

**Review: Ross Clifford, *Leading Lawyers' Case for the Resurrection*,
NRP Books, Irvine, CA, 1991 (2015 edn.)**

Pages: 143

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

This unique work enables one to judge the Gospels through a legal lens, giving many useful tests of source documents, internal and external evidences, witness reliability, and perhaps most importantly referencing a standard of reasonable doubt, not perfection. The fact that all events do not *seem* to agree (in our limited understanding this side of eternity), is not proof the events *did not take place*, or that they are *not* in perfect agreement.

The lawyer's verdict is that historical records and archaeology would more than satisfy a court of the reality of the resurrection, if Gospel evidences were admitted under an 'Ancient Documents Rule'.

Furthermore, they expose the stark double standards of scholars exalting minimally-attested Greek and Roman secular histories, yet ignoring the mounting evidence in favour of the Gospels.

Introduction (pp. 1-14)

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) was the father of international law.

"Evidence does not bring one hundred percent certainty. All decisions in life are founded on probability." [p23]

"To make a decision against the evidence is to commit intellectual suicide and be intellectually dishonest."

Erasmus was the "Reformation's Orphan".

Luther found him equivocal and cowardly.

Despite standing by Rome, she placed all his books on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

I) Judge Edmund H. Bennett: A model lawyer. Who Wrote the Gospels? (pp. 15-27)

Archaeologist Sir William Ramsay: “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense ... In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”

Mark wrote for Peter.

Evidence may be intrinsic, e.g:

- Matthew (a tax collector) is the only one who records Jesus paying his personal tax;

- Mark interprets “Ephphatha” since he was writing for on-Jews;

- Luke has a medical emphasis since he was a doctor (he alone includes the healing of the man’s ear in the garden, also he diagnoses a high fever of Peter’s mother-in-law, and that a man was *full* of leprosy.

- John’s gospel is most personal given his close relationship with Jesus.

The *Muratorian Canon*, AD190, states Luke wrote his Gospel by Paul’s authority, and John the disciple wrote John.

Legal principle dictates experts commenting on documents today are irrelevant, it is the document itself which carries weight.

In *Deeks v H.G. Wells et al.*, Deeks claimed Wells plagiarised her work and she called in expert literary critics. However, the action failed due to worthless evidence.

II) Dr John Warwick Montgomery: A Prominent Scholar. Are the Gospels Reliable, Historical Documents? (pp. 28-40)

Military C. Sanders had three tests:

1. Bibliographical ('transmission'): a large number of cross-checked manuscripts saying essentially the same thing evidences high reliability; variant copies aid scholars in reconstructing the original [!!]

2. Internal evidence: Dr Montgomery: "To express scepticism concerning the ... New Testament ... is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity." [p33] ... Aristotle's dictum that the benefit of doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself." [p35]

"Doubt the critic before the document."

3. External evidence: "While Graeco-Roman historians have been growing in confidence, the twentieth-century study of the Gospel narratives ... has taken so gloomy a turn."

III) Professor Simon Greenleaf: Leading Expert on Evidence. Do the Gospel Writers Speak the Truth? (pp. 41-55)

Simon Greenleaf (also Thomas Starkie): "Testimony of witnesses depends upon ... honesty ... number and the consistency of heir testimony ... conformity ... with experience and ... coincidence ... with collateral circumstances".

The 'incredible assertions test' mitigates against accepting outrageous claims.

"Does testimony of witnesses coincide with contemporaneous facts?"

John records the pavement of Pontius Pilate which has been discovered, also the Pool of Bethesda.

Dishonest witness tend to be very guarded in what they say.

There is an "embellishment test".

The Givens bias test determines if a witness has an obvious bias.

Mishna Aboth, II.8: “a good pupil was like a ‘plastered cistern that loses not a drop’ ”.

IV) Robert Anderson: The ‘Jack the Ripper’ Detective. Do the Gospel Writers Complement Each Other? (pp. 56-69)

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (Fenian Society) was formed 1865 to create an independent Irish state.

Complementary witness test: truthful witnesses naturally complement each other.

Minor variations test: sometimes there may not be total uniformity in the order of events.

Trivial differences are not going to lead to dismissing evidence as a whole.

Apparent inconsistencies may not be so when all the facts come to light in the end.

‘Negative higher critics’ have negated the supernatural:

-Do they have to expertise to comment on the trustworthiness of the Gospels? No.

-Have their findings been upheld in the past? No.

-Are they biased? Yes.

V) Lord Hailsham: The Former Lord Chancellor. Is the Jesus Story Found Outside the New Testament (pp. 70-81)

Lord Hailsham: “The Communist world teaches an extremely simple view of Jesus of Nazareth ... he simply did not exist ... He was a Sun myth, like Mithras, or perhaps the rain god like Quetzalcoatl.

He is the unperson to end all unpeople. It might be possible to ignore this view as too absurd to be taken seriously were it not for the fact ... so many people must be growing up to believe just this.” [p73]

VI) Sir Norman Anderson: An Eminent Law Professor. What Is the Real Evidence for the Resurrection? (pp. 82-108)

Some of the 500 who saw the risen Christ in I Cr 15.6 may well have been sceptics.

Hallucinations are highly individualistic, not common.

History indicates the tomb of Christ was not subject to early pilgrimage.

The Jews had no motive to steal the body since they were set to destroy Christianity, not aid it.

VII) Sir Lionel Luckhoo: The World's 'Most Successful' Lawyer. It May be True, but Does it Work? (pp. 109-119)

VIII) Dr Frank Morison: A Case of Mistaken Identity. What Should Our Response be to Jesus? (pp. 120-123)

Appendix 1: Lawyers' Statements on the Resurrection (pp. 124-131)

Appendix 2: Mr Clarrie Briese's Statement on the Resurrection (pp. 132-135)

Appendix 3: The Gospels in Court (pp. 136-144)

The U.K. Civil Evidence Act 1968 and the U.S. Federal Rules of Evidence Rule 803 (16) declares an exception to hearsay rule for "Statements in ancient documents", normally for documents at least thirty years old. The implications of this would be direct observations in the gospels like in John would be admissible. Others are "double hearsay" and out of scope.