first manuscript found containing 1 John 5:7 , the single basis by which Erasmus was compelled to insert that doubtful passage into his Greek New Testament in 1516.

Manuscript 69 contains the entire New Testament and dates from the fifteenth century. It is an important member of family 13.

Manuscript 81 was written in 1044 and is one of the most important of all minuscules. Its text in Acts agrees frequently with the Alexandrian text-type.

Manuscript 157 is a twelfth-century codex of the Gospels following the Caesarean type. An editorial inscription or colophon, found in this and a number of other manuscripts, states that they were copied and corrected “from ancient manuscripts at Jerusalem.” For more about the “Jerusalem colophon,” see *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 [1913]: 78ff., 242ff., 359ff.).

Manuscript 565 is one of the most beautiful of all known manuscripts. It has all the Gospels on purple vellum in gold letters.

Manuscript 614 is a thirteenth-century copy of Acts and the Epistles, with many pre-Byzantine readings.

Manuscript 700 is an eleventh- or twelfth-century codex remarkable for its divergent readings. It has 2724 deviations from the Received Text and 270 not found in any other manuscript.

Manuscript 892 is a ninth- or tenth-century codex of the Gospels with remarkable readings of an early (Alexandrian) type.

Manuscript 1739 is a very important codex from the tenth century that is based directly on a fourth-century Alexandrian type of manuscript. It has marginal notes from the writings of Irenaeus, Clement , Origen , Eusebius , and Basil.

Manuscript 2053 is a thirteenth-century copy of Revelation. It is one of the best sources for the text of the Apocalypse.

Conclusion. Whereas there are many variant readings in New Testament manuscripts, there are a multitude of manuscripts available for comparison and correlation of those readings in order to arrive at the correct one. Through intensive comparative study of the readings in 5686 Greek manuscripts, scholars have carefully weeded out errors and additions from “helpful” copyists and discerned which early manuscripts are most accurate. Textual issues remain, but today’s Bible reader, and especially those who read a recently edited Greek New Testament from the United Bible Society, can be confident that the text is extremely close to the autographs.

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New Testament, Non-Christian Sources. See JESUS, NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES .

Newman, John Paul. John Paul Newman (1801–1890) was born in London and ordained to the Church of England priesthood in 1825. He was the most famous English convert to Roman Catholicism and one of the great Catholic apologists of modern times. He came to Christ as a teen and was nurtured in the most Calvinistic segment of Anglicanism. He attended Oxford and remained as a fellow in Oriel College. Repelled by the theological liberalism he saw rising in his church, he launched the Oxford or Tractarian Movement. When he realized the Anglican Church as a whole would not embrace it, he took refuge in Roman Catholicism (1845), which he believed offered the best hope for overcoming the liberal onslaught. He rose to the ecclesiastical rank of cardinal.

Newman produced several works with apologetic themes. While an Anglican he wrote *Essays on Miracles* and *The Ariens of the Fourth Century* . In his *University Sermons* , preached between 1826 and 1843, he developed his views on faith and reason. In *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) he explained his reasons for believing the Roman Church was the true successor of the early church. His *Idea of a University* was penned in 1852. In 1864, in response to the attacks of Charles Kingsley, he composed his *Apologia pro vita sua* . His last major work was *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870).

Newman's Apologetic Views. In *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* , Newman argued, against objections by liberals to all dogmatic religion, that religious assent is real. It is not a passing notion. Speculative theology, as practiced by the liberals, was about logic and abstractions, but the believer adheres with a whole heart to the living God (Dulles, 185).

Newman then addressed the problem of the degree of conviction demanded by faith and the amount of certainty on which it stands (see LESSING, GOTTHOLD). Newman did not believe it possible to amass a set of philosophical or historical arguments that would demonstrate Christianity beyond all possible argument. He felt that purely objective arguments would not

bring true religious conviction. Because of the subjective element in all religious inquiry, Newman preferred what has been called an "existential dialect of conscience" (ibid., 186). In this he followed Joseph Butler 's use of analogies and probabilities .

Newman counted only two consistent alternatives regarding belief in God: atheism and Roman Catholicism. He rejected atheism because of the testimony of conscience, which he believed implied the existence of a Supreme Legislator. Nonetheless, Newman recognized that the absence of God pointed to an alienation due to sin and called for a divinely established way of salvation. This way must be accompanied by a teaching authority sufficient to withstand the arbitrary willfulness of fallen human beings. Natural religion (see NATURAL THEOLOGY) provides an anticipation of this revealed religion. But he held that there is only one religion in the world which tends to fulfill the aspirations, needs, and foreshadowing of natural faith and devotion (ibid., 187).

In *Grammar of Assent* (Chap. 10, part 2), Newman set forth an impressive historical argument based on the convergence of probabilities. He concluded that Christianity is more probable than other religions because of the convergence of probabilities that give rise to moral certitude (see CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE). First, the history of the Jews shows an example of extraordinarily strong monotheism in the face of persistent idolatry. Christianity exhibits the fulfillment of Israel's messianic expectations and agrees with Jesus' prediction that it would fill the earth and take dominion over it.

Newman argues more fully in *Apologia* for the Catholic dimension of his apologetic. He insists that, if divine revelation was delivered to the dominion of human reason, it would inevitably deteriorate and dissolve into chaos and confusion (ibid., 188). It was his opinion that only an infallible living authority could arrest this process of decline. In his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* , he sought to show how the Catholic Church has followed a line of development that manifests its continuity with the original revelation given in the Bible.

Evaluation. Newman's apologetic is valuable for both Catholics and Protestants. Some positive features include an appeal to objective and historical evidence (see APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL), willingness to address the subjective and moral dimension, and focus on the moral certitude that results from converging probabilities.

On the negative side, Newman fails to make a convincing case for the uniqueness of Catholicism in holding back liberalism. Conservative Protestantism, without an infallible teaching magisterium, has more successfully held its ranks (see Geisler, chap. 11). What is more, Newman's thesis on the historical development of doctrine is without proof from either Scripture or the Fathers and is contrary to the infallible pronouncements of the Council of Trent (see Geisler, chap. 10).

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Nietzsche, Friedrich. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was one of the most colorful and forceful atheists (*see* ATHEISM) of all time. His rejection of God was instinctive and incisive (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF). With the denial of God, Nietzsche denied all objective value based on God. Hence, his view is a form of nihilism. Although he was reared in a Lutheran pastor’s home, Nietzsche reacted violently against his religious training. His mother, aunt, and sisters reared him from a young age after the death of his father.

God and the God Myth. Nietzsche based his belief that God never existed on several grounds (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 23). He argued that the theist’s God would have to be a self-caused being, which was impossible (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). Evil in the world further ruled out a benevolent Creator (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). Nietzsche thought the basis for belief in God to be purely psychological (*see* FREUD, SIGMUND). Nietzsche exhorted, “I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes!” He added, “Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with Him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing” (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 125).

Nietzsche did believe the God-myth was once very much alive. It had been the model by which medieval and Reformation Europe had based its life. This culture, however, was in decay. Modernity had caught up to modern humanity, who could no longer believe in God. “God is dead!” Nietzsche cried. Modern humankind must bury God and move on.

The World. Since God does not exist, the world is all there is. Matter is in motion, and life moves in cycles (*see* MATERIALISM ; NATURALISM). The world is real, and God is an illusion. There is no God to which we must be faithful. Hence, each person is exhorted to “remain faithful to the earth.” For Nietzsche viewed God “as the declaration of war against life, against nature . . . the deification of nothingness, the will of nothingness pronounced holy” (*ibid.*, 92–94).

History and Destiny. Human history, as human destiny, is cyclical. Nietzsche rejected any Christian goal-oriented end or eschaton in favor of a more oriental cyclical recurrence. History is not going anywhere. There are no ultimate goals to achieve, no paradise to regain. There is simply an individual life to live by courage and creativity. Humanity creates a destiny here, and there is no hereafter—except the eternal recurrence of the same state of affairs. The supermen are the geniuses who form destiny. “They say, ‘It shall be thus!’ They determine the ‘whether’ and the ‘to what end’ of mankind. . . . Their knowing is creating” (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 18–19).

Ethics. The shocking realization of God’s death brought Nietzsche to the conclusion that all God-based values and absolutes were also dead (*see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF).

Hence, Nietzsche rejected traditional Judeo-Christian values in an almost violent manner. Nietzsche questioned even general principles, such as “injure no man” (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 186–87). He ridiculed the Christian principle of love: “Why, you idiots. . . . ‘How about praising the one who sacrifices himself?’ ” (*ibid.*, 220). Indeed, Christianity “is the greatest of all conceivable corruptions. . . . I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind.” (*Antichrist*, 230).

In place of traditional Christian values, he proposed that modern people go “beyond good and evil.” He suggested a transevaluation that would reject the “soft” feminine virtues of love and humility and seize the “hard” male virtues of harshness and suspicion (*Beyond Good and Evil*, all).

Human Beings. There is no afterlife, so the best one can do to overcome the limits of personal mortality is to will the eternal recurrence of the same state of affairs (*see* IMMORTALITY). That is, he must will to come back and live the same life over and over forever. Since there is no God and there are no objective values to discover, the human race must create its own values. Meaningless and emptiness of life must be overcome. The overcomers are “supermen.”

Evaluation. All atheists share the basic elements of Nietzsche’s view. His contention that no God exists is refuted by strong evidence for the existence of God (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). The objections to these arguments are answered elsewhere (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). Like Freud’s, Nietzsche’s view that God is an illusion is without foundation. His moral relativism cannot stand against the logical strength of moral absolutism. Both the materialistic (*see* MATERIALISM) view of the universe (*see* NATURALISM) and its eternity are contrary to good scientific (*see* BIG BANG) and philosophical arguments (*see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

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Nihilism. *Nihilism* means “nothingness,” the negation of all being or value (*see* NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH). In rejecting values, nihilism is antinomian or lawless. But even most relativists (*see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF) or situationists do not deny all value, just all *absolute* value. Less stringent nihilists simply deny that any ultimate or absolute value exists. The only value that exists is what we create. There is no objective value to be discovered.

The negation of all being is self-defeating, since one has to exist in order to deny all existence. Those who do not exist do not deny anything.

Likewise, the denial of all value is self-refuting, since the very denial involves the belief that there is value in making this denial. Nihilists value their freedom to be nihilists. Thus, they cannot escape affirming value implicitly, even when they deny it explicitly.

Noah’s Ark. See FLOOD, NOAH’S .

Noetic Effects of Sin. Some scholars object to any form of rational or evidential apologetics (*see* APOLOGETICS, TYPES OF) on the grounds that sin has so vitiated the human mind that it is neither possible for fallen humanity to understand God’s revelation properly, nor to reason correctly. These objections are rooted in a certain understanding of Reformed theology and are expressed in such theologians as Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977), and Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987). Other Reformed Christians and classical apologists (*see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS) reject this dichotomy, claiming that, while sin effaces God’s image in humankind and general revelation, it does not erase them.

Sin and the Mind. *John Calvin.* Protestant Reformers stressed the noetic effects of sin. John Calvin (1509–1564) was quick to point out that the depravity of the human will obscures the ability to understand and respond to the natural revelation of God. He wrote: “Your idea of His [God] nature is not clear unless you acknowledge him to be the origin and foundation of all goodness. Hence, would arise both confidence in Him and a desire of cleaving to Him, did not the depravity of the human mind lead it away from the proper course of investigation” (*Institutes* , 1.11.2).

Calvin believed that complete certainty (*see* CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE) comes only by the Holy Spirit (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS) working through this objective evidence to confirm in one’s heart that the Bible is the Word of God. He wrote, “Our faith in doctrine is not established until we have a perfect conviction that God is its Author. Hence, the highest proof of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of Him whose word it is.” (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). “Our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjecture, judgments, or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit” (*ibid.*, 1.7.1, cf. 1.8.1).

It is important to remember, however, as R. C. Sproul points out, that “the *testimonium* is not placed over against reason as a form of mysticism or subjectivism. Rather, it goes beyond and transcends reason” (Sproul, 341). In Calvin’s words, “But I answer that the testimony of the

Spirit is superior to reason. For God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit on the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit” (cited by Sproul, *ibid.*). It is God working through the objective evidence that provides us with subjective certainty that the Bible is the Word of God (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR).

Cornelius Van Til . One of the strongest modern expressions of the destruction of the mind by depravity is in the work of Van Til. He said that the unbeliever has within the knowledge of God by virtue of creation in the image of God. Then he hastens to say in the next sentence: “But this idea of God is suppressed by his false principle, the principle of autonomy” (*In Defense of the Faith* , 170). It is this principle that constitutes Van Til’s analogy of the “jaundiced eye,” by which all knowing by an unbeliever is distorted and false. The doctrine of radical depravity entails the belief that all unbelieving interpretive activity yields false conclusions.

Arguments in Scripture. The view that sin vitiates human ability to understand God’s revelation or receive his redemptive grace most often appeals to certain biblical passages for support:

Dead in Sin. Paul uses the figure of speech that the unregenerate are “dead” in sins (Eph. 2:1). From this it is concluded that the dead neither hear nor see God’s general revelation. They do not know it until they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Most often Paul is cited saying, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Wisdom Does Not Know God. Paul wrote that the world, by its wisdom, did not know God (1 Cor. 1:21). This cannot mean that there is no evidence for God’s existence, since Paul declared in Romans 1:19–20 that the evidence for God’s existence is so “plain” as to render the heathen “without excuse.” The context of 1 Corinthians is not God’s existence but his plan of salvation in the cross. This cannot be known by mere reason, but only by divine revelation. It is “foolish” to the depraved human mind. Finally, in this very book of 1 Corinthians, Paul gives his greatest apologetic evidence for the Christian faith—the eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ which his companion Luke called “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3 NKJV). So his reference to the world by wisdom not knowing God is not a reference to the inability of human beings to know God through the evidence he has revealed in creation (Rom. 1:19–20) and conscience (Rom. 2:12–15). Rather, it is a reference to the human depraved, foolish rejection of the message of the cross. Even though each person knows clearly through human reason that God exists, depravity “suppresses” or “holds down” this truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

Without Faith . . . “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6) would seem to argue against the need for reason. In fact, it would appear that asking for reasons, rather than simply believing, displeases God. But God calls upon us to use our reason (1 Peter 3:15 ; *see* APOLOGETICS, NEED FOR). Indeed, he has given “clear” (Rom. 1:20) and “infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). The text in Hebrews does not exclude “evidence,” but actually implies it. For faith is

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said to be “the evidence” of things we do not see (Heb. 11:1 NKJV). Just as the evidence that someone is a reliable witness justifies my believing that person’s testimony, so our faith in “things not seen” (Heb. 11:1) is justified by the evidence we have that God exists, which is clearly seen, “being understood from what has been made” (Rom. 1:20).

The One Who Can’t Understand. Paul insisted that “the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14). What use, then, is apologetics? They cannot even “know” him. But Paul does not say that natural persons cannot perceive truth about God, but that they do not receive (Gk. *dekomai* , “welcome”) it. Paul emphatically declared that the basic truths about God are “clearly seen” (Rom. 1:20). The problem is not that unbelievers are not aware of God’s existence but that they do not want to *accept* him because of the moral consequences this would have on their sinful lives. They do not “know” (Gk. *ginomskom* , which frequently means to “know by experience”). They *know* God in their mind (Rom. 1:19–20), but they have not accepted him in their heart (Rom. 1:18). “The fool has said *in his heart* , ‘There is no God’ ” (Ps. 14:1).

Response. Even Van Til saw the tension in his own view. He speaks of it as a “difficult point,” one which “we cannot give any wholly satisfactory account of the situation as it actually obtains” (*Introduction to Systematic Theology* , 15). Indeed, if fallen human beings really see everything with a “jaundiced eye,” so that they cannot even understand the truth of general revelation or of the Gospel, they are not morally accountable.

Calvin never carried his belief in the noetic effects of sin to the extreme of claiming no unsaved person could understand God’s revelation to them. In fact, Calvin insisted “that there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of deity” (*Institutes* , 1.3.1). He contended that there is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God” (ibid.). This “sense of deity is so naturally engraven on the human heart, in the fact, that the very reprobate are forced to acknowledge it” (*Institutes* , 2.4.4). Calvin went further to claim that the invisible and incomprehensible essence of God has been made visible in God’s works, along with proofs of the Soul’s immortality (*Institutes* , 1.5.1–2). For “on each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse” (ibid.).

Commenting on Romans 1:20–21 , Calvin concludes that Paul teaches that “God has presented to the minds of all the means of knowing him, having manifested himself by his works, that they must necessarily see what of themselves they seek not to know—that there is some God” (Commentary on Romans).

For Calvin this innate knowledge of God includes knowledge of his righteous law. He held that, since “the Gentiles have the righteousness of the law naturally engraved on their minds, we cannot say that they are altogether blind as to the rule of life” (*Institutes* , 1.2.22). He calls this moral awareness “ natural law ,” which is sufficient for condemnation but not for salvation (ibid.). By means of this natural law, “the judgment of conscience” is able to distinguish between what is just and unjust (Commentary on Romans, 48). Because of the bright engraving of God’s glory, most people share the same basic ideas of what is right and what must be forbidden. It is

evident that God has left “proof” of himself for all, in both creation and conscience (Commentary on Romans, 48).

Van Til’s Extreme View. Even Van Til’s disciples have had serious reservations about his view of the total destruction of reason by sin. John Frame responds that “To deny the restraint [of common grace], as Van Til appears to do in the present context, is to deny common grace itself” (Frame, 194). He adds that Van Til’s antithesis of the mind with and without Christ requires considerable qualifying. Such an antithesis would seem to suggest that an unbeliever errs with every statement made. Depravity does not necessarily work that way. The formulation also suggests that the specifically intellectual handicap of human depravity will inevitably show up in what the unbeliever says, does, or makes, rather than in the direction of his or her life. They also fail to convey that the unbeliever’s very denial of the truth is in some respects an affirmation of it (Frame, 207).

Frame adds that it is simplistic to hold that the noetic effects of sin amount to a propositional falsification of the unbeliever’s every utterance (ibid., 211).

Van Til himself offers statements that do not fit his antithesis. He urges “that we present the message and evidence for the Christian position as clearly as possible, knowing that because man is what the Christian says he is, the non-Christian will be able to understand in an intellectual sense the issues involved” (“My Credo”). But how can the non-Christian understand the issues, even in an intellectual sense, if there is no common ground, or knowledge of any kind—if he sees all with a jaundiced eye?

Scripture clearly declares unregenerate beings to be “without excuse” (Rom. 1:19–20 ; 2:12–15). Adam and Eve were “dead in trespasses and sin” (cf. Eph. 2:1) the very instant they took of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6 ; Rom. 5:12). Yet they heard and understood God speaking to them (Gen. 3:9–19).

A common mistake of Reformed presuppositionalism is to misunderstand the figure of speech of “dead” to be the equivalent of spiritually “annihilated,” a mistake which, fortunately, they do not make when speaking of the second death (Rev. 20:14). Death in Scripture is better understood in terms of separation, not annihilation (see ANNIHILATIONISM). The prophet said, “Your sins have separated you from your God” (Isa. 59:2 KJV). “Dead” is not the only figure of speech used in the Bible to describe fallen humankind. Sickness, blindness, pollution, and lameness are also used. But none of these imply a person totally unable to understand God’s revelation.

Other nonpresuppositional Reformed theologians, such as Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield , John Gerstner, and Sproul believe just as firmly in total depravity without accepting this skewed view of the noetic effects of sin. Total depravity can be understood as the inability to initiate or attain salvation without the grace of God.

In this same connection, Reformed presuppositionalists often misinterpret 1 Cor. 2:14 to mean that unbelievers cannot even understand God's truth before they are regenerated. Besides the obvious difficulty that they would have to be saved before they believe—the opposite of what Scripture says in John 3:16, 36; Acts 16:31, and Rom. 5:1—This is a misreading of the passage. Nor does it help to claim they are regenerated before they are saved (justified), since one is placed in the kingdom of God by regeneration (John 3:3; Titus 5:5). As Fred Howe noted, the Greek word for "receive," *dekomai*, means "to welcome." It does not mean they do not understand. They clearly perceive (Rom. 1:19–20), but they are not willing to receive the truths of God (Howe, 71–72). Consequently, they do not know them by experience. They know them only in their mind, not in their heart. A failure to understand these truths leads to misunderstanding of the effects of sin.

Limits of Reason. Following Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) set forth five reasons why we must first believe. Later we may be able to provide good evidence. We must believe,

1. because these truths are deep and subtle and far removed from the senses.
2. because the mind is weak at understanding something new.
3. because a number of facts may need to be assembled for conclusive proof to develop.
4. because some lack the scientific temperament to study philosophical concepts.
5. because we have more to do in life than just think.

It is clear that, if it required total understanding to come to God, few could put together the needed steps of knowledge, and then only after a long time. So the way of faith, which gives access to salvation at any time, is a great benefit (Aquinas, *On Truth*, 14.10, reply). Thus, for certitude in divine things, faith is necessary.

Aquinas stated that

the mind of man falls far short when it comes to the things of God. Look at the philosophers; even in searching into questions about man they have erred in many points and held contradictory views. To the end, therefore, that a knowledge of God, undoubted and secure, might be present among men, it was necessary that divine things be taught by way of faith, spoken as it were by the Word of God who cannot lie. [Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 2, 4, 6]

The searching mind will not come to understand the things of God, Aquinas said. A sign of the human deficiency in understanding the divine is the fact that philosophers cannot come even to understand human affairs without error. Therefore, it was necessary for God to deliver divine truths by way of faith, told to human beings by the God who cannot lie (ibid., 2a2ae. 2, 4).

Grace, therefore, is needed to overcome the noetic effects of sin. Aquinas concluded that God must come to human aid with healing grace. We cannot love God or our neighbor without grace. Neither can we believe. But with grace we do have this power. As Augustine says, to whomever this help is given by God, it is given in mercy; to whomever it is denied, it is denied in justice, because of original and personal sin (ibid., 2a2ae. 2, 6, ad 1). Aquinas, however, did not believe that sin completely destroyed human rational ability. Rather, "sin cannot destroy man's rationality altogether, for then he would no longer be capable of sin" (ibid., 1a2ae. 85, 2).

Proportionate Effects of Sin. According to Emil Brunner (1889–1966) the noetic effects of sin are manifest on the mind in direct proportion to the distance of a discipline from religious concern. Effects of the fall are more evident, for example, in philosophy than in economics. Since the discipline of theology is the most religious, there is greater area of disagreement with unbelievers. Brunner saw religious worldview as being progressively less of an issue in ethics, psychology/sociology, physics, and the least important in mathematics. That is, in mathematics Christians and non-Christians have the least disagreement and in ethics the most.

Conclusion. Sin affects the whole person—mind, emotions, and will. Human beings are *radically depraved* in their being. Another way to say this is that they are *extensively* affected by sin. But humans are not totally depraved in an *intensive* sense, since sin does not destroy the image of God (see Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). God's image is effaced but not erased.

So revelation can be perceived, even if it is not willingly received by depraved creatures without the work of the Spirit. There is no certain, saving knowledge of God apart from God's special revelation in Scripture and the special grace of the Holy Spirit applying Scripture and convincing the person of sin and need and the truth in general and special revelation. General revelation alone (see REVELATION, GENERAL), however, is sufficient to reveal God, if anyone truly desired to see him, so the lost are justly condemned for not receiving what they have clearly seen (Rom. 1:20).

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Nominalism. *Nominalism* is the view that neither universals nor essences are real (*see* REALISM), that is, they have no extramental existence. Everything is particular. A universal is a general or class concept that includes all the particulars in it. The class is an abstract concept that exists only in the mind (*see* EPISTEMOLOGY ; FIRST PRINCIPLES).

“Humanness” is a general concept that includes all individual human beings. But nominalists insist that humanness does not exist; only individuals really exist. “Triangleness” is a universal, but it too exists only in the mind. In reality only individual triangular shaped things exist.

Nature of Nominalism. Nominalism can be best viewed by contrast with opposing conceptions. Following >Plato , the Medieval theologian Gilbert of Porree affirmed that universals are *real things*. On the other end of the spectrum, medieval thinker Roscellinus (1050–1125) contended that universals are *a mere sign* , “a puff of the voice.” Peter Abelard (1079–1142) claimed that universals are *nouns* formed by a confusion of particular ideas. William of Ockham (1280–1349) was a true nominalist. To him, a universal is a *mere abstract concept in the mind*. John Duns Scotus (1266–1308) believed that universals are *bonds* or *common natures* that in themselves are neither universal or particular. Nature as such is neutral; it can be generalized by the mind or concretized with “thisness.” Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) held a realistic position (*see* REALISM), declaring that a universal is *mental being*. It is a form existing in the mind but rooted in reality.

Problems with Nominalism. From a realistic perspective, nominalism has problems, some with serious consequences for important Christian beliefs.

Nominalism Leads to Skepticism. If there is no basis in reality for our general ideas, then words tell us nothing about reality. We must remain skeptical about the real world. But complete skepticism (*see* AGNOSTICISM) is self-defeating. If it suspended judgment about its own central affirmation, as it demands we do about everything else, the skeptic would have to be skeptical of skepticism. That would destroy the basis for skepticism.

Nominalism Leads to Moral Relativism. If universals have no basis in the real world, there can be no universal moral values. Everything would simply be particular or situational. There would be nothing that one ought to do in every circumstance (such as, be loving or just). However, the denial of all absolutes is self-defeating (*see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF), for the claim that one absolutely *ought not* believe in moral absolutes is a moral absolute of its own.

Nominalism Leads to Heresy. All orthodox Christians believe that God has one essence or nature, and Christ has two natures (*see* TRINITY). But, if nominalists are right, then God has no

nature. Likewise, Christ could not have both a human and a divine nature, as the creeds assert (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). Hence, nominalism is a denial of historic, creedal, orthodox Christianity.

Nominalism Overreacts to Platonism. Plato (428–348 B.C.) believed everything that exists is part of an eternal essence or form. Nominalists deny such changeless essences, affirming that everything is particular or individual. They fail to acknowledge, however, that these are not the only two options. Aquinas showed that, while universals exist in the mind as abstractions from particulars, they are rooted in reality. There is no such entity as human nature. However, each human being shares essential characteristics (= nature or essence). So the abstraction referring to what we call humanness is not a mere name; it is a referent to a relationship that truly exists in reality.

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Nostradamus. Nostradamus (1503–1566) was known by the Latin name of Michel de Notredame or Nostredame. He was graduated from University of Montpellier in France and was a physician and astrologer. He published a book of rhymed prophecies titled *Centuries* (1555). He is reputed to have predicted accurately the death of Henry II of France and many other things.

According to Andre Lamont, *Nostradamus Sees All* (“Preface,” 2d. ed., v), “he was well versed in the arts of astronomy, the kabbala, astrology, alchemy, magic, mathematics and medicine.”

Predictions of Nostradamus. Some critics of Christianity hold up Nostradamus as an example of someone who made predictions on the level with those in the Bible, thus canceling the claim of supernatural uniqueness made for biblical prophecy (*see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE). However, on examination they fall far short of this claim. The predictions of Nostradamus show signs of an occult source and may be explained according to purely natural processes.

A Great California Earthquake. Nostradamus is alleged to have predicted a great earthquake in California for May 10, 1981. This was reported on May 6, 1981, in *USA Today*. However, no

such quake occurred. As a matter of fact, Nostradamus mentioned no country, city, or year. He spoke only of a “rumbling earth” in a “new city” and a “very mighty quake” on May 10 [no year].

Hitler’s Rise to Power. Lamont claims that Nostradamus gave “a prophecy of the coming of Hitler and Nazism in a world divided within itself” (Lamont, 252). However, Hitler is not mentioned and the prediction gives no date and is vague. It reads: “Followers of sects, great troubles are in store for the Messenger. A beast upon the theater prepares the scenical play. The inventor of that wicked feat will be famous. By sects the world will be confused and divided” (ibid.). In this context there is a reference to “Hister” (not Hitler) by Nostradamus (C4Q68), which is obviously a place, not a person. The attempt to read back into this both his name and birthplace is stretched. What is more, Hitler grew up in Linz, Austria, not in any place called Hister.

Quatrain 2–24 reads: “Beasts mad with hunger will swim across rivers, Most of the army will be against the Lower Danube [*Hister sera*]. The great one shall be dragged in an iron cage when the child brother [*de Germain*] will observe nothing.”

This is allegedly a prophecy concerning Adolf Hitler. According to followers of Nostradamus, the lower portion of the Danube is known as either “*Ister*” or “*Hister*” (Randi, 213), which seems to be close enough to “Hitler” for their purposes.

However, the substitution of “I” for “s” in *Hister*, and the inversion of “t” and “s,” is totally arbitrary. In another quatrain (4–68), Nostradamus mentions the Lower Danube in conjunction with the Rhine (“*De Ryn*”). But if “*Hister*” refers to Hitler, then to what does “*De Ryn*” refer? Followers of Nostradamus are inconsistent, treating one river as an anagram and taking the other literally. The Latin phrase *de Germain* should be interpreted “brother” or “near relative,” not “Germany” (Randi, 214). Even if these highly questionable interpretations are allowed, the prophecy is still quite ambiguous. What are we to make of the “Beasts” and the “iron cage”? To say that Adolf Hitler (“the great one”) will be “dragged in an iron cage” while Germany “will observe nothing” is so ambiguous and confusing it renders the entire prophecy meaningless.

Quatrain 4–68 is also alleged to refer to Hitler. It reads: “In the year very near, not far from Venus, The two greatest of Asia and Africa From the Rhine and Lower Danube, which will be said to have come, Cries, tears at Malta and the Ligurian coast.”

As in the previous example, “Lower Danube” is here taken to mean “Hitler.” “The two greatest of Asia and Africa” are taken to refer to Japan and Mussolini, respectively. Thus, the second and third lines refer to the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Italy, and Germany. The fourth is taken as a reference to the bombing of Malta and the bombardment of Genoa (Randi, 215).

In addition to the reasons given above, this prophecy claims these events would take place in a “year very near,” but the Tripartite Pact (1941) came almost 400 years after the prediction. It is not clear how Asia could refer to Japan, and even more so, how Africa could refer to Mussolini or Italy. Again Nostradamus’s followers are inconsistent, for they interpret Asia, Africa, and the Lower Danube figuratively while providing no corresponding interpretation for the Rhine.

Finally, this prophecy is ambiguous on the whole. It could be interpreted in various ways so as to fulfill many different events.

The Second World War. According to Lamont, Nostradamus forecast that, after the first World War, the Spanish Civil War, and other wars, a more furious one was foretold—the Second World War, with its aerial warfare and suffering. But no such details are given. It is typically vague and could be easily forecast without any supernatural powers. The passage reads simply: “After a great human exhaustion, a greater one is being prepared. As the great motor renews the centuries, a rain of blood, milk, famine, iron and pestilence [will come]. In the sky will be seen fires carrying long sparks” (Lamont, 168).

Evaluation. Nostradamus’s forecasts are general, vague, and explainable on purely natural grounds. Furthermore, Nostradamus shows clear signs of demonic and occult influence (*see* MIRACLES, MAGIC AND).

False Prophecies. An evident sign of a false prophet is false prophecy (cf. Deuteronomy 18). If Nostradamus’ predictions are taken literally, many are false. If they are not, then they can fit many “fulfillments.” As John Ankerberg put it, “it is an undeniable fact that Nostradamus gave numerous false prophecies” (Ankerberg, 340). Noted Nostradamus scholar Erika Cheetham said flatly of his prognostications in his *Almanachs*: “Many of these predictions were wrong” (Ericka, 20). Some interpretations are so diverse that while one claims it is a reference to “Calvinist Geneva,” another believes it refers to “atomic power” (*The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, 81).

Vague Predictions. The truth is that the vast majority of his prognostications are so ambiguous and vague that they could fit a great variety of events. Consider this one: “Scythe by the Pond, in conjunction with Sagittarius at the high point of its ascendant—disease, famine, death by soldiery—the century/age draws near its renewal” (*Centuries* I. 6). The lines can be interpreted so as to fit any number of events in the future. When something is judged to be a fulfillment, Nostradamus will seem supernatural. Astrologers and fortune tellers use vague descriptions and imagery all the time. Nostradamus was a master at this art.

Contradictory Interpretations. There is no unanimity among Nostradamus’ interpreters about the meaning of his predictions. This lack of agreement is further proof of their ambiguity and lack of authority. In *The Prophecies of Nostradamus* the editors note contradictory interpretations (see I, 16; I, 51; II, 41; II, 43; II, 89; III, 97, etc.).

Predictions after the Fact. Nostradamus himself acknowledged that his predictions were written in such a manner that “they could not possibly be understood until they were interpreted after the event and by it” (Randi, 31). There is nothing miraculous about reading a fulfillment back into a prophecy which could not be clearly seen there beforehand. Not a single prediction of Nostradamus has ever been proven genuine. This means that either he is a false prophet or else he was not really seriously claiming to be giving real predictions. Perhaps he was a con artist or a literary prankster.

Tongue-in-Cheek Prophecies? His prognostications were so vague and unproductive that even the encyclopedia of *Man, Myth and Magic* suggests that “Nostradamus composed them with tongue in cheek, as he was well aware that there is an enduring market for prophecies and particularly for veiled ones” (Cavendish, 2017). As James Randi put it, “The marvelous prophecies of Michel de Nostredame, upon examination, turn out to be a tiresome collection of vague, punning, seemingly badly constructed verses. . . . From a distance of more than 400 years, I fancy I can hear a bearded Frenchman laughing at the naiveté of his 20th century dupes” (36).

Confessed Demonic Source. Nostradamus admitted demonic inspiration when he wrote: “The tenth of the Calends of April roused by evil persons; the light extinguished; diabolical assembly searching for the bones of the devil (*damant* —“demon”) according to Psellos” (Lamont, 71). Commenting on this, Lamont noted that “The utilization of the demons or black angels is recommended by ancient writers on magic. They claim that they have much knowledge of temporal matters and, once under control, will give much information to the operator.” He adds, Nostradamus could not have avoided such a temptation” (ibid.).

Various Forms of Occult Practices. Nostradamus was associated with various occult activities. Lamont observes that “Magic—Astrology—Symbolism—Anagrams—[are a] Key to Nostradamus” (ibid., 69). In *Centuries* , Quatrain 2 is translated: “The wand in the hand seated in the midst of the Branches, He (the prophet) wets in the water both the hem (of his garment) and the foot. A fearfulness and a voice quiver through the sleeves; divine splendor, The Divine is seated near” (ibid., 70). Lamont comments that here “Nostradamus followed the rites of magic according to Iamblichus. It is night—he is seated on the stool or prophetic tripod—a little flame rises. He has the divining rod in his hand” (ibid., 70–71).

In addition to the use of the occult divining rod, Nostradamus was widely known for his knowledge of astrology—another occult practice condemned by the Bible (Deuteronomy 18). But whatever their source, these predictions in no way rival the clear, specific, and highly accurate predictions of Scripture.

Conclusion. There is no real comparison between Nostradamus’ predictions and those of the Bible. His are vague, fallible, and occult. Those of the Bible are clear, infallible, and divine (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). The Bible made numerous clear and distinct predictions hundreds of years in advance. Nostradamus did not. There is no evidence that Nostradamus was a prophet at all; certainly he was like none in the Bible. Biblical prophecy stands unique in its claim to be supernatural (*see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

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