

The “Acid Test”

Introduction

There used to be something called the “Acid test of Journalism.” It got its name back when gold was tested for authenticity. Nitric acid would be applied to a gold item. If the piece happened to be fake, the acid would eat away the phony gold plating. If it were true gold, it would be unaffected. The acid test of journalism tested the truthfulness of a report. If the report could not be substantiated, it was rejected and often the reporter was discredited and disgraced. Example: Jayson Blair, a former New York Times journalist. In 2003, he resigned for plagiarism and fabrication. It was discovered when witnesses denied and refuted the details of his articles.

To establish the reliability of ANY historical document, two of the first questions to be raised is:

1. “How soon after the events took place were they recorded?”
2. “Did the eyewitnesses to the recorded events accept or reject the written record?”

I. Rules Concerning the Truthfulness of Witnesses by Simon Greenleaf.

A. Probability

“In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony might be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true.”

B. Credibility

“In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown.”

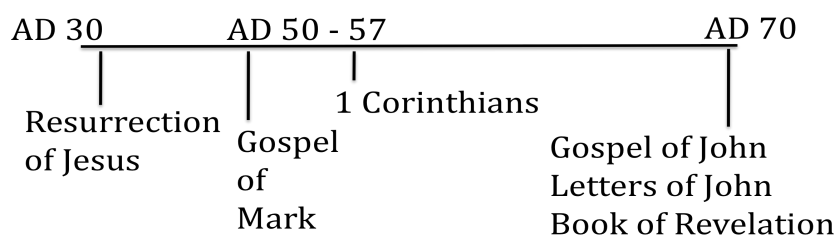
C. Authenticity

“Every document, apparently ancient,... and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise.”

The New Testament documents provide sufficient probability to be true, no suspicion that would hinder its credibility, and no marks of forgery to prevent it from being considered genuine.

II. The Eyewitness Window

A. The Eyewitness Window of the New Testament is the period between AD 30 – 70.



- B. The New Testament was likely completed by AD 70 before the Destruction of Jerusalem. There is evidence in the Book of Revelation that can be dated before AD 69.
 - C. The Gospel of Mark was possibly the first Gospel written and circulated along with the First Letter to the Corinthians by the apostle Paul.
 - 1. Each contains the complete gospel of Christ.
 - 2. Paul mentions eyewitnesses who were alive at the time of his writing – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.
 - 3. The Gospel was widely known and accepted by this time.
- II. The New Testament documents were subjected to the Acid Test of Journalism.
- A. Those living while the documents were circulated had the opportunity to reject them.
 - B. At the turn of the first century, the Roman government tried to confiscate the writings of the New Testament. The church of Christ would not give them up.
 - C. The New Testament passed the acid test.
- III. Writings of the Apostolic Fathers – AD 90 - 135
- A. These writings are uninspired.
 - B. They are written by Christians to churches to encourage them to be faithful to Christ through the apostles' teachings.
 - C. If their quotes from the New Testament were compiled, we could reproduce every book of the New Testament, some say word for word.

Conclusion

- 1. The Bible is historically reliable.
- 2. The Old Testament proves itself to be the inspired word of God.
- 3. The Bible is the best-preserved historical document in history.
- 4. The New Testament document passed the "Acid Test of Journalism" to be the most authenticated document of its time.
- 5. The New Testament is the most quoted document of its time. If all the Bibles in the world were destroyed, the New Testament could be reproduced from the quotes of the Apostolic Fathers.