

Satan's Bookshelf

The Worst Books Ever Written... and Why Christians Should Know Them

Jeffrey D. Breshears

Satan's main headquarters in Hell is an enormous complex featuring his favorite artifacts and memorabilia from throughout human history.

There are rooms stocked with the most ingenious torture devices ever devised by demonically inspired human beings; long hallways lined with thousands of photographs of both notorious and obscure mass murderers, perverts, racists, con artists, capitalist pigs, rabble rousers, tyrants, propagandists and liars (including many politicians and a surprising number of theologians); red-lit rooms that proudly display the most extensive collection of pornography in the universe; a spacious, convention-sized room modeled after Dave & Buster's loaded with hundreds of the most mindless and violent video games Satan ever inspired; and room after room featuring rows upon rows of DVDs with titles such as "Satan's Hollywood Favorites, Volume 81: 'Guy' Movies" and "Satan's Hollywood Favorites, Volume 382: TV Sit-Coms, 1978-81," along with thousands of compact discs with titles such as "Satan's Greatest Hits, Vol. 86: From Ludacris to Madonna."

But the vortex of this complex of decadence – and the energy center that has generated most of Satan's proudest accomplishments – is his library. Not as large as a modern university library, it nonetheless contains an impressive number of volumes on virtually every conceivable topic, including thousands of books on science, theology and even Biblical studies. His very favorites, of course, are the books he most directly inspired, which he proudly displays in a special bookshelf in the center of the room. This is an elite collection of books that have most effectively promoted his agenda (either subtly or explicitly) and exerted the most effectively corrupted everything that God originally created good.

In his book, *Ten Books That Screwed Up the World* (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2008), Benjamin Wiker writes that "Ideas have consequences," and they oftentimes "float, largely undetected, in the intellectual air we breathe" until they reach a critical mass. As the philosopher Hegel taught, some of the Great Ideas in human history have been liberating – Christianity, representative self-government, and economic freedom, for example. Other ideas are toxic and cancerous, and they eat away at a culture's moral base. Some of the worst ideas are subtle and seductive, while others are blatantly obvious.

Like a viral epidemic, many of the most insidious and destructive ideas ever generated in Hell have been propagated through some of the most popular and influential books of the past few centuries. There are many examples of such ideas, and the 25 books listed below are filled with them. As the Roman statesman Cicero once observed, "There is nothing so absurd that it hasn't been said by a philosopher" – or by an anthropologist, an historian or a theologian, for that matter.

Interestingly, many of the authors in this elite list of bad books share at least some of the following traits in common:

(1) Many were atheists (either avowedly or functionally) who operated out of a naturalistic worldview. Having rejected God, they had a distorted view of reality in general and human nature in particular.

(2) Many were moral relativists – although, ironically, many were exceedingly moralistic and quite certain that their own moral perspective was absolutely true.

(3) Many were utopian idealists. They were often astute social critics who recognized that the world is screwed up, and many were social engineers who sought to transform humanity (and human nature) by reforming the social, political and economic systems. However, having rejected God and a Biblically based worldview, they neither understood *why* the world is so dysfunctional nor *how* to change it for the better. Therefore, they manufactured myths disconnected from reality to explain why the world is so fouled up and how to fix it, but their analyses and solutions were often tragically wrong.

(4) Many, especially in the 20th century, were sexual revolutionaries. Believing that human beings are merely highly evolved animals, they easily (and eagerly) embraced and promoted a naturalistic view of sexuality disconnected from traditional Biblically based morality.

The Cumulative Effect

The 20th century witnessed the convergence of these themes, and the cumulative effect has been substantial and devastating. Rather than ushering in a New Age of Aquarius, these ideas produced the most chaotic and horrific century in human history. In fact, the intellectual and moral foundations of Western culture had been eroding for several centuries, but prior to the French Revolution and the advent of modern atheistic regimes, it was possible to blame Christianity for many of the problems in Western civilization. But as Benjamin Wiker observes, “after the 20th century, when much of the world lay convulsed and broken upon the rock-hard certainties of so many secular political utopian schemes, atheism no longer has the luxury of speculating upon how grand the future will be once we’ve rid the world of [all religious influences] and brought heaven to earth” [*Ten Books That Screwed Up the World*, p. 229]. Similarly, the Russian philosopher Semyon Frank astutely summarizes the mentality of the secular idealists who have wreaked so much havoc on humanity in the past century:

Sacrificing himself for the sake of an idea, he does not hesitate to sacrifice others for it. Among his contemporaries he sees either the victims of the world’s evil he dreams of eradicating or the perpetrators of that evil.... This feeling of hatred for the enemies of the people forms the psychological foundation of his life. Thus the great love of mankind and of the future gives birth to a great hatred for people; [and] the passion for organizing an

earthly paradise becomes a passion for destruction.” [*Sacred Causes*. Quoted in Wiker, p. 227.]

The hatred that Frank mentions was particularly intense when directed at Christians and cultural conservatives who stood in the way of these secular idealists and their utopian goals. In the 20th century, Marxist utopians alone were responsible for the extermination of an estimated 100 million “enemies of the people” – all on behalf of “the people,” of course.

Why Should Christians Know These Books?

Christians are called to be the “light” and “salt” in society. This makes it imperative that we understand our times – including the major ideas, trends and worldviews that are competing with Christianity in the public square. But Christians (along with cultural conservatives in general) are losing the Culture War in America – and mostly by default because we have forfeited the great intellectual battles of our time. The extent of laziness and apathy among Christians (and Christian leaders) is nothing short of scandalous.

We may not be able to turn back the rising tide of secularism, immorality and corruption that threatens to flood our society and culture, but we have a spiritual responsibility to do what we can. But we can’t begin to change things until we understand what’s going on and why our culture has become so hostile over the past fifty years toward Christian values and beliefs. The solution to bad ideas that are plaguing our culture is not to ignore them, and the solution to bad books is not to burn or ban them – or even to discourage Christians from reading them. On the contrary, it’s just the opposite: Rather than avoid bad books and bad ideas, we need to know them, understand them, engage them, and be equipped to defeat them. To do otherwise is not only irresponsible but cowardly.

The following is a select list of 25 books that have distorted reality, corrupted morality and undermined civility. A comprehensive review and critique of these books is available through the Areopagus course, “Satan’s Bookshelf: The Worst Books Ever Written – and Why Christians Should Know Them.”

Satan's Bookshelf

The Worst Books Ever Written

25 Books That Have Distorted Reality,
Corrupted Morality, and Undermined Civility

Compiled by Jeffrey D. Breshears

(NOTE: This list is limited to books in the Western tradition
over the past 500 years, listed in chronological order)

1. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

Thesis:

- Survival and success in this world depend upon power and manipulation, and only fools operate according to a strict moral code.

Significance:

- Machiavelli (1469-1527) has been called “the evil genius behind dictators” and the founder of modern political science.
- Although a nominal Catholic, Machiavelli was in fact a functional atheist who rejected the ethics of Christ.
- As a master of pragmatic *realpolitik*, he believed that human beings are innately evil and that morality is hopelessly naive.
- The term “Machiavellian” connotes someone who is cold, calculating, ruthless, devious, hypocritical, cunning, dishonest and treacherous.

2. Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637)

Thesis:

- Based on a foundational principle – “I think, therefore I am” – Descartes sought to build a rational philosophy that proved God’s existence.

Significance:

- Descartes (1596-1650) was not an anti-Christian skeptic, but his philosophical methodology, grounded in his own subjective awareness, redirected the course of subsequent philosophy away from God.
- Rejecting the basis of traditional Christian philosophy, which is derived from ontology (specifically, the being of God), Descartes grounded his philosophy in human-based epistemology.
- Descartes’ rationalistic philosophy is purely subjective and fails to account for the noetic effects of the Fall.

3. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)

Thesis:

- Human beings are naturally egoistic and amoral, and only an authoritarian government can control the predatory impulses of its citizens.

Significance:

- Like Machiavelli, Hobbes (1588-1679) claimed to be Christian but was in fact a functional atheist who rejected the traditional Christian doctrine that human beings are created in the image of God.
- Hobbes' "fundamental law of nature" was that life is a competitive jungle and "a war of every man against every man."
- He believed that violence, exploitation and war are "the state of nature," and that peace, decency and civility are unnatural.
- The solution to human aggression is "Leviathan" – a strong authoritarian government that imposes order on society.

4. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin... of Inequality Among Men* (1755)

Thesis:

- Man is innately good and reasonable, but society corrupts. The solution is a social and political system that operates according to Reason and the principles of a "social contract" (i.e., the popular will of the people).

Significance:

- As the first great critic of modern society, Rousseau (1712-78) detested all social institutions, including the monarchy, the aristocracy and the church.
- Rousseau was a humanist and a utopian idealist, and he considered modern civilization to be unnatural and oppressive.
- Civilization promotes social inequality and social injustice and alienates humanity from nature.
- Rousseau's political ideals expressed the values of the Enlightenment.
 - Laws are not divinely-ordained but man-made.
 - The people – not the government – are sovereign, and government exists to serve the interests of the people.
 - Therefore, the only valid basis for government is a "social contract" that reflects the will of the people.

5. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781)

Thesis:

- Logic and reason cannot lead to absolute truth.
- We can know what something means to us personally, but we can never know it in its essence.

Significance:

- Kant (1724-1804) was no atheistic skeptic, and in fact he intended to refute skepticism.
- He exposed the basic philosophical fallacy of the Enlightenment: that human reason can lead to absolute truth.
- However, as an epistemological agnostic, Kant doubted that we can know anything in its reality – including God.
- Therefore, Kant's philosophy undermined traditional Christian theism and contributed to the rise of a deistic worldview.

6. Ludwig von Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841)

Thesis:

- Belief in God is a human invention – “a dream of the human soul.”
- “Consciousness of God is self-consciousness; knowledge of God is self-knowledge.”

Significance:

- According to Feuerbach (1804-72), his goal was “to change believers into thinkers.”
- Feuerbach argued that Christianity is a mere superstition, and predicted that it would wither away and be replaced by humanism and a naturalistic worldview.
- He offered up a psychological explanation for belief in God, and argued that human beings have created God in their own image rather than vice-versa.
- Feuerbach’s central premise is, “God is nothing but the projection of human imagination.” But self-projection can also explain atheism.

7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

Thesis:

- Only a violent revolution can overthrow the present unjust socio/political order and usher in an ideal communist society that operates according to the principle: “From each according to his ability to each according to his need.”

Significance:

- *The Communist Manifesto* is not a treatise on political and economic philosophy but a revolutionary pamphlet.
- Marx’s (1818-83) underlying philosophy is dialectical materialism:
 - History is deterministic, and it is driven by economics and the class struggle.
 - A society superstructure (culture and institutions) is an expression of its economic substructure.
- In the current age (i.e., the 19th century), the major historical forces are the oppressors (the bourgeoisie class of capitalist bankers, industrialists, entrepreneurs, etc.) and the oppressed (the proletariat class of industrial workers).
- In terms of the number of people directly impacted by a book, *The Communist Manifesto* ranks with the Bible, the Qur’an, and Darwin’s works.
- In terms of the number of people who have tyrannized, abused and murdered as a result of a book, *The Communist Manifesto* is in a category of its own.

8. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863)

Thesis:

- Human happiness is the ultimate goal in life, and the socio/political system should promote the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Significance:

- Like the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, Mill (1806-73) believed that human happiness is the greatest goal in life.
- “Good” is whatever contributes to pleasure, and “bad” is whatever causes stress or pain.
- Mill labeled his moral philosophy the “Greatest Happiness Principle.”
 - Mill: “The ultimate end... is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyment... This being, according to the utilitarian opinion, the end [or goal] of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality.”
- Mill was an atheist and a moral relativist who rejected any objective standard of morality.
 - He advocated democratic morality in which the majority decides what is right and wrong “since there is no other tribunal to be referred to....”

9. Ernest Renan, *Origins of the History of Christianity* (1864) and *The Life of Jesus* (1867)

Thesis:

- The “real” history of Christianity and the “real” Jesus have little in common with the New Testament, which is largely myth and legend.

Significance:

- As a radical revisionist, Renan (1823-92) was a key figure in launching the modern “quest for the historical Jesus.”
- Renan was one of the first who attempted to separate the “Jesus of history” from the “Christ of faith.”
- According to Renan, Jesus was not divine, and the resurrection is merely a beautiful myth.
- Renan’s view of Jesus was not original, but he was the most popular Jesus revisionist prior to the 20th century.
- Renan influenced later revisionist scholars such as Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth.
- Renan also influenced later Christian fiction including Nikos Kazantzakis’ *The Last Temptation of Christ* and Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*.

10. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871)

Thesis:

- Human beings are not a special creation of God but the product of naturalistic, random and purposeless processes.

Significance:

- Human beings are not created in the image of God but are highly-evolved animals.
- Just as “natural selection” and “survival-of-the-fittest” rule in the animal kingdom, these forces control the ongoing evolution of human beings.
- Darwin’s (1809-82) theory of naturalistic evolution is the mother of all modern heresies.
 - James Eckman: “Darwin shook Christianity at its foundation and made atheism respectable.”
- Darwinism has no basis for morality since nature – and naturalistic processes – are completely amoral.
 - What human beings call “morality” is really just part of their survival strategy.
- Darwin’s influence and legacy have been monumental.
 - Beginning in the late 1800s, Social Darwinists from laissez-faire capitalists to Nazis have sought to apply his theories of “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest” to human society.
 - The modern eugenics movement is rooted in Darwinian theory.
 - Darwin was a racist who believed some races were more highly evolved than others.

11. Julius Wellhausen, *Prologue to the History of Israel* (1878)

Thesis:

- The Documentary Hypothesis (or JEDP Theory): The Pentateuch was not written by Moses, as traditionally believed, but was the product of a literary synthesis over many centuries.

Significance:

- Wellhausen (1844-1918) is known as the “father of modern biblical criticism.”
- According to Wellhausen, the Pentateuch is a literary mosaic comprised of four independent source documents written centuries after Moses and finally compiled in the 5th century B.C.
- If Wellhausen’s theory is correct, the Pentateuch is unhistorical and little more than a pious fraud.
- In fact, there is no evidence of multiple authorship of the Pentateuch.

12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

Thesis:

- There is no God, and there is no source of absolute morality.

Significance:

- Nietzsche (1844-1900) was the first great apostle of Nihilism and has been a major influence on Postmodernism.
- According to Nietzsche, morality is man-made and artificial.
- Deriving many of his presuppositions from Darwinian naturalism, Nietzsche concluded:
 - Human beings are merely highly-evolved animals.
 - Life has no meaning and purpose.
 - All that matters is that we survive – which requires that we dominate, subjugate, and even exterminate our competition.
 - In order to dominate, we cannot be bound by moral restrictions and must go “beyond good and evil.”

13. Sergei Nilus, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (c. 1905)

Thesis:

- A conspiracy of Jews and Masons is plotting to take over the world.

Significance:

- Although proven to be a literary forgery and a hoax, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* purports to be a document drafted by a secret group of Jewish conspirators that outlines a master plan for achieving world domination by controlling the media and major financial institutions.
- Sergei Nilus (1862-1929), a Russian religious writer, is credited with first publishing the “full text” of *The Protocols* in 1905 as an addendum to his book, *The Great Within the Small: The Coming of the Anti-Christ and the Rule of Satan on Earth* – a prophecy related to the coming of the Antichrist.
- Note: Some researchers believe *The Protocols* was initiated by factions of the Russian aristocracy who opposed the social reforms of Tsar Alexander II (r. 1855-81) and sought to link the reforms to an “international Jewish conspiracy.”
- Allegedly, the Protocols are instructions to a newly-initiated Elder, summarizing how the group will manufacture and manipulate crises in order to take over individual nations and eventually impose a Jewish theocracy on the world.
- *The Protocols* has been cited repeatedly by anti-Semites and conspiracy buffs from Henry Ford and Hitler to Louis Farrakan to generate hostility toward Jews.

14. Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922)

Thesis:

- Sanger advocated sexual liberation, which inevitably would result in many unwanted pregnancies.
- Therefore, she considered birth control to be the greatest “cause” of our age and “the pivot of civilization.”

Significance:

- Sanger (1879-1966) believed the greatest hindrance to personal liberty is sexual repression, and *The Pivot of Civilization* makes the case for birth control, abortion, and eugenics.
- Sanger opened the first birth control clinic in America in 1916 and co-founded the American Birth Control League in 1921 and Planned Parenthood in 1942.
- A lifelong proponent of eugenics, she wrote: “The greatest present menace to... civilization is the lack of balance between the birth-rate of the ‘unfit’ and the ‘fit.’”
- Sanger’s views on sexuality, race and eugenics were influenced primarily by Charles Darwin and Havelock Ellis.

15. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925)

Thesis:

- There are three great threats to German civilization: Capitalism, Communism, and Judaism.
- These threats must be defeated by any means necessary.

Significance:

- Hitler (1889-1945) derived his philosophy and vision from several sources:
 - (1) German nationalism.
 - (2) Machiavellian power politics.
 - (3) Hobbesian authoritarianism.
 - (4) Nietzschean pragmatism.
 - (5) Darwinian “survival of the fittest” evolutionary theory.
 - (6) Race-based eugenics and the doctrine of Aryan supremacy.
- Like Marx and Lenin, Hitler was a utopian visionary who used totalitarian government to implement his views.
- Unlike the Marxists, who advocated a worldwide Communist revolution and the abolition of individual nation-states, Hitler’s solution was nationalistic and racial.
- Hitler and many of his Nazi followers believed they were improving humanity by purifying the human gene pool and eliminating inferior peoples.

16. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927)

Thesis:

- Belief in God is a human invention – “a dream of the human soul” – and a form of neurosis.

Significance:

- Freud (1856-1939) defined himself as “a godless Jew” and “one of the most dangerous enemies of religion.”
- Previously, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud wrote that belief in God is a form of “mass delusion.”
- In *The Future of an Illusion*, he reaffirmed “my absolutely negative attitude toward religion in every form.”
- Belief in God is a childlike fantasy that stems from living in a dangerous world.
 - In this world, we live in a state of anxiety and experience a feeling of helplessness “against the crushingly superior force of nature.”
 - Freud: “It would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent Providence.... a moral order in the universe and an after-life....”
- Because God is a figment of the imagination, Freud likened belief in God to mental illness – a form of neurosis.
- The “solution” to the problem of belief in God was to embrace science.

17. Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928)

Thesis:

- Humanity’s ideal state is to live natural and carefree like the natives of Samoa who are not encumbered by the kinds of inhibitions that characterize modern societies.
- A sexually-healthy society is free, casual, spontaneous, diverse, and “non-judgmental.”

Significance:

- Mead (1901-78) idealized primitive societies such as what she found in Samoa.
- Mead was a cultural (and moral) relativist who argued that traditional Christian morality is stifling and unnatural, and that it produces anxiety, inhibitions, and intolerance.
- Mead’s operating assumption is: The Natural = The Primitive = Good.
- Samoan culture so natural and sexually liberated because they have no sense of a “wrathful” God who punishes people for their transgressions.
- Note: In fact, Mead’s anthropological research has been shown to be biased and flawed.

18. Paul Kurtz, et al., *Humanist Manifestos I, II & III* (1933, 1973, 2000)

Thesis:

- As human civilization advances, it will become increasingly secular and humanistic.
- Belief in God and Christianity are the greatest hindrances to human evolution.

Significance:

- Secular Humanism is a man-centered (rather than God-centered) philosophy based on a naturalistic worldview that holds human self-fulfillment as the highest goal in life.
- Modern Secular Humanism has been influenced by the theories of Darwin, Marx and Freud, among others.
- With each new edition, the *Humanist Manifesto* has become increasingly secularistic and hostile to theism in general and Christianity in particular.
- Paul Kurtz: “[H]umanists believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons... and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith....”
 “Traditional moral codes... fail to meet the pressing needs of today and tomorrow....”
 “[I]n this age of modern science... if no deity will save us, we must save ourselves.”

19. Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948)

Thesis:

- Human sexuality, like all animal behavior, is driven by natural impulses and attractions.
- There is a wide range of sexual desires and practices that are all “normal” and “natural” for those who hold them.
- Any distinctions between “natural” and “unnatural” sexual practices are artificial.
- No sexual orientation or behavior is immoral.

Significance:

- Kinsey (1894-1956) founded the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction at Indiana University.
- Kinsey’s research provided the clinical scientific “evidence” for the sexual revolution.
- Through his research, Kinsey attempted to erase the line between “normal” and “abnormal” sexual attractions and practices.
- Note: In fact, Kinsey’s research was fraudulent and agenda-driven, and Kinsey himself was a depraved sex pervert.

20. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (1958)

Thesis:

- A true socialist revolution transforms society by integrating radical political and economic change with sexual liberation.

Significance:

- Marcuse (1898-1979), a Neo-Marxian philosopher and social theorist, has been referred to as “the father of the New Left.”
- Marcuse’s synthesis of Marxism and Freudianism helped ignite the cultural revolution of the 1960s.
- According to Marcuse, young people are angst-ridden and neurotic because American society is politically, socially and sexually repressive.
- The solution is a “non-repressive society” in which libertarian socialistic values prevail – i.e, an egalitarian society in which individuals are free to pursue their hedonistic instincts and practice “polymorphous perversity.”
- William Lind: “Marcuse understood... that the way to destroy Western civilization... was not through abstruse theory, but through sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll....”
- Marcuse coined the phrase, “Make love, not war,” and his call for sexual liberation became the basis for Sixties’ slogans such as “Do your own thing” and “If it feels good, do it.”

21. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)

Thesis:

- The roles of wife, mother, and housewife are intrinsically demeaning and unfulfilling.
- Women who are only housewives and mothers are repressed, and unfulfilled – whether they realize it or not.
- The image of the contented and blissful suburban housewife is a myth of “the feminine mystique.”

Significance:

- *The Feminine Mystique* launched the modern feminist movement.
- According to Friedan (1921-2006), her purpose in writing the book was to educate and radicalize well-educated, upper-middle-class, intellectual women who could serve as a vanguard in the cultural and sexual revolution of the late-20th century.
- Based on “the latest psychological research” and the results of surveys in women’s magazines(!), she argued that most housewives are mired in neurotic discontent.
- In 1966 Friedan co-founded NOW (National Organization of Women) and was an ardent supporter of abortion rights.

22. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979)

Thesis:

- There is no such thing as Christian orthodox theology, and early Gnostic sects were every bit as “Christian” as the orthodox (later “Catholic”) party.
- Pauline theology eventually won out in the theology wars of the early centuries by political means.

Significance:

- *The Gnostic Gospels* was the first popular-level study of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts that were discovered in 1945.
- According to Pagels (b. 1943), early Christianity was theologically pluralistic.
- It wasn’t until the age of Constantine that the Nicene Council forced a rigid orthodoxy on all Christians and began persecuting all non-Catholic sects.
- Pagels’ book has contributed significantly to the popular mythology regarding suppressed “alternative Christianities.”

23. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (2003)

Thesis:

- Brown puts forth 3 popular (and thoroughly discredited) theories:
 - (1)The ‘Conspiracy Theory of History’ Myth.
 - “Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.”
 - (2)The Canonicity Myth:
 - “The Bible is the product of man... Not of God. The Bible has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.”
 - (3)The Christology Myth.
 - At the Council of Nicea in 325, Church leaders declared Jesus divine. “Until that moment in history, Jesus [had been] viewed as a mortal prophet.”

Significance:

- Brown’s book attempts to redefine Christianity and its history.
- Brown promoted his book as a serious work of historical fiction that was factually accurate.
- In fact, the book is a mess: a witch’s brew of radical historical revisionism, enticing mysteries, unsubstantiated conspiracies, and secret esoteric codes.
- Theologically, the book is a radical feminist/New Age diatribe disguised as an historical novel that draws upon Gnosticism, goddess-based neopaganism, and postmodernism.

24. Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story of Who Changed the Bible, and Why* (2005)

Thesis:

- The Bible is seriously lacking in textual integrity.
- The Biblical texts have been so corrupted in the transmission process over the centuries that modern readers cannot possibly know what the authors originally wrote.
- By implication: The Bible is not historical reliable, nor is it an authoritative source of theology (knowledge of God) or morality.

Significance:

- Ehrman, a renowned New Testament scholar at the University of North Carolina, has popularized the field of Biblical textual criticism.
- According to Ehrman, the NT manuscripts have been hopelessly corrupted over time.
 - Ehrman: “The more I studied the manuscript tradition of the NT, the more I realized just how radically the text had been altered over the years at the hands of scribes, who were not only conserving scripture but also changing it.”
 - Ehrman: “There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament[!]”
- Ehrman contends that the lack of original biblical manuscripts presents an insurmountable problem for belief in the Bible:
 - Ehrman: “How does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired, only the words copied by the scribes – sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) Incorrectly? What good does it say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don't have the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals.”
- The seminal issue: All biblical text critics understand that the texts have been altered over time in the transmission process.
 - The issue is whether any fundamental Christian doctrine – or our understanding of Jesus – has been affected in the process.

25. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (2006)

Thesis:

- There is no God.
- Religious belief is like a contagious virus that infects entire populations.
- Religious education “a form of child abuse.”

Significance:

- Dawkins (b. 1941), a professor of evolutionary biology at Oxford University, wrote previous best-sellers such as *The Selfish Gene* (1976) and *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986).
- In *The Selfish Gene*, he refers to religious faith as “a kind of mental illness” and “one of the world's great evils, comparable to the small pox virus but harder to eradicate.”
- In *The Blind Watchmaker*, he declares that “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”
- What his books lack in facts and logic, they more than compensates for in terms of audacity.
 - He declares critics of evolution to be either “ignorant, stupid, or insane – or evil.”
- In the Introduction to *The God Delusion*, Dawkins writes: “If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down.”
- Michael Ruse: “*The God Delusion* makes me embarrassed to be an atheist....”

Dishonorable Mention

Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (1794)

Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (1830)

David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835)

Thomas Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863)

- Also: John William Draper, *The History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (1902) and Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science With Theology in Christendom* (1908)

Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (1954)

Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968)

Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980)

Robert Funk, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (1996)