



"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by George L. Faull, Rel. D. unless otherwise stated ~

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George L. Faull, Editor

The Bible: Fact or Fantasy?

**By John Drane
The Courtland Call**

I was once run down by a car in the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland. I was not seriously injured, but since I was on the crossing controlled by traffic signals, the driver was duly summoned to appear in court. I had to go and give evidence – along with the defense lawyer, the car driver and others who witnessed the scene.

A policeman was also called to present evidence. He spoke of the time, as well as giving an account of the precise width of the road, the car's dimension, and how all that related to where I was standing when the car struck me. Whatever else he said, he was undoubtedly recording the "bare facts".

My recollections were completely different, and certainly did not include things like the dimensions of the car or the road. The driver's story was different again.

When the judge reached his decision, he took all this into account. He did not say, "Because I have several stories of what happened, this accident cannot possibly have taken place."

Nor did he go on to conclude that there was a fair chance that the car and the road – even Edinburgh itself – did not exist either. To do so would have been absurd, and we all know that.

Yet this is exactly the sort of crazy conclusion that otherwise intelligent people seem prepared to reach when talking about the New Testament. "The four Gospels are not word-for-word the same", we say; "their writers make valuable judgments about what they report."

So the only safe conclusion must be that these things never happened, and maybe Jesus never existed! If we lived our everyday lives on this set of assumptions, we would all be in a big mess.

The Gospel writers were actually far more sophisticated than we give them credit for. Luke wrote a follow-up volume to link the story of Jesus to the story of His early

disciples. This is the Book of Acts. One of the striking things about it are that it tells the same story three times.

Paul's dramatic spiritual experience on the road to Damascus appears in **Acts 9, 22, and 26**. All three versions are different. Why?

Because Luke had no idea what actually happened?

Because he was making it all up? If he had been doing that, he would certainly not have produced three distinctive versions.

As it is, he adapts the same story at different points in his narrative to present varied aspects of the meaning of what he reports.

If one writer could do that within a single book, why should we be surprised when different writers utilize the stories about Jesus in different ways?