

The Disciples

A. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

As a young man Saul of Tarsus allied himself with the ones who persecuted the followers of Christ, and Saul watched over their robes as they stoned Stephen to death.¹ Later, his malice against Christ drove him to ask for permission to increase his mistreatment of the disciples. Luke wrote,

Acts 9:1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

But while he was on the journey to Damascus the zeal of Saul of Tarsus to punish and persecute Christians changed in a day. At one moment he is Saul the Persecutor; the next he is Paul the Penitent, Paul the Apologist for Christ.

How could such a reversal occur in the feelings of a persecutor of Christians?

The following is what Paul said while defending his actions before King Agrippa and Festus. At that time Paul was under arrest for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

Acts 26:9 “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 “And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 “And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. 12 “While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

¹ Acts 7:58.

- Paul said that the light accompanied the presence of Jesus of Nazareth.
- After this encounter Saul was a changed man.
- The change in him was so complete that it was no longer accurate to call him Saul of Tarsus; rather, now he is Paul the Apostle, Paul the fellow-sufferer with Christians.

Where before he had persecuted the church, now he tells the Corinthians,

2 Cor. 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Before, Paul caused the suffering; now Paul is the sufferer for the cause of Christ. How could anyone account for this change in a man who was once Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of Christ? He had undergone a deep and profound change of attitude and purpose. Men do not make such changes for trivial reasons. If Paul did not encounter the risen Christ then there is no adequate explanation for his rebirth.

B. The Witnesses of the Resurrection.

The “witnesses” refers to those people who can declare and affirm what they saw, heard or knew concerning the things Christ did both before and after His resurrection. Luke says that the requirements for apostolic succession are as Peter told the gathering of disciples who had assembled to replace Judas Iscariot,

Acts 1:21 “It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— 22 beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

- The witnesses knew the Lord Jesus. They saw Him and they heard Him.

- The witnesses knew what Jesus did during His ministry, where He went, what He spoke, and to whom He spoke.
- The witnesses were competent to tell of Jesus before His death, about His suffering, and of Him after His resurrection.

In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter told the gathering,

Acts 2:29 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 “And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses...”²

Later, Peter wrote in his second letter,

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Paul stated the importance of the resurrection,

1 Cor. 15:12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our **preaching is vain**, your **faith also is vain**. 15 Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your **faith is worthless**; you are **still in your sins**. 18 Then **those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished**. 19 **If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**

- The fact of the resurrection rests on eyewitness testimony.
- The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian hope.
- Everything rests upon it.

² Emphasis mine, author.

- The qualifications of the witnesses are, therefore, supremely important.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead can be proved as a fact of history then He is the Christ of God, and the Bible is a special divine revelation.

C. The Question and the Witnesses.

1. Did Jesus rise from the dead?

J.W. McGarvey said,

“By the leading skeptics it is now admitted, first, that Jesus actually died and was buried; second, it is admitted that on or before the third morning His body disappeared from the tomb; third, that the disciples came to believe firmly that He arose from the dead. The exact issue has reference to the last two facts, and may be stated by the two questions:

Did the body disappear by a resurrection, or in some other way? And – Did the belief of the disciples originate from the fact of the resurrection, or from some other cause?”³

2. Who were the witnesses?

“To us the witnesses are a group of women, not less than five in number, plus Mary His mother; (Matt. 27:55; Luke 8:1-3; John 19:25), the twelve original apostles; and the apostle Paul. The testimony of the women and of the twelve is recorded in the four Gospels, in Acts, and in the Epistles of Peter and John, and in Revelation. That of Paul is found in Acts and his epistles.”⁴

The Women.

These women were those who “...contributed to the support of Jesus and his disciples out of their private means.” They were comparatively wealthy. Luke 8:2. Among them were,

Mary Magdalene – Jesus healed her. She saw Jesus crucified, buried and afterward when He had risen. She bought spices to anoint His body. Mk. 15:40; Mk. 16:1.

Mary the mother of James (Mary of Cleophas) – stood by the cross; waited at the tomb; bought spices. She had four sons and at least

³ J. W. McGarvey, *Evidences of Christianity*, Part III, p. 117,18.

⁴ Ibid, p. 118.

three daughters. Her sons were, James, Joses, Jude and Simon. Mk. 16:1;

Joanna the wife of Chuza – her husband was a steward of Herod. Luke 8:3.

Susana – (no other mention than Luke 8:3)

Salome – the wife of Zebedee; at the crucifixion; visited the tomb; also bought spices.

Mary – the mother of Jesus; was at the crucifixion.

- These women accompanied Jesus.
- They knew Him well.

D. The Apostles as Witnesses.

Matthew, in his gospel, lists the names of the twelve apostles who were with Jesus at the beginning.

Matt. 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called **Peter**, and **Andrew** his brother; and **James** the *son* of Zebedee, and **John** his brother; 3 **Philip** and **Bartholomew**; **Thomas** and **Matthew the tax-gatherer**; **James the son of Alphaeus**, and **Thaddaeus**; 4 **Simon the Zealot**, and **Judas Iscariot**, the one who betrayed Him.

“The force of human testimony depends on three things: first, the **honesty** of the witness; second, their **competency**; and third, their **number**.”⁵

1. Their honesty.

McGarvey wrote, “We ascertain whether they are honest by considering their general character and their motives in the particular case.”⁶

a. Their character is good.

(1) **Their tone**. They tell their tale in the dispassionate tone that belongs to truthful witnesses.

Luke 23:33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

⁵ Ibid., p.146.

⁶ Ibid.

- The same is true in Mark 15:24.

(2) **Their candor** in relating things to their own discredit. They show their honesty in relating things discreditable to themselves: Peter's denial; the Apostles' ambition; their failure to understand, etc.

In the courtyard of the residence of the High Priest, Caiaphas, Peter said, "I do not know the man." He said it twice. Matt. 26:72, 74.

The mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons came to Jesus and asked Him if her sons could sit one on His right and the other on His left in His kingdom. Matt 20:20.

(3) **Their sufferings.** The sincerity and honesty of the Apostles is proved by what they were willing to endure in consequence of the testimony they gave. They had no selfish advantage to gain. Paul wrote that he was,

2 Cor. 11:20 ... beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

(4) **Allusions to local customs.** The truthfulness of the witnesses is shown by many incidental (and therefore, undesigned) allusions to the topography, customs, and manners of the country – to peculiarities of time and place. These things confirm their credibility.

- References to the Council (The Great Sanhedrin), the Temple, the Temple Guard, towns and cities in the area, the Passover, the Day of Preparation, sacrifices and offerings all put the testimony in a historical context.

(5) The **unintentional evidence** of words, phrases, and accidental details: After His resurrection the disciples did not at first recognize Jesus, Luke 24:16; John 21:4; but we are not told why. Jesus said, "Stop clinging to Me..." John 20:17; "I will take Him away," Mary said; John 20:15; Could she have taken Him away? "And Peter" Mark 16:7; Why refer particularly to Peter? "**The napkin**" John 20:7; an incidental observation. And a thousand other examples.

(6) The character of **the interviews (conversations) with Jesus**. The character of these interviews (conversations) of Jesus with His followers constitute unanswerable proof of the resurrection.

- These are honest and without guile, unadorned, and bearing the unmistakable marks of truth.

(7) **Manifestations of Jesus**. These were limited to a certain number of instances; all these interviews ceased after a limited time and was not extended. He did not appear to His enemies. All of this evidence points to the honesty of the witnesses.

b. Their motives are pure.

“The motives which prompt men to false testimony are fear, avarice, and ambition; fear of some evil to themselves or others, which is to be averted by the testimony; desire of sordid gain; and ambition for some kind of distinction among men.”⁷

Yet, in this the witnesses of the Resurrection are above suspicion.

- If the motives of the apostles were not pure, then in what way did they gain? Each of them but one was put to death.

2. Their competency.

“Competency is determined by considering the **opportunities** of the witness **to obtain knowledge** of that to which he testifies, and his **mental capacity to observe** and remember the facts.”⁸

(a) **Opportunity**. The Apostles had been with Jesus from His baptism, and understood that their office was that of witnesses. Acts 1:21,22.

(b) Mental and physical competence.

Physical competency required mainly good eyes, and good ears. As in the quotation,

Good eyes and ears were better qualifications for the original Apostles, than all the learning of the Archbishop of York, or of the potentialities of a Rhodes Scholar. Their most important role was to identify the person of Jesus,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

whenever and wherever they saw him. Jesus expected them to tell what he did, to repeat what he said, and to proclaim the facts without comment.

Note the character and occupation of at least three:

(1) Matthew was a tax collector, with a profound knowledge of Hebrew law, Roman law, and human nature. He shows no sign of hysteria or weakness.

(2) Peter, although impetuous, was not gullible, naïve, or uncritical.

(3) John was not gullible. He shows an ability to notice details, John 20:7.

(4) These men were not willing to believe just anything. Mk. 9:30-32; Lk. 24:25.

3. Their number.

- **There were twelve original Apostles.**
- **Paul joined their number later.**
- **Others saw and heard; but these were chosen.**

McGarvey wrote,

“The requisite number varies with the degree of probability attached to the facts. The testimony of two honest and competent witnesses makes us feel more sure than that of one; and that of three, than that of two; but a limit is soon reached beyond which those who are convinced feel the need of no more, and those who are not yet convinced realize that more would not convince them. When this number has testified in any case, the number is sufficient, and a greater number would be useless.”⁹

E. Evidence of the Changed Disciples.

- They began following Jesus with the expectation of a grand and glorious earthly kingdom in which Israel and they would be set free from bondage.
- On Friday, the day of the Crucifixion they fell into despair; on the First Day of the week they rejoiced, and exulted.
- At the crucifixion they lost hope; on the First Day of the week hope and certainty returned.

⁹ Ibid.

- When they first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead they did not believe it; afterward they never doubted.
- They went from fear and cowardice to boldness and courage.
- Afterward, they passed their lives in labors, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily accepted and endured as a consequence of the message they preached; yet they never recanted, nor denied the truth of the message they carried.
- These witnesses gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known; and even according to the testimony of their enemies they lived by those principles themselves.
- For their labors they gained neither worldly riches, nor acclaim, neither did they rise to positions of power; rather, so far as we know, all of them except one suffered martyrdom. John the Apostle was exiled on Patmos.
- Why should they suffer so if their story was not true?

1. Jesus' instructions to the disciples.

Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that He must be killed, and then rise from the dead on the third day following His death. Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:22; 20:19; John 2:19.

Matt. 16:21 From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

2. The understanding of the disciples.

Matt. 17:22 And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; 23 and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." **And they were deeply grieved.**

- They did not understand what He said either before or after His crucifixion, or even after the resurrection. Lk. 24:11; 20-21; Mark 16:12-14.
- So completely convinced were they that their hopes had been crushed by the crucifixion of Christ that they went back to Galilee, John 21:3.

John 21:3 Simon Peter *said to them, “I am going fishing.” They *said to him, “We will also come with you.”

- This comment is one of the most telling of Peter’s attitude after the crucifixion. And his attitude was the same as the others.

3. Their attitude after the crucifixion.

Luke 24:10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 And these words appeared to them as nonsense, **and they would not believe them.**

The two disciples on the way to Emmaus,

Luke 24:15 And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and *began* traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. 17 And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. 18 And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” 19 And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. **21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. 24 “And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.” 25** And He said to them, **“O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!** 26 “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

3. The change in the disciples.

But after Jesus' ascension, and after the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples are radically changed. Acts 2:14; 22-24, 36; 3:13-15; 4:8-13, 19-20; 5:28-32, etc.

Seven weeks later, Peter, addressing the men of Jerusalem and Judea on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection:

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this *Man*, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. 24 “And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Peter addressing the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem,

Acts 4:1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard*, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. 5 And it came about on the next day, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7 And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “**Rulers and elders of the people**, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, **10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 “He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. 12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”**

4. How to account for the change in the disciples.

How does one account for the change in the disciples? No one can deny the zeal of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost. Their message shook the world, changed history, and overturned existing systems of government and society. Peter's explanation is best,

1 Peter 1:3 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 dead**, 4 to obtain **an inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are **protected by the power of God** through faith **for a salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

CONCLUSION: There is really only one explanation for the change wrought in the personalities of the witnesses. Jesus of Nazareth died upon the cross in the full physical sense of the word, he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and on the first day of the week following He arose from the dead. Afterward he presented Himself to the witnesses in such a way that it brought about a complete change in their belief, resulting in a complete change in their course of life. It is more reasonable, therefore, to believe Peter's explanation than to believe the explanations given by other men.

The changes wrought on the disciples can be described in no other way than they were born again—as Peter said.

A. Alexander, *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 118-130.

Band, *Positive Christian Evidences*, p. 231-253.

W. A. Candler, *Cristus Auctor*, see table of contents.

Fisher, *Manual of Christian Evidences*, 44ff, 83ff.

Floyd Hamilton, *Basis of Christian Faith*, p. 283-295.

I.S.B.E., Article, "Resurrection."

McClintock and Strong Encyclopedae, article, "Resurrection of Jesus Christ."

J. W. McGarvey, *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 116ff, 132-162, 153ff.

E. Y. Mullins, *Why is Christianity True?*, p. 185-203.

James Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, 478 (See Index, "Resurrection").

James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*.

William Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ*.

Edward J. Carnell, *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, p. 243-275, 336-348.

Lord's Quarterly, Vol. V. p. 310-328.

Merrill Tenney, *John, The Gospel of Belief*, p. 272-284.

Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand*, p. 359-437.

Russell, *A Lawyer's Examination of the Bible*, p. 101-136.

Proof from the Conversion of Saul.

Endnotes

The following is an outline of the argument presented by Lord George Lyttelton, which appeared first in about 1747. Lyttelton and his friend, Gilbert West, were "Fully persuaded that the Bible was an impostor and determined to expose the cheat. Lord Lyttelton chose the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and Mr. West the Resurrection of Christ for the subject of hostile criticism...the result of their separate attempts was that they were both converted by their efforts to overthrow the truth of Christianity."¹⁰

Lyttelton lays down four propositions that he considers to exhaust all the possibilities in the case:

1. Paul was "an impostor who said what he knew to be false with an intent to deceive;" or

2. He was an enthusiast who imposed on himself by the force of "an overheated imagination;" or

3. He was "deceived by the fraud of others;" or finally,

¹⁰ Fundamentals, Vol. V., p. 107.

4. What he declared to be the cause of his conversion did really happen; “and, therefore, the Christian religion is a divine revelation.”

A. Paul was not an impostor.

Men act from motives, and Paul could not have possessed a motive for imposture.

1. Wealth could not have been the motive.

Paul gave up wealth when he left Pharisaism and the influence he would have possessed in Judaism. When Paul embraced Christianity, he also embraced poverty. Even though poor and in want, he refused to accept help when such help would hinder the gospel. 1 Cor. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 9:15-18; 2 Cor. 12:14; Acts 20:33-34. The closing days of his life show him as an old man in a Roman prison, asking that a cloak be sent him to protect him from the cold, 2 Tim. 4:13.

2. Reputation could not have been the motive.

Reputation lay on the side of the Pharisees. Universal contempt lay on the side of Christianity. 1 Cor. 1:26-29; 4:11-13.

3. Power could not have been the motive.

Paul did not desire power. He was not ambitious in a worldly sense when he became a Christian. He addressed his inferiors as “co-laborers;” “fellow workers;” he neither lorded it over individuals, nor over the churches he established. Paul preached Christ as head; he hid himself behind the cross; he rebuked sin of all kinds in the church without fear or favor, but never with an attitude of superiority. Philemon 23-24; 1 Cor. 1:13-17; 3:4-9; 2 Cor. 4:5.

4. The gratification of other passions could not have been the motive.

Some people claim they have received revelations so that they may indulge in loose conduct. Paul preached the highest standard of morals, and condemned all such departures from the standard. Eph. 4:17-5:33; Col. 3:5-17; Gal. 5:19-25.

5. His work was not simply a pious fraud.

Did Paul pretend to be converted simply to be able to spread Christianity? No. Pretenders do not live and work as Paul did without a sufficient motive. Men always have a motive for what they do. What was Paul’s motive? Where did he get his knowledge? How can we account for his successes?

B. Paul was not an enthusiast who imposed on himself.

1. An “enthusiast” is:

A religious madman; a fanatic. One whose mind is wholly possessed and heated by what engages it...A fervent and imaginative person. Webster.

2. Characteristics of an enthusiast.

a. Great heat of temper. Though Paul was fervent, he was always governed by reason and discretion. Before all else, his efforts were to reach men with the gospel, Acts 24:24-27; 26:2-29; He had one aim only, Phil. 3:13-14.

b. Melancholy. This is a mark of misguided zeal, but it is never found in Paul; he is always rejoicing, never brooding; Col. 1:24; Phil 4:4-7, etc.

c. Paul was not swept away as an enthusiast, for such men always see what they are looking for; he was looking for something else besides Christianity when he went on the road to Damascus. He was persecuting Christ, not looking for Him.

C. Paul was not deceived by others.

1. Verbal deception is an impossibility.

While Paul was bitter against the disciples, and carrying out his persecution, it is impossible that they could have deceived him, nor would they have attempted it. It is morally impossible.

2. Physical deception is an impossibility.

It was physically, and technically impossible for them to produce the light and the voice he experienced on the road to Damascus. A deception of this type is impossible because of their level of science.

3. Conclusion.

Therefore, Paul was not deceived. He saw Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Christ rose from the dead.

D. Paul’s testimony about the Resurrection.

1. Universal belief in the resurrection.

a. Paul wrote letters to the Romans, Galatians, and two to the Corinthians. In these he testifies to the truth of the resurrection.

b. His claims in the letters: Rom. 1:4; Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:14, 15.

c. The resurrection was a matter of faith in the churches addressed in the letters, even the one Paul had not visited, i.e., Rome.

d. Paul met his opponents by an appeal to having seen Jesus, 1 Cor. 9:1. This establishes the fact that his opponents believed in the resurrection and that Paul's having seen Jesus was required for his apostleship.

2. Three theories to account for this universal belief.

a. In intended fraud by the apostles.

b. The apostles were deceived.

c. Jesus rose from the dead.

3. A consideration of the theories.

a. The early disciples lacked motive and ability for a fraud so stupendous and successful. If Jesus did not rise from the dead we have a wondrous effect without an adequate cause.

c. "These men lacked the mental conditions required for such an hallucination as the 'vision theory' attributed to the early followers of Jesus. One of three mental conditions must exist before the mind can yield itself to an hallucination, viz., prepossession, a fixed idea, or a state of expectancy." ¹¹

"Again, why should the same form of hallucination have possessed the minds of so many and so different persons at the same time?"¹² "Furthermore, if the appearances of Jesus were mere visions, why did they cease within a very limited time after the crucifixion—say forty days? What cured the visionaries of their hallucinations all at once? Why were they all cured simultaneously? Why did not the distemper last them longer?"¹³

CONCLUSION: There is only one logical answer: Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He is the Son of God. The Bible is a Special Divine Revelation.

¹¹ Candler, *Christus Auctor*, p. 86.

¹² Ibid. p. 87.

¹³ Ibid. p. 88.

Simon Greenleaf

Simon Greenleaf was perhaps the greatest authority known to England and America on the subject of legal evidence. He wrote a book entitled, "*The Testimony of the Evangelists*," in which he said this,

"The great truths which the apostles declared were that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling terrors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of his disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience and unblenching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and to avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come."¹⁴

- Yet the apostles of Christ maintained the same story to their deaths: Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead, and they were witnesses to that fact.

¹⁴ Irwin H. Linton, *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, p.p. 40-41. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1943.