

Chapter 2

RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS

*"Now these historical records have been recorded permanently for the purpose that we should not desire evil;
...not the tiniest hook on the tiniest letter will pass away until it is all fulfilled;
...the Word of God abides forever."
I Corinthians 10:6; Matthew 5:18; I Peter 1:25*

The foundation of the Christian Faith rests upon the sacred Scriptures of Israel. Therefore, to a large degree, the worthiness of Christianity to provide answers to the mysteries of history depends upon the reliability of the literature of the Old Testament. The very basis of Christianity begins with whether or not the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah. Beginning with Jesus, along with the Apostolic New Testament writers, all agree that "...what is written..." in the Old Testament bears witness to the nature, person and work of the coming Messiah.^{A2} *If the Old Testament prophetic statements prove to be accurately fulfilled in Jesus of Nazerath, then the reliability of the Biblical documents is established, and, in turn, the validity of the Christian Faith.* The claim of the Christian Faith, the validity of which is in question, is that of the words of Jesus, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except by me!"* (John 14:6) If this is true, then the "seeker" can stop searching for answers -- they are vested in the words of Christ and the Scriptures which He not only endorsed but utilized in His own earthly life. If Jesus Christ has not accurately and meticulously fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures, then one must continue his search for truth and the meaning of life, history, and eternity.

Many aspects of the Old Testament Scriptures are referred to by the New Testament writers, confirming that, at least in the minds of everyone from Jesus to the Apostolic writers, **the Hebrew Scriptures were to be regarded as absolutely reliable.** It was of these same Scriptures that Jesus said, *"not the tiniest hook on the tiniest letter will pass away until it is all fulfilled."* (Matthew 5:18)

Therefore, to the degree that the Old Testament inscripturated representation of the Messiah came true in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then those same writings become absolutely reliable.^[A3] The Scripture itself defines "fulfilled prophecy" as its own reasonable test.

"I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him ... And you may say in your intellect, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken..."
Deuteronomy 18:18,21-22

The New Testament constantly asserts that the events

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Does it matter whether the New Testament Documents are reliable? Would a "real" Christian even dare to question the reliability of the Old Testament's prophecy of the coming Messiah and the New Testament's record of the fulfillment of those prophecies in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer for the *thinking* believer is, "Yes!" This is not a "lack of faith" or "blasphemy"! For the believer who refuses to submit to institutional or traditional dogma just because it represents what he wishes the Bible said, may legitimately inquire, "What is the truth?" Jesus answered this question in John 17:17 when He said in prayer to God the Father, *"...Your word is truth!"* Since the Word of God has been conveyed to the believer through the written word, how may a believer confidently know which of the written documents actually contain the "truth" or real Word of God? This should be a matter of concern to the believer due to the fact that the reliability of the New Testament as a witness to God's self-revelation in Christ is only as reliable as are the documents which hold the historical facts. The validity of Christianity as the one and only source of temporal and eternal secure prosperity is entirely based upon the claims of Christ and His followers that Jesus actually lived, died for the sins of the world, rose from the dead, and today sits at the right hand of God the Father. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of the facts recorded in the New Testament about God's plan of grace for the human race. The validity, accuracy, and truthfulness of the New Testament documents which bear witness to His resurrection, are confirmed by the fact that there exists better textual evidence to the integrity of the New Testament, by far, than for any of the other documents from that same period.

of the life and times of Jesus Christ transpired "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." (Matthew 1:22-23; 2:23; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:70; 4:21; 24:27,44; John 1:45; 5:39,46; Acts 2:25-31; 3:13,22,24; 7:52; 8:30-35; 10:43; 13:32-37,47; 15:15-17; 24:14; 27:6,22-23; Romans 1:2; II Timothy 3:15-16; II Peter 1:19-21) Every such reference serves to emphasize the trustworthiness of the words of the Old Testament documents. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, states, "A worthy study of prophecy and its fulfillment leaves little room for unbelief. In vain the skeptic asserts that the predictions were only fortunate conjecture. If it were conjecture, the prophet was preserved from error and that would be supernatural in itself."¹ Dr. James Boyce, by means of extensive documentation, states that the Old Testament foretells of the Messiah "As the seed of the woman ... in Him was the day which Abraham saw and was glad ... the Lion of Judah ... sufferings which secure happiness ... His kingdom everlasting ... priesthood with neither beginning or end ... the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world ... ever liveth to make intercession ... made us kings and priests ... at His name every knee will bow and every tongue confess ... his flesh the tabernacle filled with glory ...", saying, "Thus did the Old Testament testify of Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of men."² Therefore, the truth or falsity of Christianity stands or falls on the validity of the great facts of creation, the fall, prophecy, redemption and resurrection fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The truthfulness of the claims of Christ and his disciples are clearly established by virtue of His fulfilling the Old Testament expectations. The Old Testament was written by over 30 different authors, many of whom never met each other, and who lived and wrote over a span of hundreds of years. Yet they described in detail, with no errors and no internal discrepancies, events meticulously fulfilled hundreds of years later in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Dr. Henry Morris states, "This is a unique characteristic of the Bible, not found in the Vedas or the Koran or any of the other 'scriptures' of mankind. The so-called prophecies of Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce, Jeanne Dixon and others of like kind are of a completely different order than those found in the Bible, always dark and ambiguous, and, much more often than not, later proved wrong."³

RELIABILITY OF BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS AND THE HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

In the New Testament, the latter half of the Christian Bible, is most of the information about a man known as the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived some 1900+ years ago. However, some of information about Jesus

comes from other sources. Even if the Bible did not exist, it could be known from secular sources that there was a man who lived in the first century, named Jesus; born during the reign of Ceasar Augustus; crucified some 33+ years later under the reign of Tiberius and the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate in Judea. Further, it could be known that He had a following of disciples, who became quite zealous, and who thought He was some sort of deity. They actually taught that he had been raised from the dead and they spread the teachings concerning this man all over the Roman Empire. *All of this could and is known apart from the Bible through the study of secular documents.* This information could be known by reading Roman historians such as Cantitus, Suetonius, Pliny, and, Jewish historians, such as Josephus. Therefore, there is enough secular information to know the bare essentials about Christ and that He was a real historical person, even without Scripture. But, beyond that, almost all that is known about Him, is contained in the New Testament.

Dr. William Bell states, "Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the truthfulness of Christianity depends in large measure on the truthfulness of the New Testament documents."⁴ Therefore, the bonafide concern is that if the New Testament documents are reliable, then the incredible events about which they tell are also reliable. It speaks of an individual who made some incredible claims about Himself, which, if true, would make Him God Almighty -- incarnate in the flesh. On the other hand, if the documents, containing these claims and records are discredited, the same, in turn, make Him and His followers the greatest strap-on-artists of all human history and destroy the entire concept of Christianity from having any validity whatsoever.

The Crowning Proof: Bodily Resurrection

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity; therefore, its historicity will receive much attention later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point, in the words of Dr. Morris, "Everything else that was said or done by Christ and the Apostles, no matter how great or marvelous, is secondary to the resurrection in importance. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth."⁵ Therefore, it is of supreme importance to document the truth or falsity of the Christian Scriptures which claim the validity of Christianity almost solely on the basis of the resurrection of Christ. (I Corinthians 15:20,22)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy has

*caused us to be born again to a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the deaths."
I Peter 1:3*

RELIABILITY OF BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS AND SKEPTICISM

A form of skepticism, inquisitiveness, and questioning is an absolute must in many fields of endeavor. This is true in good police work, good legal work, good private investigation work, contracting, etc. Bonafide skepticism means to take the attitude that nothing will be accepted as fact until demonstrated to be so.

There is a place for this mental attitude disposition in the study of the Word of God, especially with reference to avoiding potential areas of error found in traditional interpretations and/or "higher criticism"^G of the Scripture. In order to avoid being misled by folly or error, one must have the viewpoint, so that if someone says, "There is a black cow.", his answer may be, "Well, it is at least black on this side."

A theologian is a trained, professional skeptic regarding any Bible doctrinal matter. He will demand to see the evidence of the facts. The one thing that the theologian should never be called is naive, subject to fantasy, gullible, accepting something with little to no documentation. This does not mean that one must think that everything that everyone else has said and researched is wrong, but it does mean that it is the task of the student of the Word of God to check and double check such interpretations.

It is a dangerous policy to accept a body of dogma or doctrine, when there is no documentation data presented to substantiate the truthfulness of the statements therein. This is true whether one is researching so as to discover reliable medical care, a reliable auto mechanic, a reliable weather forecaster, and, especially, a theologian who deals with the subject of one's eternal destiny. To be so gullible and naive as to accept the dogmas of tradition just because they are there, or because they are emotionally stimulating, or because the said interpretation sounds like what one *wishes* the Bible said, always leads to disastrous interpretations totally foreign to what the Bible actually says. *This is exactly the predicament that the Christian is in with regard to Christian Doctrines if the Word of God is not a reliable source of information.* The value of the Christian Doctrines are, therefore, no more truthful than is the reliability of the documents, the Christian Scriptures, from which they emerge. In turn, if the Christian doctrines are not verifiable, then the Christian Faith is just another empty religion.^G This means that the Bible must be provable as the reliable final word on any matter which it discusses, whether historical, scientific, or

doctrinal. Otherwise, there is no source of information to inform the believer that is "the same yesterday, today and tomorrow" --- **reliable** --- regarding the meaning, purpose and definition of the Plan of God and the life of mankind therein.

Therefore, to the *thinking* person, there is absolutely nothing wrong or subversive with the application of the normal questions of "investigation into the truth of a matter" to the Christian Scriptures. Since Bible Doctrine derived from the Christian Bible is only as valid, truthful, and of value to the degree that the documents of the Bible are reliable, the academically honest student of the Word of God will strive to determine if the documents on which Christian doctrine is constructed are real, accurate, authentic, dependable, or if they are humanly produced myth, or fiction, and/or superstition. This is not to infer that every single facet of the Christian faith, and every facet of Bible Doctrine, science, history, etc., can be documented empirically in the same way that one may prove a theorem or a law in the physical sciences. However, it is intended to convey the principle that there is ample proof to the effect that, by means of the application of *the principles and laws of investigation* to the Christian Biblical documents, the evidence points strongly toward the truthfulness of Christianity. This is only accomplished by means of establishing the truth and reliability of the documents of the Christian Faith.

Therefore, in this chapter, the writer does not intend to attempt to document and prove as authentic and accurate every book of the Bible and every questionable portion or sentence. This would take a lifetime and other worthy and able scholars have already made great strides in performing this task. In fact, in this chapter, for the most part, there will be an examination of only the New Testament, attempting to determine whether it is reliable. If it is, then the inference is, as will be demonstrated, that the rest of the Bible will also be reliable.

RELIABILITY AND THE QUEST FOR "TRUE RELIGION"

Does not every "religion" in the history of the world have its documents that it regards as sacred and completely reliable? Yes they do. The Hindus have their *Vedas*; the Mormans have their *Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*; the Buddhists have their *Writings of the Compassionate Buddha*; the Christian Scientists have their *Science and Health, the Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddie; the Muslims have their *Koran*, and the list goes on and on. **The question is, "Is the Bible any Different???"** Again, yes it is and it can be demonstrated so!!!

First, just because there are so many “works” considered to be “holy,” does not mean that there cannot be one of them which really “lives and abides forever.” (I Peter 1:23) This follows the reasoning that as long as human records have been kept, it is clear that almost every genuine item has its counterfeit! This is true whether it be diamonds, blue jeans, money, quotations, etc. The very principle behind a “counterfeit” is that before there can be a counterfeit, there must be a genuine item to be counterfeited. Therefore, the very effort to counterfeit implies by its meaning and definition that there is the real thing.

Second, since all of the “Holy Books,” with all their varied contradictions cannot be “the truth,” this means that some must be counterfeit -- *dead wrong and worthless*. Logically, therefore, there must be truth somewhere. This principle applies whether speaking of holy books, saviors, heavens, happiness, blessing, etc., but, how could one possibly ever sort out which one is the true savior, heaven, happiness, blessing, etc.??? While it may be worthwhile, or at least interesting to study the subject of comparative religion, it is not necessary, at least at the outset, to study all of the religions of the world in detail in order to find the “true”^G religion.

REASON: There is only one major faith in the world, whose founder claimed to actually be God in the flesh, to have lived and walked among men, that He died for the sins of the world and, most astounding of all, that He actually rose from the dead after three days in a physical human body!!!! **Therefore, the claims of Christianity narrows the options down to Christ versus others.**

REASON: If the claims of Christ turn out to be true, one can stop right there in the search for truth. But if the claims turn out to be false, one must go on from there and seek the truth elsewhere. If the claims by Christ in turn prove to be true, one can cease searching, because Christ stated that He is the only way to the Father. (John 14:1-6) PRINCIPLE: If He turns out to be, indeed, the Son of God, then He would speak nothing but absolute truth and one would need to look no further.

Therefore, the truthfulness of the ancient New Testament Biblical documents and their validity, including, and especially, the truthfulness of the statements of Christ, as far as the Christian perspective is concerned, is of preeminent importance. As noted above, this is because in these documents resides almost all the records regarding the historical Jesus and His work on the Cross for the sins of the world and instructions to His followers.

HOW DOES ONE DETERMINE IF THE BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS ARE RELIABLE?

Although most Believers never think about this

matter, it is of utmost importance to the Christian with regard to his loyalty and peace of mind in attempting to live the Christian Way of Life.^G In fact, the basic principles of the importance of the reliability of the Biblical documents, on which one frames his moral beliefs, hence his priorities and actions, applies to every facet of life. Many times one is able to glean lessons from history which are helpful in life. However, the overriding principle which must be applied by the *thinking* person, is that before one can learn anything beneficial from history, the historical record, which is his source of information, must be accurate. Hence, if the student of history is alert, when he is reading historical information and sees an interesting point brought out, his first question must be, “Is this really the way it occurred?” For example, one may learn from the study of the battle of Gettysburg, of the great American Civil War, that it is wise for the one in command to listen to his reliable and trusted lieutenants. However, this is only a bonafide lesson to be learned if it is true that Pickett’s charge was a disaster for General Lee and the South because, indeed, the former did disregard sound advice.⁶ If the documents are in error, then it is inevitable that one will adapt to his own present situation the distorted and twisted bias of the one who wrote the untrue account.

The question is, “Is this the case with the New Testament documents?” Most readers read of the account of the first century regarding a ruler named Augustus in Rome, perhaps from Josephus, or from Cambridge Ancient History, and that he was one of the most powerful of the Roman emperors, etc. In turn, they may take notes, accept it and believe it as truth. The same question that applies to the New Testament applies to the historical records about Augustus: Does anyone ever stop and think — “How did this writer know that this fact(s) is true?” For example, take a case in point of more recent times: One reads in an American History book of the American Civil War, and that in the midst of this war the President of the United States was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. However, the man that wrote the book was probably not there! How does he, and those in the present time, verify the veracity of whether any of this occurred and, if it did, how much of the information is embellishment, bias, hearsay and/or fact?

PRINCIPLE: Writers of historical information which is reliable must base their data on documents which have been preserved and have come down to them in tact and uncorrupted; otherwise, at best, their work will be pure and simple speculation. Therefore, there must be some means of evaluation of documents from the period to be studied so that the student will know what is reliable and what is not. In fact, there are several means of evaluation of documents for validity.

One example is the set of principles set forth by

Dr. Louis Gottschalk.⁷ Dr. Gottschalk, Professor of History at the University of Chicago, deals with *how to do historical research*. The text book is primarily a primer on how to do history, not how to read it. It outlines principles on how to prepare a history by evaluation of documents from a given period. An adaptation of Dr. Gottschalk's criteria for evaluation of documents and an application of the same to the New Testament is presented below.

The Gottschalk approach is only one of many methods of determining the reliability of documents. For example, Simon Greenleaf, Professor of Law at the Harvard Law School over 100 years ago, wrote a three volume set on the laws of evidence, "Treatise on the Laws of Evidence," which illustrates the "legal" approach. This treatise was considered for 75 years to be the authoritative work or "Bible of law schools." This man decided to apply the legal laws of evidence to the New Testament. As a result, he came to the conclusion that these books could be presented in any court in the western world and be accepted as reliable documents. He wrote a book about it called, "The Testimony of the Evangelists." As one of the most skilled legal minds ever produced in this nation, the developer of the Harvard Law School, a top authority on the matter of what constitutes sound evidence, this scholar, after a thorough evaluation of the four Gospel accounts from the point of view of their validity as objective testimonial evidence, concluded: "It was, therefore, impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead,..."⁸ Another from the legal field, Tom Anderson, former president of the California Trial Lawyers Association, states:

"Let us assume that Christ did not rise from the dead. Let's assume that the written accounts of His appearances to hundreds of people were false. I want to pose a question. With an event so well publicized, don't you think that it's reasonable that one historian, one eyewitness, one antagonist would record for all time that he had seen Christ's body: 'Listen, I saw that tomb--it was not empty! I was there; Christ did not rise from the dead. As a matter of fact, I saw His body!' The silence of history is deafening when it comes to testimony against the resurrection."⁹

Another writer-lawyer, J. N. D. Anderson, Dean of Graduate School of Law, University of London, has done essentially the same thing as Greenleaf.¹⁰ Another system of evaluation of documents is "Literary Criticism,"^G represented by F. F. Bruce, Professor of Biblical Criticism, University of Manchester, England.¹¹ This approach to the subject is from the standpoint of a literary critic, examining the New Testament documents for their literary value and validity.

Examining the matter from the "historical approach"^G or "evidence approach," attempting to answer the question, "Would a historian be able to accept the Biblical New Testament documents as reliable history?", the Gottschalk outline for understanding history defines two areas of evidence which must be documented: **External Evidence and Internal Evidence**.

The rules of External Evidence deal with the problem of "authenticity." These rules deal with the question, "Is the document genuine?"; "Does it actually come from the time period and from the author which it purports to arise from?" These rules deal with the process of evaluating the over 5,000 copies¹² of New Testament manuscripts. This is also called "Textual Criticism."^G The New Testament documents have been thoroughly examined via the rules of Textual Criticism and scholars have been remarkably successful in assuring the Christian that he has an accurate text copy. Dr. F. J. Hort, one of the most famous textual critics of all time, made the statement some years ago that, at that time less than 00.001 (one-thousandth) of the New Testament was still in doubt (and the textual refinements have continued from then until now) as far as the text is concerned.¹³ This would constitute about one page of the New Testament in doubt. Sir Fredrich Kenyon, a British Scholar, recognized as the foremost scholar and authority on ancient manuscripts, states, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."¹⁴

No Original Manuscripts of the New Testament??

Many skeptics have complained about the authenticity of the New Testament documents because there are no originals in existence. Even though the original manuscripts of the New Testament Scriptures do not exist, notice this comparison: Many have read the works of the Roman Historian, Tacitus, who is accepted and quoted without hesitation or question. Yet few will stop to ask, "How many manuscripts exist of Tacitus?" **TWO, REPEAT TWO!** Remember that he dates from the same approximate time of the Biblical documents.¹⁵ A second comparison: It is almost certain that some may have been lying awake at night [Right? --- For *s-u-r-e*!!] worrying about the historical accuracy of Thucydides, an Athenian, the world's first scientific historian. His writings cover 21 years of the 28 years of the Peloponnesian war. He is acclaimed as being a "critical and objective" writer, and, although his writings seem to contain inconsistencies, they are, nevertheless, accepted as "a dramatic account of stirring events."¹⁶ They are unquestionably accepted as good information. Notice: There exists a grand total of eight manuscripts representing his work. **Principle:**

Most ancient documents are represented by only a handful of manuscripts, while the New Testament is represented by more than 5,000 manuscripts. By comparison, volume after volume has been written about the pros and cons of the validity of the New Testament, while many other areas, such as Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian war, are simply accepted with no apparent questions. ***Concept: There exists a better textual (external) evidence to the validity and integrity of the New Testament text by far than for any of the other documents from that same period.*** For that matter, there is better evidence for the New Testament than for many "great" documents arising centuries later.

Many further complain that not only do the original or earliest copies of New Testament documents not exist, they do not begin until into the second century A.D. In fact, the earliest complete document does not begin until early in the fourth century. Therefore, they conclude, such cannot be all that credible. Yet, by comparison, "Caesars' Gallic Wars," whose earliest

recorded manuscript is 900 years after the event, is readily accepted. There are two manuscripts existing of Tacitus, a second century Roman Historian: One of them dates from the 9th century and the other the 11th century, 700 and 900 year spans. With regard to Herodotus, the earliest manuscripts of him date 1300 years after his life. Yet, how often does one hear these sources discredited for their "time lag" — ***never*** -- they are accepted as they are!

Compared to every other document of that same general period, the New Testament documents are not only in great numerical profusion, but they are much, much, closer to the time of the original events.

Were the Biblical Writers Able to Tell the Truth?

One of the major criteria raised by Dr. Gottschalk is the rule, "Is the author of the document able to tell the truth?" One aspect of determining "ability to tell the truth" has to do with demonstrated competence on the part of the writer. He must demonstrate

COMPARISON OF ANCIENT TEXTS

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copy
Caesar	1st Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	1	_____
Livy	1st Cent. B.C.	_____	20	_____
Tacitus	c. 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	20	_____
Thucydides	5th Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	8	_____
Herodotus	5th Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	8	_____
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.	200	_____
Mahabharata	_____	_____	_____	90%
Homer	9th Cent. B.C.	_____	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (50-100 A.D.)	2nd. Cent. A.D. (c.130 A.D. f.)	5,000 (Metzgar - 4969 Manuscripts)³⁸	99 + %

There are more New Testament manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than for any secular classic from antiquity. Norman Geisler states, "From the standpoint of a documentary historian the New Testament has vastly superior evidence to that of any other book from the ancient world." He offers the above chart which reveals the superior number, dating, and degree of accuracy of the New Testament over other books. Several observations become clear from the chart: (1) No other book is even a close second to the Bible on either the number or early dating of the copies. The average secular work from antiquity survives on only a handful of manuscripts; the New Testament boasts thousands. (2) The average gap between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years for other books. The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition and most of the New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion. (3) The degree of accuracy of the copies is greater for the New Testament than for other books that can be compared. For example, the New Testament has about 20,000 lines. Of these, only 40 are in doubt (i.e., about 400 words). By comparison, the Iliad possesses about 15,600 lines with 764 of them in question. This would mean that Homer's text is only 95% pure or accurate compared to over 99.5% accuracy for the New Testament manuscript copies.¹⁷

competence in the sense of expertness, state of mental and physical health, age, education, memory, narrative skill, etc. Therefore, it is a bonafide question: "Does the writer of a given Biblical document give any evidence of competence to write on the subject which he discusses?" One example will suffice: Did Luke, the Apostle, have the competence to write an accurate gospel and historical account of the early years of the Church? On this question, the famous British Scholar, Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939), with a great deal of pomp and flare, left England on his way to the Middle East and Turkey to retrace the journeys of the Apostle Paul as set forth in the bulk of the Biblical book of *Acts*, written by Luke.¹⁸ Ramsey set out with the intent and announced purpose of showing that it could not have happened the way that it is stated and that the record of *Acts* is full of errors and misstatements. To summarize, this most famous scholar of England at the time, was astonished to discover just how accurate the Book of Acts and the writer Luke was, and finally was so impressed that he was converted to Christianity himself. He spent the rest of his life writing on the work and activity of St. Paul and his message. Ramsey checked Luke's writings in hundreds of different ways, and found that *Acts* was written by someone who knew what he was doing and had the intimate knowledge wherewith to do it. Ramsey found Luke to be accurate in every case and instance.

It is a reasonable assumption that when a writer is accurate in every case, hundreds of them, in which the data can be checked, that he will then be accurate in even those cases which cannot be checked. For example, if a man tells the truth 100 times and what he says checks out to, in fact, be the truth, then on the 101st time he says something, even though one may be unable to check the validity of the statement, such a statement from this individual can reasonably be expected to be the truth. Yet, there is a strange malady in Biblical "scholarship," i.e., that everything in the Bible is false until everything is proven correct, therefore, the conclusion is that little or none of the Bible is reliable. This is not scholarship, this is philosophical bias and prejudice.

Were the Biblical Writers Willing to Tell the Truth?

A second major criteria which Dr. Gottschalk establishes as necessary is the question of "Willingness to tell the truth." This question includes other sub-tests such as "the interested witness test." This test deals with the problem that the author may have had a personal interest in the content of the document due to the fact that he may benefit himself the most from his own testimony. This is a common phenomena in modern times which manifests itself in "Tabloid Journalism" -- individuals selling their story

for personal gain. In such cases, the more colorful, i.e., embellished the story becomes, the more one stands to gain. With regard to the New Testament documents, particularly the Gospels, the question is whether or not the disciples of Christ manufactured a hoax and embellished their story for their own benefit. Did they, in turn, perpetrate the same on a huge portion of the population of the human race by means of a lie? In fact, Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), a German theologian who would be totally forgotten except that Albert Switzer made him famous in his book, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," came up with the idea in modern times that the Disciples knew perfectly well that Jesus was just a man, that He did not rise from the dead, that the whole thing was a fabrication, but they had too much at stake to let it all die.¹⁹ Therefore, they elaborated, concocted, and embellished the story after His death so that the movement would keep going and preserve their own leadership in the movement. Williston Walker describes Reimarus' position as one of "extreme rationalism,"²⁰ holding that, "The writers of the Bible were not even honest men, but were moved by fraud and selfishness."²⁰ To illustrate what is involved in this approach to the writers of the four gospels, take the example of "Internal Financial Control" from the business world. "Internal Control" is a system of bookkeeping which deters anyone from stealing money from the company. If in a business, only one person controls all the money and keeps all the books, then the internal control is only as good as is the honesty and integrity of that one man. But if the business has even two people responsible for control of the money, one handling the money and one recording the money on the books, then the chances of something getting out of hand are cut about 90%. Reason: With two individuals in control, one must have some sort of collusion for there to be a problem. Further, if the responsibility for the money can be spread between four to six people, for all practical purposes, one has eliminated the embezzlement possibility. NOTICE what the public is asked to believe by Reimarus — He asks that all believe that the eleven immediate disciples of Jesus, after His the death, concocted the story of the resurrection and then lived with it the rest of their lives. And, so far as the record is able to produce, all but the Apostle John died martyr's deaths. Therefore, all are asked to believe that 10 of the eleven Disciples went to a cross and other means of horrible deaths, and, they were told: "We will spare your life if you will but recant and admit that this whole thing about the resurrection of Jesus is a concocted myth." ***But everyone of them died for something that he knew to be a hoax.*** To say the least, this is not the way the normal human mind works! This writer knows of no record of anyone dying for something, who, at the same time, knew that it was not true, and all he had to

do was to recant the claim in order to live, but chose to die anyway. The urge of self-preservation is too great a normal human trait to make the argument of Reimarus valid. Such an argument becomes especially untenable in that it maintains that all eleven Disciples were in on the hoax and not one of them broke ranks. Not likely! Furthermore, if they were trying to keep a good thing going, *What was the good thing?* Was it all the money they made from it? Was it all the respect and good treatment they received? Was it all the travel and the great motels they stayed in? Read II Corinthians Chapter Eleven to see the "great times" these Apostles of Christ endured for the sake of Reimarus' imagined hoax.

In the final analysis, every single factor which Gottschalk raises as to the reliability of documents has been satisfactorily answered by the scholars. They include: Does the New Testament writers' literary style distort the truth? Is the witness accurately reported? Is there any independent corroboration? Are there any contradictions? Are there any prejudicial statements by the writers about themselves? Do the documents conform with known historical and scientific fact? All the answers are in the affirmative and in favor of the reliability of the New Testament Documents.

RELIABILITY AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

As far as Christianity is concerned, the Doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ is the basis of all Christian doctrine. Even a casual glance at a few basic points taken from the Doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ make it clear that the historical accuracy and fact of the literal resurrection of the humanity of Jesus Christ is an absolute must if the Christian Faith has any validity whatsoever.^[A4] If the resurrection of Christ is not a historical fact, then Christianity is no better than Mormonism, Buddhism, or Shintoism or any other "ism" that claims to have a savior, god, prophecy, doctrine, dogma, etc., that offers final and authoritative answers for secure prosperity. Therefore, as Dr Norman Geisler states, "The resurrection of Christ must be a verifiable, historical reality or Christianity is a farce."²¹

"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, (and He has been) how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; your faith is also in vain. If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then, those also who have died in Christ have

perished. If we only have hoped in Christ, in this life we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who are dead.

I Corinthians 12-14, 17-20

Attack on the Resurrection of Christ

No point of Bible Doctrine has been attacked more by the forces of this world than this particular principle. The primary reason being that the Cosmos knows that if it can upset this "apple-cart" then it has upset the entire basis of Christianity. However, all of the major attacks on this particular point of doctrine have only served to prove its truthfulness.

Is the resurrection of Christ something beyond a natural occurrence or experience? For purposes of this study, the subject of the historicity of the resurrection of Christ, hence the reliability of the Biblical Documents which record the incident, and, in turn, the validity of the Christian Faith as a source of Secure Prosperity in both time and eternity, will be approached from the standpoint, "**Can miracles occur?**"

The answer to the question: "Can miracles occur?" depends on the definition of a miracle. A miracle is anything that occurs in the supra or epinatural circumstance. This means something that occurs outside the natural Establishment^G Chain of Command laws. Denial of miracles demands explanations of the "resurrection" of Jesus Christ such as: He merely passed out, was then buried, and later, woke up and the disciples, or somebody, helped Him escape from the tomb and they purported the story that He rose from the dead, when He didn't really rise from the dead at all. This explanation follows the idea that they had a good thing going and did not want to allow it to die.

On the other hand, if one approaches the subject of the resurrection of Christ objectively and if the facts stack up so that it is confirmed that the Resurrection is supernatural and historical, and if all the other questions are answered positively, then one would know that Christianity has a justified basis. This approach of "questioning" the reliability of the Biblical documents is not anti-Christ, anti-faith, or anti-anything. It is simply subjecting the Christian documents, hence the claims of Christianity, to the same rules of scientific investigation to which one would subject any other set of documents or claims. Whether one is examining the nature and the cause of the Civil War or the nature and the cause of the problems of reconstruction after that war, he cannot understand the nature and cause of the Civil War unless he approaches the documents about the Civil War objectively.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE HUMANITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The historical accuracy of the Resurrection of Jesus is verified by literally hundreds that said they saw Him; some touched him; some put their finger into the wounds/scars; and all this occurred over an extended 40 day period, not in just one or two isolated incidents. However, the naturalist cannot allow any of these witnesses to represent truth, because the event is not "repeatable." This viewpoint is based on David Hume's [Scottish philosopher - 1711-1776 - Developed the modern philosophical schools of "Scepticism" and "Empiricism."] argument that, "Wise men always believe in the element with the highest degree of probability." However, do "wise men" really always only believe in that which fits into the category of the "highest degree of probability?" Imagine that in a Bridge game one was dealt a perfect Bridge hand. The odds of being dealt a "perfect" Bridge hand is 1 in 635 billion. Yet, many times in the history of the game of Bridge, perfect hands have, in fact, been dealt. QUESTION: Would the "wise man" believe that a perfect Bridge hand had been dealt at some time in history in light of the probability against it ever occurring, or does he believe the actual facts about the matter. ANSWER: According to Hume's doctrine of the definition of a "wise man," the answer would be "No!" This means that one with such a philosophy has predisposed himself against the possibility of miracles and no matter what the evidence is, he is not going to believe it. CASE IN POINT: If one will approach the New Testament record, being open to the facts, under the normal rules of investigation, he will conclude that the claim of the New Testament that Christ rose from the dead is true.

The Evidence Shows that Christ Rose From the Dead

The evidence shows that the most verified event of the ancient world is the Resurrection of Christ. In his book called, "Who Moved the Stone," Frank Morrison, a man highly skeptical of the validity of the Resurrection of Christ, intended to disprove the resurrection, but the subtitle of the book reveals what happened, — "The Book that Refused to Be Written." When he looked at the evidence and the facts from a purely historical perspective (as an open minded skeptic), he converted to Christianity and to the belief that Jesus did rise from the dead. His book stands as one of the finest defenses of all time from the historical evidence of the resurrection of Christ in modern times.²²

If one applies the normal laws of evidence and historical research to the facts of the New Testament documents and their claim for the resurrection, it is

obvious that it is the most verifiable event in the ancient world. No event in the ancient world and times has better evidence to verify its validity and truthfulness than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Was the Resurrection of Christ Physical?

The Gospels and I Corinthians 15 document that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was physical. (Paul's words on the matter are taken from the Gospels and his own personal encounter with Christ in the throne room, [II Corinthians 12:1-4] not from contact during the 40 days after the resurrection.)

The list of evidences for a literal/physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, as recorded by the New Testament writers, document that the Resurrection was LITERAL and PHYSICAL. This written evidence was recorded by individuals who were eye witnesses, who ate breakfast with Him, who walked and talked with Him, who placed their finger in the scars, etc. The list of evidence includes:

THE EMPTY TOMB: A body was never found. If the Romans or the Jews had it, surely, being the one's who would want to contest the claim of the resurrection of Christ, they would have produced the body if there had been one. The Jews and the Romans would only gain if a body was found. The Romans would benefit by producing the body of Jesus; hence, proving that He was not God, because they viewed Caesar as god and would like to keep him there. The Jews would benefit because they did not accept Christ as the Messiah and would surely desire to prove Him not so. They were looking for a man on a white horse and to get rid of Jesus the Nazarene as a potential Messiah; therefore, producing a body would have been healthy for their cause. Consequently, both groups had a vested interest in producing a body if they possibly could. In turn, these two groups are representative of the god of this world, who, surely, if the body of Jesus was available, would have produced a body. But even the god of this world could not do it.

THE GRAVE CLOTHES: These indicate a physical resurrection, i.e., Jesus was raised out of the literal clothes which were around the body. (cf., John 11:44) This refers to the fact that there was a cloth wrapped around His head. Other clothing, with spices intermingled, was wrapped around the rest of the body, making a cocoon like enclosure. However, when the disciples came to the tomb, they found this cocoon apparently collapsed flat and the head-wrap folded neatly. The description of the grave cite by the Apostle John is one of orderliness, not one of wild confusion. (John 20:7 "...head-cloth laid by itself...") If a grave-robber had stolen the body of Jesus in an

attempt to discredit His claims and shut down the Christian movement, why would he have meticulously removed the grave clothes and neatly folded them. [Greek: perfect passive participle of *entulissw* indicates that the cloth had received the action, apparently by Jesus.] It seems that a grave-robber would have taken both the body and the grave clothes. Whatever the nature of the scene of the grave site, the Apostles admit that they themselves believed only when they saw the condition of the grave for themselves.

THE MOVED STONE: Why move the stone? Not so that Jesus could get out, but so the disciples could get in. In resurrection body, Jesus would not have needed to move the stone. The fact that the stone was moved (John 20:1) so that people could see, plus, there were angels testifying that he was not there, speaks of the physical nature of the resurrection. The opened tomb means there could be no claim that the resurrection was spiritual.

HE ATE FISH: When He ate, He had a physical body which consumed fish. (Luke 24:42-43 "...ate it in their sight..." cf., Acts 10:40-41)

"God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to communicate to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One Who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead." Acts 10:40-42

SCARS OF THE BODY: The disciples put their hands in the physical scars. (Luke 24:38-40; John 20:20,27 cf., I John 1:1)

"And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace (be) with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" John 20:26-28

JESUS' PERSONAL STATEMENT: "I am not spirit, but have flesh and bones...". Modern Critics say that Jesus never Himself said these things, i.e., that these are embellishments by later followers who were trying to "beef-up" the story. However, the evidence demonstrates that the New Testament was written, not by people two or three generations later, but by people who were eye witnesses, who ate breakfast

with Him, and said "we talked to Him and put our finger into His scars." Bishop Robinson, in an article, "Honest to God," states, regarding a supposed lie about Christ's resurrection by the disciples, that, "Every book in the New Testament was written before 70 A.D., some of them between 40-50 A.D., i.e., between 10 to 15 years after the death of Christ."²³ He says, regarding recent evidence about the time frame within which the New Testament was actually written, that, "...if scholars reopen the question of the dates of the books, he is convinced that it will force the rewriting of the introduction to and ultimately most theologies of the New Testament."

Is The Resurrection Evidential?

This question is answered by documentation of the overall reliability of the documents of the New Testament and the impact which the message of Christ has had from the very beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff) until the present upon world history. The validity of this historical impact depends entirely upon the accuracy and fact of the literal resurrection of the humanity of Jesus Christ:

Categories of Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus:

1. **CATEGORY ONE:** Proof from the Test of Oral Testimony :

The "test" of whether oral testimony is truthful involves presenting evidence that there is no good reason or ulterior motives involved which would have caused the witness to say what he has said, unless it was simply the truth. Such witnesses to the resurrection of Christ include people who were alive and present in Jerusalem at the time of the events and who would qualify under the United States system of law to give testimony regarding personal knowledge of the events in question. These witnesses would also qualify under Roman and Hebrew Law (Deuteronomy 17:6) to testify on the subject.

a. Testimony that the tomb of Jesus Christ was empty:

❖The Roman soldiers who were assigned to guard the tomb, though unbelievers in the deity of Christ, gave objective witness that the tomb of Jesus was empty on the third day. (Matthew 28:11-15) The "evidential" nature of the testimony of the Roman guards [They had no good reason to lie.] is noted by the fact that their report was **regarded to be so accurate and believable** that they were bribed by the elders to, in fact, lie regarding the "empty tomb." They

were bribed to say, *"His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep."* (Matthew 28:13) Hence, this is the true source of the lie regarding the disciples stealing the body of Jesus, which lie became a widely held view. (Matthew 28:15 *"...and this story was widely spread among the Jews and is to this day."*)

- ❖ The statements of the unbelieving chief priests & elders of the Sanhedrin. Matt 28:11-12
 - ❖ The testimony of Mary Magdalene. Matt 28:1,6
 - ❖ The testimony of Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and sister of Jesus' mother. John 19:25
 - ❖ The testimony of Salome. Mark 16:1-6
 - ❖ The testimony of Peter. Luke 14:12
 - ❖ The written testimony of Matthew. Matt 28:
 - ❖ The written testimony of John. John 20:1-8
 - ❖ The written testimony from the facts, as given by the witnesses. Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:3
- b. Facts that prove that there is no good reason to believe that His body could have or would have been removed by his followers:
- ❖ The disciples were afraid and had already deserted Him, much less trying to preserve his body. Mat. 26:56; Mark 14:50
 - ❖ Their boldest leader, Peter, had denied Him 3 times. Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72 Luke 22:55-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27
 - ❖ John, who had the closest personal relationship with Him, stood by during his trials and had not entered one word in His defense.
 - ❖ The tomb was sealed with the Royal Seal of Roman Law and to break it and enter the tomb would be a capital crime.
 - ❖ The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers and to attack them was an act of insurrection which was punishable by crucifixion. Matt 27:62-66
 - ❖ His boldest followers, after the crucifixion, were Joseph of Armathea and Nicodemus and if they had plotted to hide the body of Christ, they would not have arranged to bury Him in such a prominent place.
 - ❖ His followers believed He was still in the tomb on resurrection morning. Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18
- c. Conclusion from personal testimony: The tomb of Christ was empty and none of His followers could have removed the body because, this would have brought the immediate wrath of Rome down upon them. And yet, Rome did not even begin to prosecute Christians over this matter.

2. CATEGORY TWO: Proof from Oral Testimony:

This includes a multitude of people who were eye witnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ prior to His ascension and session:

- a. Mary Magdalene - John 20:15-17; Mark 16:9-11
- b. Five other women, including Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Salome - Matthew 28:9-10
- c. Peter, on the afternoon of Resurrection Sunday - I Corinthians 15:5
- d. Cleopas on the road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-33
- e. Ten disciples (minus Thomas) - John 20:19-25
- f. Eleven disciples - John 20:26-29; Mark 16:14
- g. Seven of the eleven disciples beside the Sea of Galilee John 21:1-2
- h. Five hundred believers in a group - I Corinthians 15:6
- i. Jesus' half-brother, James, who was an unbeliever until the post-resurrection appearances - I Corinthians 15:7; John 7:3; Acts 1:14
- j. Eleven disciples on a mountain near Galilee - Matthew 28:16-20
- k. At the ascension (June, 32 a.d.) - Acts 1:3-11

3. CATEGORY THREE: Testimony of those who were eye witnesses to His resurrection through special post-resurrection appearances: Paul and Stephen. In both cases, one item that points to the truthfulness of their stories is that neither had anything to gain by maintaining a lie. They had lost everything for the cause. They were martyrs.

- a. Stephen - Acts 7:55-56
- b. The Apostle Paul:
 - ❖ On the road to Damascus (unbeliever) Acts 9:1-8; I Corinthians 15:8
 - ❖ In Arabia - Gal 1:12-17
 - ❖ In the temple in Jerusalem - Acts 22:17-21 (trance)
 - ❖ In Corinth (vision) - Acts 18:9
 - ❖ In jail in Jerusalem - Acts 23:11
 - ❖ On a ship on the way to Rome during a great storm. Acts 27:23 (Angel of the Lord)
- c. The Apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos - Revelation 1:12-20; 22:20

4. CATEGORY FOUR: Testimony of others who witnessed appearances, about which appearances, the Scripture is not specific.

- a. One of the requirements for Apostleship was to have witnessed the resurrected Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 9:1; 15:8-9) Silvanus & Timothy were classified as associates of, but not specifically as Apostles themselves. However, the possibility of their being considered as Apostles is hinted at in I Thessalonians 1:1 cf., 2:6 through the editorial "we" and the fact that they say that they could have "exercised our authority as Christ's Apostles." Hence, if this is true, this points to the fact that they stand as additional witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.
 - b. Apollos (above reason) - I Corinthians 4:6-9
 - c. Barnabas (above reason) - Acts 14:14 cf., Galatians 2:9
5. CATEGORY FIVE: Testimony of historians contemporary with the day and time of Jesus.

Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," (Chapter 3:3) states that Jesus Christ was resurrected and made appearances upon the earth. Josephus was a secular and unbeliever historian who states that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a common known fact of the day. What did he have to gain by such a claim? His is a testimony of historical fact based on objectivity.

THE VALUE OF THE ABOVE TESTIMONY IN A WESTERN-WORLD COURT OF LAW:

1. The witness must be mentally competent. (Especially at the time that he witnessed the event.)
2. Witnesses must be sufficient in number:
 - ❖ One witness is sufficient to establish murder.
 - ❖ Two witnesses are sufficient to establish an act of high treason.
 - ❖ Three witnesses are necessary for the execution of a will.
 - ❖ Seven witnesses are necessary for the execution of an oral will.
 - ❖ Under Jewish Law, two witnesses are required.

Therefore, under normal circumstances, seven is the largest number of witnesses required in the United States in a legal case. In the case of Christ's resurrection, **THERE ARE OVER 500 WITNESSES** ranging from family to distant contemporary historians.

3. The witness must be able to withstand an examination of his own character as a basis for accepting his testimony.

Simon Greenleaf asks the only pertinent question in this matter, which is, "Are they (the above witnesses) worthy of implicit belief, in the matters which they relate?" He states, "This is the question, in all human tribunals, in regard to persons testifying before them; and we propose to test the veracity of these witnesses, by the same rules and means which are there employed."²⁴ Greenleaf lists the rules of legal testimony in a court of law and documents that all of the witnesses, testimony, and exhibits regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ measure up to the requirements of the legal system of the western world, as well as Roman and Hebrew Law.

- a. FIRST RULE: Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing part the burden of proving it to be otherwise.²⁵

- ❖ The law presumes that every man is innocent until he is proven guilty; that everything has been done fairly and legally, until it is proven to have been otherwise; and that every document, found in its proper repository, and not bearing marks of forgery, is genuine.²⁶
- ❖ Greenleaf states, "Now this is precisely the case with the Sacred Writings." He notes, for example, "They (The New Testament Biblical documents) have been used in the church since time immemorial, thus they are found in the place where alone they ought to be looked for."²⁷ Greenleaf states that the texts of the "Four Evangelists" have been handed down to us in the state in which they were originally written, that is, without having been materially corrupted or falsified, wither by heretics or Christians. He says, "The genuineness of these writings really admits of as little doubt, and is susceptible of as ready proof, as that of any other ancient writings whatever."²⁸

- b. SECOND RULE: In matters of public and general interest, all persons must be presumed to be conversant, on the principle that individuals are presumed to be conversant with their own affairs.

- ❖ It is often complained that the "originals" are lost, hence the ones in our possession are likely corrupt and non-dependable. However, under the principles of common law, the fact of multiplication of copies being a public fact, i.e., an existing public common knowledge of what the originals said and purported, the prevailing current of assertion may be resorted to as

evidence, i.e., that to which every member of the community is supposed to be privy. It is a rule of principle that if any ancient document concerning the public's rights were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted on as the Four Gospels have been, would have been received in evidence in any of our courts of justice, without the slightest hesitation.²⁹

- ❖ The community/public common knowledge of the Four Gospels has been established and preserved by both the agents of the Christian public and the jealousy of opposing sects, beyond any moral possibility of corruption.³⁰
 - ❖ These copies of the Scriptures having thus been in familiar use in the churches, from the time when the text was committed to writing; having been watched with vigilance by so many sects, opposed to each other in doctrine, yet all appealing to these Scriptures for the correctness of their faith; having in all ages, down to this day, been respected as the authoritative source of all ecclesiastical power and government, and submitted to, and acted under in regard to so many claims of right, on the one hand, and so many obligations of duty on the other hand, Greenleaf states, "It is quite erroneous to suppose that the Christian is bound to offer any further proof of their genuineness or authenticity ... no lawyer, it is believed, would venture to deny either its admissibility in evidence, or the satisfactory character of proof."³¹
- c. THIRD RULE: In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true.³²
- ❖ In "matters of fact" the proof rests upon moral evidence alone, i.e., in the ordinary affairs of life we do not require nor do we expect demonstrative evidence of that which is consistent with known affairs and conditions.
 - ❖ The error of the skeptic consists in pretending or supposing that there is a difference in the nature of things to be proved, i.e., it makes no difference whether the facts to be proved relate to past life, present life or future life, the nature of evidence is the same.
- d. FOURTH RULE: A proposition of fact is proved when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence.
- ❖ This answers the question regarding when is a thing proved. By "competent evidence," is meant such as the nature of the thing to be proved requires; By "satisfactory evidence," is meant that amount of proof which ordinarily satisfies an

unprejudiced mind, beyond any reasonable doubt. If the subject is a matter of mathematics, its truth is to be shown by the certainty of demonstrative evidence. But if it is a question of act in human affairs, nothing more than moral evidence can be required, for this is the best evidence which, from the nature of the case, is attainable. The facts stated in Scripture History are not of the "mathematical" nature, but are cognizable by the senses so that they may be proved when they are established by that kind and degree of evidence which would, in the affairs of human life, satisfy the mind and conscience of a common man. Greenleaf, states with regard to the degree of evidence that exists for the resurrection of Christ, "When we have this degree of evidence, it is unreasonable to require more. A juror would violate his oath, if he should refuse to acquit or condemn a person charged with an offence, where this measure of proof was adduced."³³

- e. FIFTH RULE: In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown: the burden of impeaching his credibility lying with the objector.³⁴

This rule serves to show the injustice with which the writers of the Gospels have been treated. The consistent and invalid requirement placed upon the Christian theologian is to establish the credibility of his witnesses above all others, before their testimony is entitled to be considered, permitting the testimony of a single secular writer alone, and uncorroborated, TO OUTWEIGH THAT OF ANY SINGLE CHRISTIAN WITNESS. This is not the course in the courts of justice, where the testimony is never permitted to outweigh the oath even of the defendant himself, interested as he is in the cause. On the contrary, if the plaintiff, after having required the oath of his adversary, cannot overthrow it by something more than the oath of one witness, however credible, it must stand as evidence against him. Greenleaf states, "The Christian theologian has been treated without due regard to the common presumption of charity and reversing the ordinary rule of administering justice in human tribunals, his witnesses unjustly presumed to be false, until proven true. ... they have been treated, in the argument, almost as if the New Testament were the entire production, at once, of a body of men, conspiring by a joint fabrication, to impose a false religion upon the world."³⁵ To summarize the problem of the attitude of the critics of the validity of the New Testament, and specifically the resurrection of Christ, Greenleaf quotes Dr. Chalmers,

"In other cases, when we compare the narratives of contemporary historians, it is not expected that all the circumstances alluded to by one will be taken notice of by the rest; and it often happens that an event or a custom is admitted upon the faith of a single historian; and the silence of all other writers is not suffered to attach suspicion or discredit to his testimony. It is an allowed principle, that a scrupulous resemblance betwixt two histories is very far from necessary to their being held consistent with one another ... How does it happen that the authority of Josephus should be acquiesced in as a first principle, while every step in the narrative of the evangelists, must have foreign testimony to confirm and support it? How comes it, that the silence of Josephus should be construed into an impeachment of the testimony of the evangelists, while it is never admitted, for a single moment, that the silence of the evangelists, can impart the slightest blemish to the testimony of Josephus?"³⁶

- f. **SIXTH RULE:** The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon; first, their honesty; second, their ability; third, their number and the consistency of their testimony; fourth, the conformity of their testimony with experience; and fifth, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances.

This rule has not been permitted by the agnostic, i.e., the evangelists have been treated as a single body, with due respect for the fact that they were independent historians, writing at different periods, being treated as if the New Testament was produced all at once by a single body of men, conspiring by a joint fabrication so as to impose a false religion upon the world.

❖ **Their Honesty:** Their testimony went against ALL their worldly interests.

❖ **Their Ability:** The "ability" of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities which he has had for observing the facts; upon his powers of discerning; upon the faithfulness of his memory in retaining facts. Of the latter two traits, we know nothing, but we may well suppose that in these respects they were like the general cross section of their countrymen. Until the contrary is shown by an objector, i.e., it is always assumed that men are honest, and of sound mind, and of the average and ordinary degree of intelligence, until proven otherwise. This is not a judgment of mere charity, it is the uniform presumption of law, a presumption which is always allowed freely and fully to operate until the fact is shown to be otherwise by the party who denies the applicability of this presumption to the particular case in question.

No lawyer is permitted to argue in disparagement of the intelligence or integrity of a witness, against whom the case itself afforded no particular of testimony. Moreover, it is evident from the minuteness of the testimony of the Evangelist/ Witnesses that they are of sufficient intelligence to know and speak the truth.

■ **Matthew:** Trained by his calling to habits of severe investigation and suspicious scrutiny.

■ **Luke:** Trained by his profession to demand an exactness of observation equally close and searching.

■ **Mark & John:** If they were learned enough to forge the story of their "Master's" life, then they were both too learned to be deceived by an imposter or to be disqualified as unintelligent.

❖ **Their Number and Consistency:** The character of their testimony is like that of all other true witnesses, containing substantial likeness under circumstantial variety. This means that there is enough variety to show that there could have been no previous concert among them, and at the same time such substantial agreement as to show that they all were independent narrators of the same great transaction, as the events actually occurred. The discrepancies between the narratives of the several evangelists, when carefully examined, will not be found sufficient to invalidate their testimony. By comparison, if the evidence of the evangelists is to be rejected because of a few discrepancies among them, we shall be obliged to discard that of many of the contemporaneous histories on which we are accustomed to rely.

❖ **Their Conformity with Experience:** The testimony of a witness for veracity is readily conceded by objectors if the facts they relate are such as ordinarily occur in human experience. It is claimed that the testimony of the evangelists is tainted by their belief in miracles. This viewpoint sees them as being unreliable because their presuppositions about "natural law" is contrary to the common experience and/or assumption that all things are governed by "immutable laws or fixed modes of motion and relation, termed laws of nature." [Spinoza -- 1632-1677; A Dutch philosopher who gained a reputation as a "free thinker." He was a strong supporter of religious and political liberalism.] As a fundamental principle of law of evidence, as applied by Spinoza, this principle excludes all knowledge derived by inference or deduction from facts, confining us to what we derive from experience alone, i.e., the doctrines of Hume. However, if we may infer, from what we see and know, that there is a Supreme Being, by whom this world and its

order was created, WE MAY CERTAINLY, and with equal reason, believe Him capable of works which we have never yet known Him to perform. We may assume that the power which was originally exercised to create the world is still constantly and without ceasing exerted to sustain it. Therefore, the full discussion of the subject of miracles and their possibility forms no essential part of the present design. Their credibility has been fully established and the skeptics most satisfactorily met and overthrown by the ablest writers of our own day.

❖ **The Coincidence of Testimony with collateral and contemporaneous facts and circumstances:**

After a witness is dead and his moral character forgotten, we can only ascertain the truthfulness of his narrative/testimony by comparing its details with other sources, accounts, collateral facts contemporary with himself. Every event which actually transpires has its appropriate relation and place in the vast complication of circumstances; it owes its origin to the events which have preceded it; it is intimately connected with all others which occur at the same time and place, and often with those in remote regions and it, in turn, gives birth to numberless others which succeed. In all this almost inconceivable contexture, and seeming discord, there is perfect harmony. Principle: While a fact, which really happened, tallies exactly with every other contemporaneous incident related to it in the remotest degree, it is not possible for the wisdom of man to invent a story, which, if closely compared with the actual occurrences of the same time and place, may not be shown to be false. (This is why the "perfect crime" eludes us.) This is the reason that a false witness will evade detailing any circumstances in which he will be opened to detection by a comparison of them with other accounts, equally circumstantial.

Therefore, it is variety and minuteness of detail which is regarded as certain tests of sincerity and truthfulness. The testimony/narratives of the Scripture writers abound in examples of this kind of evidence, the value of which is hardly capable of being properly estimated.

CONCLUSION:

All that Christianity asks of men on this subject is that they would be consistent with themselves and treat the evidence as they treat the evidence of other things and that they try and judge the actors and witnesses as they deal with their fellowman when testifying to human affairs and actions in human

tribunals. The irony of the various viewpoints about the reliability of the New Testament documents is summarized by Geisler: "...today the professional historians accept the historicity of the New Testament. It is the critics who use pre-archaeological and philosophical presuppositions that reject the historicity of the New Testament."³⁷ Both the authenticity and the historicity of the New Testament documents are firmly established today. The authentic nature and vast amount of the manuscript evidence is overwhelming compared to the classical texts from antiquity. The original manuscripts date from within twenty to thirty years of the events of the life of Christ, that is, arising from contemporaries and eyewitnesses. These contemporary accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection are also established on firm secular historical grounds. Therefore the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.

NOTES----Chapter 2

1. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 7 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) 4: 287-288.
2. James P. Boyce, DD., LL.D., Abstract of Systematic Theology, (Republication by Ernest C. Reisinger & Fred A. Malone, Christian Gospel Foundation, 1887), pp. 258-271.
3. Henry M. Morris, Many Infallible Proofs, (San Diego: C.L.P. Publishers, 1974), p. 14.
4. Dr. William Bell, The Reliability of the New Testament Documents, [Taped lecture before university class] Probe Ministries International, 12011 Coit Road, Suite 107, Dallas, Texas 75251, March, 1977 Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.) [No tape number available from Probe Ministries] Writer is deeply indebted to Dr. Bell for much of these pertinent materials.
5. Morris, p. 88.
6. Jacob Hoke, The Great Invasion of 1863, (Dayton: W. J. Shuey Publisher, 1887), p. 360. General Longstreet said to General Lee on the morning of July 3, 1863: "General, I have had my scouts out all night, and I find that you still have an excellent opportunity to move around to the right of Meade's army, and maneuver him to attacking us." Lee replied, pointing with his fist at Cemetery Hill, "The enemy is there, and I am going to strike him." Longstreet pressed his point, thinking it his duty to express his convictions, saying, "General, I have been a soldier all my life. I have

been with soldiers engaged in fights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions, and armies, and should know, as well as anyone, what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men ever arrayed for battle can take that position," pointing to Cemetery Hill. General Lee, in reply to this, ordered Pickett's division to prepare for the attack. The Confederate infantry emerged from the shelter of the woods on Seminary Ridge, and in 50 minutes 7,000 Confederate troops lay dead or mortally wounded. Out of 15,000 troops, only a few hundred ever reached the Union line, only to also be repulsed.

Cross reference documentation demonstrates that Hoke's account is accurate and, in fact, Lee did go against the sound advice of Longstreet.

R. A. Brock, ed., Gen. Robert Edward Lee, Soldier, Citizen and Christian Patriot (Richmond: Royal Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 292-293. As recorded by Colonel John J. Garnett of the Confederate States Artillery, who was there: "In the morning Lee had told Longstreet to order Pickett's division, which belonged to his corps, to make an attack in force on the Federal left centre ... General Pickett mounted his white charger, and, riding up to Longstreet, asked for orders. "Shall I move forward, General?" he asked, pointing to the Federal left centre, at an angle of the stone wall directly in his front. Longstreet looked the hero in the face, with firmest lips and a glance of hesitation and doubt. He had opposed the movement, had no faith in it, and was reluctant to give verbal assent to it. But, veteran soldier that he was, he bowed to do the will and desire of his commanding officer, and nodded his head affirmatively to Pickett's question."

7. Louis Gottschalk, Understanding History, A Primer of Historical Method, 2nd. ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1969).
8. Simon Greenleaf, LL.D. Testimony of the Evangelists, Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice, (New York: James Cockcroft & Company, 1874), p. 28.
9. Josh McDowell, "The Resurrection Factor--Proof Positive," *Moody Monthly*, (April, 1983), p. .
10. J. N. D. Anderson, Christianity, the Witness of History Sub-title: "A Lawyer sifts the evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Tyndale Press, 1969).
11. F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943).
12. Bruce, p. 16.
13. Bell, Tape recording.
14. Ibid.
15. Bruce, p. 16. "Of the sixteen books of his *Annals*, ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh."
16. Dr. Norman Geisler, Elements of the Resurrection, (Dallas: Probe Ministries, Cassette Tape # AP-11).
17. Dr. Norman Geisler, Christian Apologetics, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), p. 307.
18. John A Simpson, "Ramsay, Sir William Mitchell," The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 824.
19. Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1960), pp. 15-21.
20. Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 481.
21. Geisler, Cassette Tape.
22. Frank Morrison, Who Moved the Stone?, (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter Books, 1930).
23. Bishop Robinson, "Honest to God," Time Magazine, (March 21, 1977).
24. Greenleaf, p. 3.
25. Ibid., page 7.
26. Ibid., page 8.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., page 7.
29. Ibid., page 9-10.
30. Ibid., page 10.
31. Ibid., page 10-11.
32. Ibid., page 23.
33. Ibid., page 25.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., page 26.
36. Greenleaf, pp. 26-27: Commentary on Chalmers, Evidences, pp. 72-74.
37. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 326.

38. Bruce Metzgar, The Text of the New Testament, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 31-33.

STUDIES----Chapter 2

[The following is a list of Bible Studies taught by Dr. Killingsworth in Rephidim Church, Wichita Falls, Texas. The listing includes the name of the doctrinal subject and the corresponding cassette tape number(s). For additional information write: RDBS, INC., 4430 Allendale Rd., Wichita Falls, TX 76310]

DOCTRINE OF RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS--K194-K197]

DOCTRINE OF SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE -- D77-D88 {Addendum to "Reliability of the Biblical Documents -- K194-K197}

DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION -- H87-H96
{ Further documents how one is able to check the validity of any document, hence, its truthfulness. The Doctrine of the Resurrection documents that the claims of Christianity narrows the options down to Christ vs. others. }

GENESIS CHAPTER TEN, VERSE ONE -- M193-M194 (Discusses the reliability of the "Table of Nations" passed down by Moses. Such documents were utilized by both Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. This means that they are included in Paul's assessment of II Timothy 3:16 that "all Scripture is God breathed and is profitable..." As such the "Table of Nations" should be considered absolutely accurate and beneficial.)

HEBREWS CHAPTER SEVEN, VERSE TWENTY TWO -- I53-I54 (Jesus Christ is called a "better guarantor" than the Mosaic Law. This refers to the fact that the priesthood of Christ, compared to that of Levi, is eternal because of His eternal nature and because of His resurrection from the dead. However, this "better" status of the priesthood of Christ depends entirely upon the accuracy of the literal resurrection of the humanity of Jesus. The truthfulness of the resurrection of Jesus, in turn, depends upon the reliability of the New Testament documents.)

BIBLICAL SUPERNATURALISM AND RELIABILITY RELATED TO THE MIRACLES OF CREATION VS. EVOLUTION -- K275-K277

PSALM FORTY --J171-J172 ("...in the roll of the book it is written of me..." Psalm 40:6)

NOAHIC FLOODS SPECIAL: INCREMENT 7--M123-M151 "Biblical Basis of Hydrology & Meteorology"

NOAHIC FLOODS SPECIAL: INCREMENT 8--M167-M172 "Overflowed With Water"