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# the SIMON GREENLEAF



# LAW REVIEW

A Scholarly Forum of Opinion Interrelating  
Law, Theology & Human Rights

featuring  
in this Inaugural Number  
the text of

*The Four Gospels  
from a Lawyer's Standpoint  
(1899)*

by  
Edmund H. Bennett, LL.D.  
Late Dean of  
The Boston University School of Law

VOLUME I

ACADEMIC YEAR 1981-82

A publication of The Simon Greenleaf School of Law,  
Orange, California and Strasbourg, France

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**THE SIMON GREENLEAF LAW REVIEW**

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Law, Theology & Human Rights**

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**EDITOR'S  
INTRODUCTION**

**EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION**  
to this  
**INAUGURAL ISSUE**  
and to  
**BENNETT'S *FOUR GOSPELS***

The faculty and students of the Simon Greenleaf School of Law are pleased to offer to the reading public the first number of *The Simon Greenleaf Law Review*. As its subtitle indicates, the *Review* will reflect the three foci of special interest at Simon Greenleaf: law, theology, and human rights. In the Renaissance tradition, it will endeavor to integrate these all-important areas, following the Socratic axiom that "the unexamined life is not worth living."

This inaugural issue of the *Review* provides readers with the photoreproduced text of a little-known classic in the defense of the Christian faith through the use of legal reasoning. Only fifty-one copies of Dean Bennett's *The Four Gospels from a Lawyer's Standpoint* (1899) are known to have survived; the Library of the Simon Greenleaf School of Law was able to acquire its copy from an antiquarian law bookseller in Chicago, and now puts this work at the disposal of all those concerned with the dynamic and scholarly defense of "the faith once delivered to the saints."

Particularly at a time when many theologians have lost faith in the possibility of harmonizing alleged Gospel contradictions and prefer to substitute form-critical and redactionist theories for confidence in the historicity of the Evangelists' accounts of Christ's life, Dean Bennett's careful, lawyerly treatment of the Gospels should come as a breath of fresh air. His work reinforces the conviction of those at Simon Greenleaf that "thinking like a lawyer" is one of the very best correctives to poor theologizing and to ineffective apologetics.

Some biographical background on Dean Bennett will be of more than routine interest to readers of his book, which was published posthumously. A Note to the 1899 edition informs us that "this lecture he delivered many times, especially during the latter years of this life. . . . It is now printed substantially in the form in which he delivered it the last time." We reproduce below the two most complete accounts of Dean Bennett's life and career: that appearing in Conrad Reno's *Memoirs of the Judiciary and the Bar of New England for the Nineteenth Century, with a History of the Judicial System of New England*, Vol. I (Boston: Century Memorial Publishing Co., 1900), and that written by his former student George A. Bacon, for *Bostonia: The Boston University Alumni Magazine*, VII/5 (February, 1934). We thank the Department of Special Collections of the Boston University Library for putting these materials at our disposal.

\* \* \*

EDMUND H. BENNETT, LL.D., for more than twenty years the dean of Boston University School of Law, was born in Manchester, Vt., April 6, 1824, and died in Boston on the 2d of January, 1898. His ancestors were typical New Englanders. Hon. Milo L. Bennett, his father, was a native of Sharon, Conn., and a graduate of Yale College in the class of 1811. He studied law at the Litchfield Law School, settled in Burlington and afterward in Manchester, Vt., and served as State attorney and judge of probate. In 1838 he was chosen judge of the Vermont Supreme Court, which position he filled with distinction and ability until the judiciary system was changed in 1859, when he was appointed a commissioner to revise the statutes of the State. His wife's maiden name was Adeline Hatch.

Edmund H. Bennett was educate in his native State, first in the Manchester and Burlington Academies and subsequently in the University of Vermont, at Burlington, where he was graduated in the class of 1843, and which bestowed upon him the degree of LL.D. in 1872. For a short time after graduating he taught a private school in Virginia. This vocation, however, did not offer him the scope which his tastes as well as his talents and ambition seemed to demand, and he therefore turned his attention to the law. He pursued his legal studies in the office of his father and became a member of the bar of Vermont in 1847, but in the following year he came to Massachusetts and was admitted to the Suffolk bar July 3, 1848. Shortly afterward he removed to Taunton, Mass., where he began the active practice of his profession. While there he was successively in partnership with the late Nathaniel Morton (brother of the late Chief Justice Marcus Morton, of Massachusetts), Hon. Henry Williams, Henry J. Fuller, and Fred S. Hall. In May, 1858, he was appointed judge of probate and insolvency for Bristol county and held that office twenty five years, resigning in 1883. When the city of Taunton was incorporated in 1865 he was unanimously elected its first mayor, and was re-elected in 1866 and again in 1867. In 1884 he took up his legal residence in Boston, but six years later returned to Taunton, to whose social, educational and religious advancement he contributed in no small degree.

The new court uniting the jurisdiction of the Probate Court and the Court of Insolvency was established in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1858, and Edmund H. Bennett was one of the fourteen judges appointed. He had already acquired, though but thirty-four years of age, a high standing and a large practice at the bar, while as a law scholar and author he had achieved wide distinction. As the successor of Judge Prescott, who had endeared himself to the people of Bristol county by a service covering a quarter of a century, his task was

not an easy one, but his abundant learning, dignified manners, and never failing patience won for him universal esteem and confidence, and he graced that bench with the highest ability. He was absolutely impartial, and, though always very busy, never seemed to be in a hurry. He possessed remarkable wisdom as well as great learning, and in the twenty-five years of his administration only two cases can be found in the reports in which his decision was overruled upon a mere question of law.

Judge Bennett honored the legal profession in the threefold capacity of a counselor, judge and teacher, but gained the widest reputation as an instructor and author. In this latter connection he was known personally or by name to probably every lawyer in New England for more than a generation, and also to many in almost every State in the Union. For three years from 1870 to 1872 he occupied the position of lecturer at the Law School of Harvard University in Cambridge. With the Boston University School of Law he was connected from its commencement in 1872, when he received the honor of being selected as its dean. He was unable, however, to serve in that capacity, but was a regular lecturer; in 1876 he was again elected to the deanship, which he filled until his death in January, 1898. Upon the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his service, a memorial portrait of him was hung in the law school building, largely at the expense of the alumni, the painter being Theobald Chartran, the celebrated French artist.

In the development of the science and the advancement of the practice of his profession Judge Bennett was a tireless worker. Gifted with unusual legal and literary ability, and endowed with great energy, he accomplished a wonderful amount of imperishable work. His legal works, written and edited alone or in company with others, number more than one hundred volumes, among them being the following: The first of the two volumes of Bennett & Heard's *Leading Criminal Cases*, the sixth edition of *Story on Bailments*, and the fourth edition of *Story on Promissory Notes* in 1856; the seventh edition of *Story's Equity Jurisprudence*, the sixth edition of *Story's Equity Pleadings*, and the fifth edition of *Story's Conflict of Laws* in 1857; volumes 9, 10, 11 and 12 of *Cushing's Massachusetts Reports* for 1856, 1857 and 1860; the third edition of *Story's Commentaries on the United States Constitution* in 1858; the fifth editions of *Story on Partnership* and of *Story on Promissory Notes* in 1859; the fourth edition of *Story on Bills of Exchange* in 1860; the *Massachusetts Digest* from 1804 to 1857, in company with F. F. Heard, in 1862; the seventh edition of *Story on Bailments* in 1863; the sixth edition of *Story on Agency* in 1862, the

second edition of *Blackwell on Tax Titles* in 1864; the second edition of *Leading Criminal Cases* in 1869; the eighth edition of *Story on Bailments* in 1870; the fourth edition of *Wm. W. Story on Sales* in 1871; the seventh edition of *Story on Conflict of Laws*, and, with H. W. Holland, the *Massachusetts Digest* from 1857 to 1869 in 1872; *Leading Fire Insurance Cases*, five vols., from 1872 to 1877; the American edition of *Indermaur's Principles of the Common Law* in 1878; the revised edition in book form of *Farm Law* (a lecture first delivered in 1878), and the American edition of *Goddard on Easements* in 1880; with Russell Gray and H. W. Swift the *Massachusetts Digest* from 1804 to 1879 in 1881; the third American edition of *Benjamin on Sales* in 1881; the fourth edition in 1883, the fifth edition in 1888, and the sixth edition in 1892; the ninth edition of *Pomeroy's Constitutional Law* in 1886. In *Jones's Index of Legal Periodical Literature*, published in 1888, he is credited with the authorship of fifty-nine articles in various law journals and periodicals. Afterward he published several articles in the *Forum*, the *Law Quarterly Review*, the *American Law Register*, the *Harvard Law Review*, and other law journals.

A lecture written by him, entitled "The Four Gospels from a Lawyer's Standpoint," has been frequently delivered before congregations of different religious beliefs, associations of clergymen, and other bodies.

In religious sympathy and work Judge Bennett was prominently allied to the Protestant Episcopal church; during his residence in Taunton he was for many years a warden or vestryman of St. Thomas's parish, and while in Boston he was for several years warden of St. Paul's church. He was for many years a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese, often one of the delegates to the Diocesan Convention, and at the time of his decease a member of the Diocesan Board of Trustees for Donations. He became a trustee of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge in 1882 and its president in 1895, succeeding the late Hon. Robert C. Winthrop in that office. In 1874 he was one of the delegates from the Diocese of Massachusetts to the General Triennial Convention of the Protestant Episcopal church in this country, and with a single exception he served as a delegate to every succeeding General Triennial Convention down to the time of his death. He frequently officiated as a member of the convention's Committee on the Constitution and Canons.

In politics he was first a Whig, and afterwards a staunch Republican from the organization of that party. In 1891 Governor Russell appointed him chairman of the Board of Commissioners for the

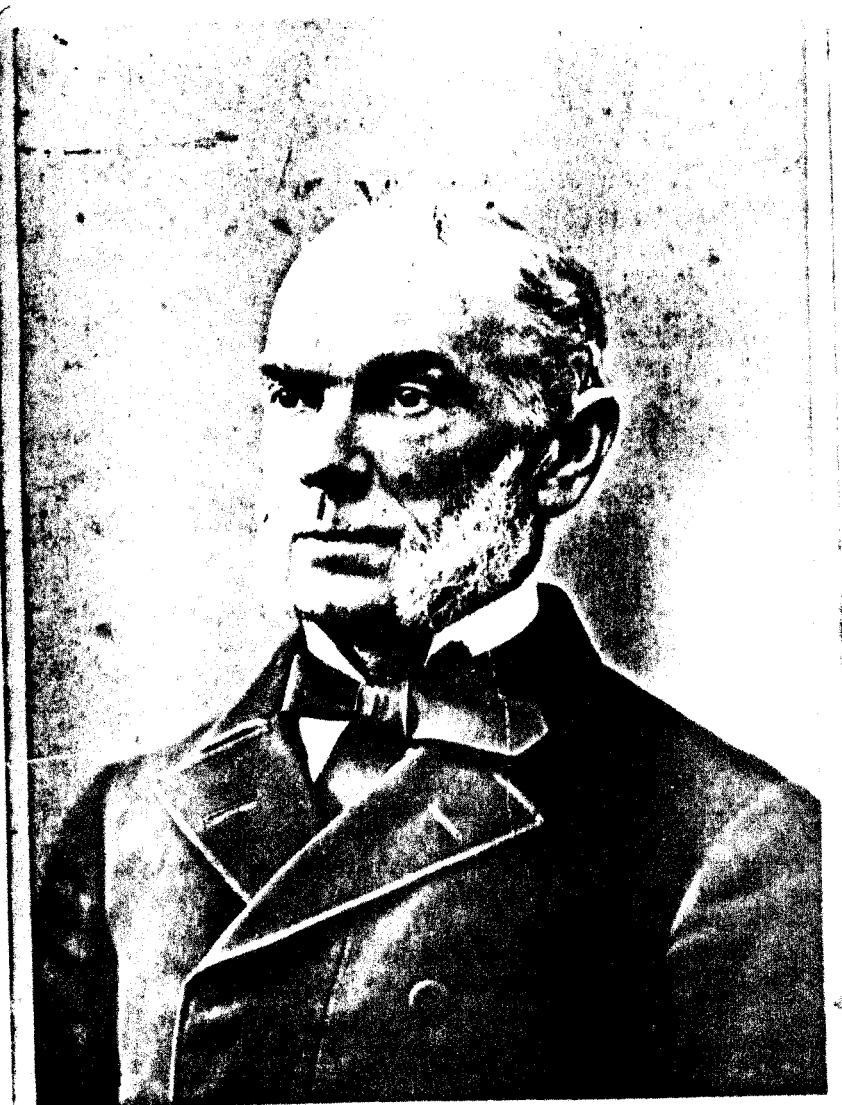


Promotion of Uniformity of Legislation in the United States, and in 1896 he was appointed by Governor Wolcott as chairman of the Commission on the Revision of the Public Statues. For many years he was a prominent member and officer of the Old Colony Historical Society and upon the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the settlement of Taunton, in 1889, he delivered the Historical Address. In all these capacities he displayed that energy, dignity and interest which were characteristic of the man.

In concluding this brief memoir of Judge Bennett allusion may be made once more to his career as a law teacher, which brought him into personal contact with so many students of the law. He rounded out a half century of active work in his profession, and up to the last was keenly alive to the principles and interests of every branch. He was a profound and learned lawyer, but his success lay chiefly in his ability to impart his knowledge to others. He was exceptionally gifted in his command of language, yet his gifts were literary rather than oratorical. His sense of humor was irrepressible; he was a man of warm sympathies, of deep knowledge of human nature, and of the purest Christian character. During his connection with the Boston Law School more than 1200 graduates received the impress of Dean Bennett's spirit and personality. The institution owes its advancement and high standing largely to his able guidance; its graduates, scattered throughout the Union, owe their early inspiration and training to his kind and gentle manners, his wonderful ability as an instructor, and his noble, unbiased helpfulness. He had the power of stimulating his pupils, of exciting their curiosity, and of urging them to work out difficult problems, and he took a personal interest in every student under his charge.

At the memorial services in honor of Judge Bennett, held at Taunton, March 10, 1898, the following resolutions were adopted by the Bristol county bar:

"In the death of Edmund H. Bennett our bar has suffered a grievous loss, a loss recognized and shared in by the whole community. And yet our grief at his death is mingled with joy and pride in his life. He has passed away full of years and honor and followed by the blessings of his fellow men. He was an able and conscientious lawyer. With a wonderful grasp of details he combined a profound insight into legal principles. He was not the slave of precedent, and ever sought to establish his conclusions in the spirit of justice and equity. His long service as judge of our Probate Court brought him into close relations with the pathetic and domestic side of the law, and his memory will long be cherished for his many acts of kindly courtesy, especially by those who, without counsel, sought his guidance and assistance. His industry was



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astounding, and demonstrated the old adage that 'Labor overcomes all things.' He not only showed the path to true success in the law, but led the way. Always affable, considerate and patient, he seemed to get the best out of others by giving them the best that was in himself.

"He sought light that he might give light. As a teacher he was not only esteemed but also loved by his pupils. His clearness and logic captivated their minds, while his simplicity and sympathy won their hearts. He was a good citizen and a good man, ever watchful to discern and zealous to promote the best interests of the community in which he lived. Strong in his convictions of right and duty, he was fearless and persistent in maintaining them both in private station and in public office. Imbued with an earnest religious faith, he was the embodiment of good-will to all. Modest yet able, studious yet not pedantic, gentle yet fearless, he has left foot-prints on the sands of time which all shall do well to follow. As a skilled advocate, wise counselor, upright judge, patriotic citizen and virtuous man he has left his lasting impress for good on the minds and hearts of his generation. To us especially, his brothers in the law, his life has been and must continue to be an inspiration and a benediction."

Judge Bennett was married in June, 1853, to Sally, the second daughter of the late Hon. Samuel Leonard Crocker, member of congress, of Taunton, Mass. His wife survives him. They had four children: Caroline, who died in infancy; Edmund Neville, who died in 1881, within a year after his graduation from Brown University; Samuel C., the dean of the Boston University Law School; and Mary B., wife of Dr. William M. Conant.

\* \* \*

As a student at the Boston University School of Law in the Class of 1895, and Clerk in the Dean's office while Judge Edmund H. Bennett was Dean, the writer had an unusual opportunity to observe the characteristics which made Judge Bennett one of the foremost teachers of his day.

A tall, thin, immaculately dressed, courtly gentleman; shy and modest, patient, friendly and simple of habit, but studious and learned, tremendously but quietly busy, lacking in all forms of pretense or show; such was Dean Bennett.

He was born in Manchester, Vermont, April 6th, 1824, his father being Milo Lyman Bennett and his mother, Abigail Hatch.

He received his A.B. degree at University of Vermont in the Class of 1843 and later was rewarded by his alma mater with the conferred degree of Doctor of Laws.

He taught school for a short while in Virginia, but soon decided to follow his father's profession and entered upon the study of law in Burlington in the office of his father, who was then one of the foremost lawyers in the State of Vermont, and afterwards a Justice of the Supreme Court of Vermont.

Edmund H. Bennett was admitted to the Bar in 1847 and commenced his practice in 1848 in Burlington, but in the following year took up his residence in Taunton, Massachusetts, where he practiced until 1884 when he moved to Boston to be nearer his work as Dean, and where he could have easier access to the larger law libraries to facilitate his research in the preparation of his voluminous law works.

While in Taunton he was a leading figure in the social, educational and religious welfare of the city. He was its first mayor after its incorporation as a city in 1865, and held that office for three years.

His first associate in practice in Taunton was the late Nathaniel Morton, brother of Marcus Morton, once Chief Justice of Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

Judge Bennett was a most successful advocate, quiet and simple in manner and expression, but his logic was unanswerable. He was always thoroughly prepared and stated his case directly and concisely.

Every problem, large and small, was given like careful consideration and to hear his arguments one would not distinguish which case involved the greater importance, as whether large or small, the underlying principle was the same. This rare trait of applying the governing principle and not allowing it to become clouded or involved was the envy of his contemporaries. He was not an actor and did not indulge in the court room pyrotechnics so common in his time, but the logic and the clarity of his arguments was eloquence sublime; and that trait together with his exceptional learning placed him among the leaders of his profession in New England.

Judge Bennett derived his title from the office of Judge of Probate and Insolvency of Bristol County, which he held from 1859 to 1883, when he resigned. This prepared him for an extensive practice in law pertaining to estates.

From 1870 to 1872 he was a lecturer in Dana Law School at Harvard University. In the fall of 1872 the law school of Boston University came into being and Judge Bennett was chosen as its first Dean, but was unable to accept on account of temporary illness and the office was given to Hon. George S. Hilliard, LL.D. However, it was then that he began his memorable lectures in that school and on the decease of the first Dean in 1875 Judge Bennett succeeded to that office and held the same until his decease in 1898.

His breadth of learning and common sense combined with a spirit of fair play made him an ideal Judge, and he was frequently chosen as Referee, Auditor and Master in important cases. He was in such demand that it became only a question with lawyers whether Judge Bennett could be induced to hear their cases.

The writer remembers at the conclusion of one important case where one of the prominent advocates was thanking the Judge and apologizing for so much encroachment on his time, which the lawyer said was more valuable than the compensation allowed by Statute, the Judge sallied that the lady stenographer who reported the evidence had to do the real work, therefore, she should receive the larger pay — which it developed was the case; she received considerably more than his stipend, although he received what the law provided.

Many important, complicated cases were so satisfactorily decided by the Judge that they were seldom reviewed by the Courts. There was implicit confidence on the part of lawyers that if Judge Bennett could be induced to hear their cases his decision would be final.

Attempts were made to induce him to accept a Judgeship on the Superior Court bench, but were refused, as the Judge would facetiously contend that a Judge's conduct was not flexible enough; which was a curious alibi in view of his most correct conduct under all circumstances.

As Dean and lecturer he inculcated in the minds of his students that law was "justice — simple justice" and to know the law one must know right from wrong. Though this is an abstract statement, how true it really is. As we all know from experience, most laws trespass somewhat on the unbridled privileges of individuals; they are nevertheless for the benefit of the great number. This thought that law is justice was dominant in the mind of Judge Bennett and it always seemed to me that he was trying to lead us instinctively and readily to distinguish between right and wrong as the determining point, for he would say, "When in doubt as to what the law is, ask yourself, what is right? — what is justice?"

and the answer will most likely be correct."

His thoughts were clear as crystal and were so simply expressed as to become jewels never to be effaced from our memories.

His illustrations would reduce the most complicated problem to terms so simple as to be comprehended by all, more especially by his students who under the spell of his magic became convinced that the study of law after all was too easy.

His lectures, especially on the subject of contracts, were classics in simplicity and conciseness, and no student will ever forget and fail to appreciate his simple and lucid illustrations which became the foundation on which the student built. It was his ability to use simple everyday understandable circumstances to illustrate his points that distinguished him as a successful teacher.

Hundreds of lawyers treasure as their richest heritage the precious inspiration of this great teacher.

His quiet, patient, friendly attitude inspired confidence and countless problems of the students were adjusted and overcome, never to be known unless revealed by the student himself. He was keen to discern existence of sadness or trouble and often called a student aside and gave him such help as a kindly father would.

His character and manner were so ideal that to emulate him was the desire of his students — truly to know him was a benediction.

Judge Bennett was of the Old School only in outward manner. He was most progressive and his reading was indefatigable. While never appearing hurried he was tremendously industrious. His learning was profound. He had thoroughly mastered the history of the law and its evolution. His literary work was voluminous, he having written or edited alone or in collaboration with others something over one hundred volumes of legal works, the best known being: "English Law and Equity Reports," an edition of Justice Story's works, "Leading Criminal Cases," "Fire Insurance Cases," "Digest of Massachusetts Reports," "Benjamin on Sales," and the American editions of "Goddard on Basements," and "Inderman on the Common Law." For several years he was connected editorially with the American Law Registry of Philadelphia. His lecture on "Farm Law," delivered at Hingham in December, 1878, before the State Board of Agriculture, attracted very general attention at that time and was published in all the agricultural journals of the country, and later in permanent form.

In 1896 Judge Bennett was one of a commission to consolidate and arrange the Public Statutes to be known as the "Revised Laws of Massachusetts," but died before completion.

As one work after another became published it was the wonder of his acquaintances when time could have been found to accomplish so much; but the writer has always attributed this faculty to the Dean's ability to think clearly and correctly and to do things without lost motion.

As an executive, Dean Bennett was an enigma. No machinery was evident but the school ran successfully. Here again was where his quiet, simple, direct method proved a great accomplishment.

The writer as his clerk in 1893-95 on many occasions in the Dean's absence found himself alone in the office with but a few sentences of instructions; but the magic still persisted and everything seemed to flourish, as arrangements had been quietly made. He was regarded by the University as a wise and sound business administrator.

He worshipped at the Protestant Episcopal Church, but he belonged to the Church Universal. He had a profound and abiding faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ and once prepared an address on the life of Jesus as proved by the Four Gospels. The evidence which he marshalled and presented is irrefutable. This was published and has had a wide circulation. It was dedicated to the Philomathian Society at Boston University, where it was first read. Afterwards Judge Bennett was frequently called to deliver this address before church societies and gatherings. Other talks on religious topics were often most graciously and convincingly given.

He served as Warden of St. Thomas Parish while residing in Taunton, and throughout his mature life he was frequently delegated to attend the Diocesan Conventions and in 1874, 1877, 1880 and 1883 served as delegate from his diocese to the annual triennial conventions of the Episcopal Church of America and filled other offices of trust connected with his church.

Judge Bennett's Christianity was inherent and was as natural as the heart-beat in its manifestations.

On January 2nd, 1898, at the age of seventy-four, after a brief illness, he left us and passed to his long rest.

He was genuinely mourned by his many friends and neighbors, and throughout the Nation, where his students were widely scattered.

Tributes were paid by the University faculty, as well as the bench and bar; and the press was lavish in its eulogies.

A few months before his decease, a remarkably realistic portrait of Dean Bennett by M. Chartran, a distinguished French artist, was procured by a host of loving pupils to be presented to their Dean, but he died before the presentation; however, it now hangs in the Law School on Ashburton Place. That benign and serene countenance depicting all the attributes referred to by the writer and radiating kindness, tolerance and charity, looks down on the succeeding generations of students and reminds them of a great soul without guile who moulded the character and enriched the lives of hosts of lawyers, and added lavishly to the jurisprudence of America. He represented the finest traditions of New England life.

Sally Crocker, his wife, who survived him, lived until 1911.

Samuel C. Bennett, his son, who succeeded his father as Dean, but now deceased, and his daughter, Mary B. Conant, wife of Dr. William M. Conant, now living in Boston, were his only heirs.

\* \* \*

Two final words concerning Dean Bennett. First, readers of the foregoing biographical sketches will find good reason to disagree with H.W. Howard Knott, author of the article on Bennett in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, when he declared: "Little that he wrote was destined to be of any permanent value. He never concentrated his efforts, his labors were dissipated over an extent of subject-matter prohibitive of other than superficial results, and he will be remembered as a teacher, when his books are forgotten." But in fact the wide range of Dean Bennett's publications attests a Renaissance spirit akin to Leonardo da Vinci's — who was likewise labeled "superficial" by his critics.

Moreover — and this is our second concluding remark — the republication of Bennett's *Four Gospels* more than eighty years after its author's death is the best evidence that his literary work has not been forgotten, nor does it deserve to be. The parallel with Simon Greenleaf is instructive. The two men are connected not only through Bennett's edition of the eight volumes of Greenleaf's Reports. Both wrote many important legal treatises, but today the two still in print are their little books applying legal reasoning to the defense of Christian faith.\* This common heritage would seem to reinforce the poet's lines.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past:  
Only what's done for Christ will last.

J.W.M.

\*Greenleaf's *Testimony of the Evangelists*, reprinted in Montgomery's *The Law Above the Law* (Minneapolis: Bethany).

## THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM A LAWYER'S STANDPOINT

BY

EDMUND H. BENNETT, LL. D.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1899



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THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM A  
LAWYER'S STANDPOINT

**I**T is, as you know, a part of the lawyer's profession to examine and cross-examine witnesses, to detect their errors, and expose their falsehoods ; or, on the other hand, to reconcile their conflicting statements, and from seeming discord to evolve and make manifest the real truth. And this paper is the result of an effort, on my own part, to ascertain whether or not, independently of divine revelation, independently of the exercise of a devout Christian faith, independently of any appeal to our religious sentiments, the truth of the story told in the four Gospels could be satisfactorily established by a mere reasoning process, and by applying the same principles and the same tests to the Gospel narratives that we observe in

## 2 THE FOUR GOSPELS

determining the truth or falsity of any other documents, or any other historical accounts. While we claim no special favors in our investigations because of any alleged importance of the subject, it is only fair to expect that every one will come to this examination with an unbiased and unprejudiced mind, ready and willing to accept the same evidence of truth and honesty as in other inquiries. Moreover, since we decide many important worldly matters upon the mere preponderance of evidence and arguments, why should we not adopt the same principles here? It is not necessary in order to recommend the Gospel story for our adoption to insist that it be proved to a *mathematical demonstration*, and beyond the cavils of every doubter, or of every unreasonable skeptic. Why not adopt that conclusion which has the higher degree of probability rather than the opposite? If we choose neither, we practically reject both. In secular matters, if seventy-five per cent. of everything that can be said on both sides

## THE FOUR GOSPELS 3

of any subject leads to one result, we are generally ready to adopt that conclusion in preference to the other. It is, you know, not uncommon before deciding some important worldly matter to arrange the arguments *pro* and *con* in parallel columns, and thus be guided by their comparative weight to our final conclusion. Let us do so here.

I approach this subject, therefore, with a personal reminiscence. A few years ago, while writing an historical address for one of our Massachusetts cities, I came across, in a newspaper file of the Revolutionary period, a letter, or what purported to be a letter, written from that place, giving an account of a meeting held there, in 1774, and a copy of some patriotic resolutions passed thereat. The writer of that letter, if there ever was one, had long been dead; all the persons said to have taken part in that meeting were also gone; the printer and publisher who gave the account to the world had likewise vanished from the earth; there was no person living who could make



## 4 THE FOUR GOSPELS

oath or testify that such an occurrence ever actually took place. But yet I had no hesitation in adopting the account as genuine, and using it as an established event in the history of that town. The mere fact of the existence of such a document under such circumstances was *prima facie* proof of its genuineness and authenticity, quite sufficient to justify the acceptance of it as true until the contrary be proved.

What would have been my joy and confidence had I found four such letters, in four different papers, written by four different persons, giving an account of the same transaction? And although in a close comparison of these four accounts some variations should have been found as to the particulars of that event, would that overthrow all belief in the truthfulness of the accounts? Nay, would it not rather furnish stronger proof of their integrity? Had all four accounts been exactly alike, the suspicion would have been irresistible that one was copied from the other, or that all were

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taken from one and the same original. But substantial uniformity with circumstantial variety is one of the surest tests of truth in all historical narratives. The several accounts of many important battles of the world, and of many other historical events, vary in many particulars, and yet no one thereby has any doubt of their occurrence. The four portraits of the Father of his country, painted by four different artists, viz., Stuart, Peale, Sharpless, and Wright, though all taken about the same period of his life, vary so much in expression that you would scarcely know them to represent the same person, and yet the same George Washington undoubtedly sat for them all. The various editions of Gray's Elegy, and of some of Shakespeare's plays, differ as much as do some chapters of Matthew and Luke in their respective accounts of the same transaction. Indeed, what four of us could go away from this meeting, and give exactly the same account of what transpires here? What four witnesses under oath in a

## 6 THE FOUR GOSPELS

court of justice *ever* describe a transaction precisely alike? And yet their testimony is taken as reliable, in cases involving the most important interests, even of life and death. Indeed, judges and juries are apt to *discredit* a cause in which all the witnesses tell a long story in exactly the same words.

Let us apply the same principles to the subject matter of this address. The four Gospels exist; they purport to contain the history of our Lord Jesus Christ; the authors are not living; the characters they therein describe are no more. No man living knows *by direct personal knowledge* that these things were ever so. But why not apply the same rules of evidence and belief to scriptural narratives as to any other? Being in existence, and a minute account of passing events, they must be either genuine and true, or else a gross forgery. There is no alternative; for the self-delusion theory is preposterous. They were true when written, or were then an absolute falsehood. If the latter, they must *at that very time* have

## THE FOUR GOSPELS 7

been known to be false, and an imposition on the credulity of those then living. These stories began to be published not long after the alleged crucifixion. Many persons were then living who could have easily refuted the statements of the evangelists had they been untrue. The enemies of Jesus were still alive and active. The Scribe and the Pharisee, the Priest and the Levite, still smarted under his repeated denunciations. They had the disposition, the opportunity, and the incentive to deny the story of the miraculous birth, the spotless life, the marvelous works, the sublime death, the astounding resurrection, and the glorious ascension of our Lord, had the then published description of these events been totally fabulous. But so far as we know, no person then living ever uttered a protest against these accounts, and for two thousand years they have been received and treated as veritable history.

Again, being written, they must have been written by some one. *There they are*; some persons wrote them; and they must

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have been written by either bad men or good men; by liars or by truth-tellers, by forgers or by honest historians. That is a very elementary and simple proposition, but it is the key to the whole situation, one which I ask you to steadily carry with you throughout this investigation. Remember that every circumstance tending to *disprove* forgery tends on the other hand to prove truth; for they *must* be one or the other.

The question then is: Do wicked men write such books as these? Do liars proclaim that they *and all other liars* "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"? Does the thief denounce dishonesty, or the adulterer proclaim uncleanness, or Satan rebuke sin? If, then, these stories were not penned by wicked men, they must owe their origin to honest men; and if honest and truthful men wrote them, they must be honest and true narratives, and not a tissue of falsehoods. Is not the conclusion irresistible? Need we go farther? But let us look at the subject from four other standpoints.



## I. PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL

**A**SIDE from the general considerations above alluded to, each Gospel itself contains internal and indirect, but cogent evidence of its own genuineness. I purposely omit all reference to the manifold external proofs of the authenticity of the Gospels, the number and force of which increase with every new discovery, and I confine myself wholly to inherent and intrinsic evidence thereof. Some of these illustrations I am about to give may be found elsewhere, and I lay no claim to originality, for nothing new or original can now be written on this subject. To present some old truths in a new setting is all I can reasonably expect to accomplish. Let us look at each Gospel separately, and see how its naturalness, its

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conformity to what we should expect, its harmony with the surroundings, tends to prove its truth.

*St. Matthew.*

Take first the Gospel of St. Matthew. He, and he alone, records the circumstance of Jesus paying tribute to the tax-collector of Capernaum (xvii. 24-27). How do we account for this? Why should Matthew be more likely to mention this particular fact than any other evangelist? When we remember that he was himself a tax-gatherer, and therefore especially interested in and observant of anything relating to his own profession, the answer is obvious. So again, Matthew informs us (xxvii. 66) that after Jesus's burial, the Jews went and "made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." How does it happen that Matthew alone mentions that fact? We must remember that the people of Judea, as has been justly remarked, were oppressively taxed under the Roman domin-

PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL 11

ion, and that excessive taxation often leads to evasion, cunning, and fraud by the taxpayer; and to increased vigilance, caution, and close scrutiny on the part of the collector. Accustomed, therefore, to suspect fraud and evasion, Matthew would naturally be the most likely to notice and record a fact which tended to show that in so important event deception had been carefully guarded against. Would a man forging the four Gospels remember that he must make Matthew state these facts, and carefully make all the other historians omit them?

*Naming the Apostles.*

Again, in giving the names of the twelve apostles, a natural incident occurs which I regard as one of the strongest proofs of simplicity and truth in Matthew. The apostles are usually named in couples, thus: Simon and Andrew, James and John, etc.; one couple is described by both Mark and Luke as "Matthew and Thomas," Matthew's name being first in both stories; but

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Matthew himself (x. 3), with the modesty of an honest and true man, says, "Thomas and Matthew," putting Thomas first and himself last. Is not this so natural as to be a sign of truth? But some skeptic may say, "This is only accidental; that don't prove much anyway." Read a little further and see. Matthew's occupation was then, as now, an unpopular and odious one, and the other evangelists therefore, when speaking of Matthew, make no reference to it; but Matthew himself, with true humility, says, "Matthew, the publican." Another instance of this same quality is found in the several accounts of Matthew's farewell feast to his former associates, when he forsook all and followed Jesus. Luke (v. 29) says, "Matthew made a *great feast* in his own house, and there was a *great company* of publicans and of others that sat down with them." Mark (ii. 15) agrees in this *complimentary description* of this event. But Matthew himself modestly omits all reference to himself and the magnitude of the

PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL 13  
 feast, and simply says: "And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house," etc. (ix. 10), without even saying it was his own house; much less that he had invited a large company to his banquet. Is this forgery? If not, it is honest truth. Falsehood is pretentious, brazen-faced, crooked. Truth is modest, natural, artless. Straws, are they? Do not straws indicate the true course of the wind?

*St. Mark.*

Let us turn to St. Mark's Gospel. Here we constantly find explanation of Jewish terms and phrases which are not found in corresponding verses of Matthew about the same event. Thus in chapter vii. verse 2, Mark writes: "When they saw his disciples eat bread with defiled hands," they found fault; and then the writer adds this explanation, "for the Pharisees and all the Jews except they wash their hands oft, eat not." Again in verse 11, "If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban,"

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Mark adds, "that is to say, a gift." In chapter ii. verse 26, speaking of David eating the shewbread in the days of Abiathar, he explains again, "which is not lawful to eat but for the priests." In chapter v. verse 41, when he records that Jesus said to the maid, "Talitha cumi," he adds, "which is, being interpreted, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.'" Again, Mark writes (vii. 34), "Ephphatha," and adds, "That is, be opened." Why is Mark so careful to explain all these Jewish terms and phrases when Matthew is not? If we remember that Matthew, himself a Jew, was writing for Jews, who understood such terms already, and Mark, himself a Gentile, was addressing Gentiles, who did not, we have the answer. What a skillful forger must he have been to have contrived all that!

*St. Luke.*

Luke also has many indirect proofs of naturalness. For instance, Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus upwards to Adam, as

## PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL 15

the Gentiles did, because he was writing for Gentiles, while Matthew, writing for Jews, as we have said, reckons downwards from Abraham, as the Jews always did. Still more: In St. Luke's descriptions of miraculous cures, the natural and genuine character of his Gospel clearly appears. Thus, while the others simply speak of Christ as "healing a leper" and of curing a man who had "a withered hand," Luke says the first was "full of leprosy," and it was the *right* hand of the last which was withered.

Again, the others say Peter's wife's mother lay "sick of a fever," but Luke writes that she "was taken with a great fever." In the account of the healing of the centurion's servant, Matthew simply says the servant "was sick of the palsy," but Luke with more fullness records that "he was sick and *ready to die*." So in the healing of the daughter of Jairus, Matthew merely states that her father addressed our Saviour thus: "My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

## 16 THE FOUR GOSPELS

And Jesus took her by the hand, and the maid arose." But Luke, with more minuteness and tenderness of feeling, tells us that Jairus "fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. And Jesus took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway." And again, while three evangelists mention that Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, they all stop there; but Luke alone, with his more acute observation, adds: "And Jesus touched his ear, and healed him." So also Luke alone mentions the compassion of the good Samaritan; he alone records the fact that the sleep of the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane was induced by extreme sorrow; that Jesus sweat great drops of blood, etc. Now why this more accurate observation and description by Luke of every circumstance of disease and of mental and physical suffering than can

## PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL 17

be found in any other historian of the same events? What was there in Luke's history or life which qualified and induced him thus to note and describe all kinds of diseases so much more minutely than the others? Turn to Colossians (iv. 14), and you have the answer, where Paul, writing to the Colossians, closes his letter thus: "Luke, the beloved *physician*, and Demas greet you." Did the forger of Luke's Gospel conspire with the forger of Paul's Epistle, the one to put into Luke's mouth words which a physician would naturally utter, but without intimating that he *was* a physician, and the other to simply *call* him a physician, without giving any circumstances indicating it? Forgers do not rest content with such round-about confirmations. On the other hand, truth-tellers do not trouble themselves to make their stories corroborate each other. But these are either forgeries or true tales. So much for Luke.

*St. John's Gospel*

also contains internal proof of honesty and genuineness. Thus in chapter vi. verse 66, soon after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, we read that "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him," and again in chapter vii. verse 5, that "neither did his brethren believe on him." What an admission for a writer to make if he were concocting a stupendous fraud to impose upon the community, viz., to openly proclaim to the world that the impostor, whose pretensions he was undertaking to bolster up, could not retain the confidence of those who were in daily personal contact with him! And this from a man who was not his *enemy*, but his first chosen disciple and his most devoted admirer! Candor might lead a *truthful* historian to make such an admission, but nothing would induce a fraudulent one to do so.

But still another striking characteristic

of genuineness is found in John's Gospel. He omits all reference to many events which the other evangelists record in full. Thus, he makes no allusion to the temptation of Jesus by the Devil; to the first miraculous draft of fishes; to the healing of Peter's wife's mother, or the recovery of the leper; to the cure of the paralytic, or of the withered hand, or of the two demoniacs; to the parable of the sower; to the stilling of the tempest, or the feast of Levi to our Lord; to the prophecy of the destruction of the temple, or the parable of the fig-tree; to the transfiguration on the mount, or to many other important events, to some of which he was even an eye-witness. Why is this notable omission by John of so many scenes with which he was perfectly familiar and which the other three evangelists record so fully? If it be the fact that John's Gospel was written long after the other three had been published to the world, as is generally believed, does not that naturally suggest that he probably thought it



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unnecessary to repeat what they had already described so minutely?

On the other hand, John alone mentions many interesting and touching incidents in our Saviour's life, about which all the others are entirely silent. Thus, he alone narrates the story of John the Baptist at the time the Jews sent the Priests and Levites to interrogate him; he alone describes the calling of Andrew and Simon, Philip and Nathaniel; he alone records the marriage in Cana of Galilee; the driving of the money-changers from the temple; the visit of Nicodemus by night; the meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well; the healing of the nobleman's son; the scene at the pool of Bethesda; the parable of the good shepherd; the restoring of sight to the blind in the pool of Siloam; the raising of Lazarus, etc. In John alone do we read that sweetly tender address of Jesus to his disciples, which has since soothed many a sorrowing breast, "Let not your heart be troubled: . . . in my father's house are many

PECULIARITIES OF EACH GOSPEL 21

mansions" (xiv. 1). Why does John record so many touching and tender events in our Lord's life of which others make no mention? Do we not find the explanation in the fact that he was the disciple whom Jesus preëminently loved; that he enjoyed in a special degree his Master's regard and confidence, resting his head so often on his Master's bosom; that his mother was one of those who constantly followed Jesus and ministered unto him; that of the four evangelists he alone was present at the transfiguration on the mount and at the agony in Gethsemane; that he alone followed Jesus to the cross, and was present at so many other affecting scenes to which the rest were not admitted?

Could we have more satisfactory evidence of probability and truthfulness than these several peculiarities in the four evangelists indicate? What a consummate forger must he have been who could know and constantly remember all these particulars and never make a slip in his fabrica-

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tions! The forger of the letters falsely attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots, or of the famous Parnellite letters some years ago, could not compare in ingenuity with a possible forger of the four evangelists. May we not believe, therefore, that each Gospel by its own internal peculiarities bears testimony to its truth and reality?



## II. CONFIRMATIONS IN THE GOSPELS

**B**Y comparing the various Gospels with each other, we often find confirmations of their truth and veracity.

A notable instance exists in regard to *Herod's Servants*.

In Matthew (xiv. 1, 2) and Luke (ix. 9) we read that when Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, being perplexed thereat, he said unto his servants inquiringly, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead," "John have I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" The inquiry at once arises, why did Herod address this question to his *servants*? What could *they* be supposed to know or care about Jesus, or about John the Baptist? Matthew gives no reason why, but on turn-

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ing to Luke (viii. 3) we learn that one of the followers of Jesus was Joanna, *the wife of Herod's steward*. And in Acts (xiii. 1) we are told that in the church at Antioch there was a teacher named Manaen, "who had been *brought up with Herod the tetrarch*." No doubt, therefore, Herod supposed that the higher grade of his servants could give him some information about Jesus which he wanted to know, and it was not strange, therefore, that he should address them as he did.

*The Transfiguration on the Mount.*

Again, after the transfiguration on the mount, Luke says (ix. 36) that they who had witnessed this remarkable event "kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen." But he gives no reason for this extraordinary silence on a subject so full of interest and wonder, and which the witnesses thereto would naturally be inclined to spread abroad. But turn to Mark, and you will find the

## CONFIRMATIONS IN THE GOSPELS 25

explanation (ix. 9), where he records that as "they came down from the mountain Jesus *charged* them they should tell no man what things they had seen," etc. One narrates the command, but not the obedience; the other the obedience, but not the command. Is that a contrived variation, or is it the natural and accidental difference into which honest witnesses constantly fall?

*The Passover.*

Once more: When Mark tells us (vi. 31), that after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus said unto his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile," the writer adds, "for there were many coming and going," without giving any intimation of the reason why so many should be abroad at that particular time; but on turning to John (vi. 4) the missing link appears, for we learn that "the passover was nigh" at hand, and thus the cause of the traveling multitude is obvious, viz., they were all going up to Jerusalem to the feast.

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*The Samaritans' Disregard of Jesus.*

Still again: In Luke (ix. 51, 53) we are told that Jesus on one of his journeys to Jerusalem sent messengers before him to a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for his coming; but the Samaritans would not receive him, "because," to use the Scripture language, "*because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*" Why should that be a reason for not receiving him? What difference could it make to them whether he was going to *Jerusalem* or to some other city? Luke does not tell us why, nor does he give us the slightest clue on the subject, but we learn it elsewhere. It is this: the Samaritans did not believe in Jerusalem as a place of worship: they had set up a temple in Gerizim in opposition to the holy city. As Jesus was known to be on his way to Jerusalem to worship there, it was only poor human nature that the Samaritans did not feel like paying him any particular attention when on such a journey.

## CONFIRMATIONS IN THE GOSPELS 27

*The Denial by Peter.*

In the denial by Peter a notable indirect confirmation or proof of veracity occurs. Thus, three of the evangelists say that when Peter was warming himself in the palace of the high priest, a maid saw him, and charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but neither of the three intimate how she knew it to be so. How *should* a maid servant in the family of the high priest, the most exalted officer in the Jewish synagogue, know such a fact? Proud of her position in the first family in town, wearing the brightest and gayest dress of all her set, what should that dark-haired and dark-eyed Jewish maiden know or care about the lowly and despised Nazarene; much less as to who his deluded followers were? Turn to John (xviii. 17), and the mystery is solved. There we learn that the maid who thus addressed Peter was the very one who kept the door of the palace through which Peter had just entered. But how did

## 28 THE FOUR GOSPELS

that enable her to know that Peter was a *follower of Jesus*? Read John again (xviii. 15, 16), and we find that John first went into the palace with Jesus, leaving Peter standing outside, and then John came out, and as he was going out, "spake to her that kept the door, and brought in Peter," right past her. She saw John come in with Jesus, and then go out and bring in Peter, and remembering what he had said to her going out, she was not a very bright girl unless she could put this and that together, and guess pretty well what was going on. And this incident furnishes another corroboration of one evangelist by the others. John speaks of only one maid who thus addressed Peter. Others say there were two, while Luke says it was a man. But John himself further on indirectly confirms the other three because he says, in verse 25, that as Simon Peter stood and warmed himself, "*They* said therefore unto him, Art not thou one of his disciples?"

## CONFIRMATIONS IN THE GOSPELS 29

*Smiting of Jesus.*

Again, in the last tragic scene of our Saviour's life, Matthew tells us (xxvi. 67, 68), that his murderers, after spitting in his face and smiting him with the palms of their hands, challenged him to say who smote him, as if that were an impossible question for him to answer. How could such a question be difficult? Could he not see who struck him, and in the face, too? Matthew gives no fact throwing light upon it, and none is there apparent. You could not understand it from Matthew alone. But turn to Luke, and the reason for such a question is obvious, for Luke says (xxii. 64), "When they had *blindfolded* him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?" Thus we see the force and significance of the question, addressed to a blindfolded man, which to another would have been too simple.

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*The Bearer of the Cross.*

Matthew and Luke say that at the crucifixion of Jesus his cross was borne by one Simon, a Cyrenian, but they give no other particulars about him. Mark alone adds that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Why? Mark wrote his Gospel at Rome for Romans. But what had that to do with it? Turn to Romans xvi. 13, and we find that Rufus was a disciple of Jesus, and lived in Rome. How natural, therefore, that Mark, when writing to *Romans*, should specially refer to Rufus, who was then living among them, and whose father had been so closely connected with the awful tragedy of the crucifixion. And how natural that first the pity and then the love of Rufus should have been excited for Jesus by the fact that his father had borne the cross, and was an eye-witness to the awful sufferings thereon, the account of which no doubt he had often heard from his father's lips.

## CONFIRMATIONS IN THE GOSPELS 31

*Division of the Garments.*

One more instance of confirmation remains. The division of the garments of Jesus after the crucifixion furnishes a remarkable instance of the truth of the Gospel narrative as confirmed by other sources.

John informs us (xix. 23) that when the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments, "and made *four* parts, to *every soldier* a part." How is this? Why just four parts? Were there no more soldiers there, on such an extraordinary occasion as that? Yes, they had "the whole band" (Matthew xxvii. 27; Mark xv. 16). And a centurion's band is an hundred. Why were only four entitled to his garments? This is the explanation. Crucifixion as a mode of punishment was well known to many ancient nations. The common and familiar practice was to compel the person to bear his cross to the place of crucifixion, and to lay the cross upon the ground, one end slightly raised; then the victim was laid

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upon it, with his arms and limbs extended, and four of the most brutal soldiers were selected to drive four large nails, or spikes, through the quivering flesh of his hands and feet, for which repulsive service they were entitled by custom to his clothes as a special perquisite. So John told the truth, — "four parts, to every soldier a part."

So much for confirmations by comparison.



III. VARIATIONS IN THE GOSPELS

**S**OME well-disposed persons, for the most part of the rather feeble-minded sort, are much troubled at the variations in the Gospel stories about the same event, and find many stumbling-blocks in their way.

Let us look at some of the events recorded in different words by the various evangelists, and we shall realize what is meant by the phrase "Harmony of the Gospels," and that mere variations are not contradictions, but on the other hand often real confirmations of each other. Take, for example, the imprisonment of John Baptist by Herod. Matthew tells us (xiv. 3, 4) that Herod had laid hold on John and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had

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told Herod that it was not lawful for him to have her, but Matthew nowhere intimates that they were *already married*. Mark alone (vi. 17) informs us that the marriage had actually taken place. Luke adds yet another reason for John's imprisonment, viz., because he had reproved Herod, not only for the Herodias matter, but also "for all the evils which Herod had done" (iii. 19). But there is no conflict or inconsistency in these different accounts; every word of every one may well be true.

*Healing the Leper.*

So in the healing of the leper, Matthew says (viii. 2), "Behold, there came a leper and worshipped him saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Mark adds something different (i. 40): "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and *kneeling down* to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt," etc. This additional fact of kneeling Matthew does not record. Luke (v. 12) mentions still another fea-

## VARIATIONS IN THE GOSPELS 35

ture, viz., "The leper *fell on his face*, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt," etc. These variations are only successive strokes on one and the same picture.

*The Inscription on the Cross.*

The inscription on the cross furnishes one more, and one of the best illustrations of unity in variety to be found in the New Testament. Mark (xv. 26) says it read, "The King of the Jews." Luke (xxiii. 38), "*This is* the King of the Jews." Matthew (xxvii. 37), "This is *Jesus* the King of the Jews." John (xix. 19), "Jesus of *Nazareth* the King of the Jews." Was there no cross on Calvary because of these variations, written as they were in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Luke xxiii. 38)?

Is the story of Barabbas a myth, merely because one evangelist (John) says he was a robber, and two others (Mark and Luke) call him a murderer? Was there no king of Tyre because in some places his name is spelled Hiram and in others Hiram?



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Is there no true time of day, because all the clocks in your house strike at a different moment?

These many variations lead to another suggestion. If these are forged tales, they were doubtless written by the same person, or by four different persons. How improbable that the same person should take the unnecessary trouble to make up four false stories about Jesus, in order to impose on the world, and at the same time make them so different from each other as to excite doubts in some honest and well-disposed minds, even to this day, as to the truth of any one of them!

On the other hand, how vastly more improbable that four different persons, at different times and in different places, should deliberately sit down without any apparent motive to write four similar fictitious stories without any knowledge of each other's work; or, if they had such knowledge, that they did not make their stories agree better with each other! It

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is too absurd to be worthy of even denying.

Here again we may learn from secular matters that the actual occurrence of some event is not to be doubted because of some discrepancy, or even some contradiction, in details between the different narrators thereof. For instance, some historians assert that Lord Stafford was condemned *to be hanged* for his alleged participation in the popish plot in 1680, while Burnett and other historians narrate that he was *beheaded*. But that he suffered death for the charge, though probably unjustly, no one doubts.

So in our own times there has been for more than a century a controversy as to the person who made the public proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, from the balcony of the old State House in Boston, on the morning of July 18, 1776. Many accounts assert that this proclamation was made by William Greenleaf, the high sheriff of Suffolk County; while as

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many more declare that it was by Colonel Thomas Crafts. But recent researches disclose the fact that Mr. Greenleaf, having a weak voice, first read the Declaration, sentence by sentence, to Colonel Crafts, who stood by his side, and then the latter, in his loud and sonorous tones, repeated the same to the assembled multitude below; and thus the seeming conflict is easily and naturally reconciled.



IV. INCONSISTENCIES IN THE GOSPELS

**L**ET us now look at some of the alleged inconsistencies in the Gospel stories; in reconciling differences, let not the children of this world be wiser than the children of light.

*The Healing of the Two Demoniacs.*

Mark (v. 2) and Luke (viii. 27) say that *a man* with an unclean spirit coming out of the tombs besought Jesus to cure him. But does it follow that Matthew was false, because he says (viii. 28) *two men* met him? If there were two there certainly was one, and if there was one it does not prove that there were not two. But, as has been well said, there is an obvious reason why Mark and Luke mention only one. What is it?

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There was only one who showed any gratitude for his deliverance, and his case therefore impressed itself the more on their minds since the duty of gratitude for blessings received was the special lesson they were seeking to inculcate.

And this expulsion of the devils and sending them into a herd of swine suggests another proof of reality and indirect confirmation. "There was," say the evangelists, "nigh to the city of Gadara, a herd of swine feeding." How could that be? The Jews were forbidden to eat swine's flesh. It was such an abomination to the Jews that one of them declared that he would die rather than eat it. How happened it that such animals were being raised about the city of Gadara, and great herds of them, too? Turn to Josephus, and we read that Gadara was a Grecian, not a Jewish city, and the Greeks had no aversion to swine's flesh.

INCONSISTENCIES

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*The Alabaster Box of Ointment.*

Again, because Matthew and Mark say that the woman with an alabaster box of ointment poured it *on the head* of Jesus, was John a falsifier when he says she anointed *his feet*, and wiped them with the hair of her head? Or because John mentions only Mary Magdalene as coming to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection, does it follow that the other evangelists are not to be believed because they state that other women accompanied her? Nay, John himself, although he gives the *name* of only one, indirectly confirms the others in their statement that more persons were present than Mary, for he says (xx. 2) that Mary, running to meet Peter, exclaimed, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and *we*," using the plural, "know not where they have laid him."

*The Sermon on the Mount.*

Another difference in the story about the sermon on the mount seems to trouble some minds wonderfully. Matthew (v. 1, 2, 3) says, "And seeing the multitudes, he went *up into* a mountain : and when he was *set*, his disciples came unto him ; and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc.

On the other hand, Luke says (vi. 17) he "*stood* in the *plain*," — or "a level place," as the new version has it, — and lifted up his eyes, and said : "Blessed be ye poor," etc. One says he was standing ; the other that he was sitting. How is this ? Remember this is the longest discourse Jesus ever delivered, probably not wholly reported either, and if he became tired of standing before his sermon was finished, why should he not sit down ? He was human like the rest of us, except without sin. But one says he went up the mountain ; another that he stood on a level place. How

could that be ? Did you never partly ascend a mountain and find a plateau, tableland, or level place on its sides or between its depths, where many people could easily be assembled ? Is not that exactly the way it probably happened ? Luke agrees with Matthew (see vi. 12), that before he commenced his sermon Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, and then he adds, in verse 17, that he came down and stood in a level place, where he lifted up his eyes, and said, "Blessed are the poor," etc. I do not overlook the fact that tradition still points out just such a "level place" between two peaks called the "Horns of Hattin," on the road from Tiberias to Capernaum, as the very spot where the sermon was delivered, but I am suggesting that the combined Gospel stories point to exactly the same conclusion.

*Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes.*

Then came the miracle of the loaves and fishes at Bethsaida. This miracle furnishes

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a striking proof of the harmony and consistency of the Gospels, while using language apparently inconsistent. Thus Luke says (ix. 14) that the multitude sat down, in companies of about fifty each, whereas another asserts that they sat down "by hundreds." How so? This is another of the much vaunted inconsistencies of the Bible. How could these two expressions be true? Easily enough. If they sat one hundred in the front row and fifty rows deep, would there be any contradiction in the two statements? Would that not be a literal compliance with the words of Mark (vi. 40), viz.: "They sat down in ranks, by hundreds, *and* by fifties." How many would that be? Fifty times one hundred is five thousand; and therefore John, without saying anything of the manner of their arrangement or the order of their seats, simply says (vi. 10): "So the men sat down, in number about five thousand." Each writer uses different words, but all the statements harmonize and blend in one consistent whole.

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But we are not quite through with this interesting story. One evangelist informs us that the next day after feeding the five thousand some of the people of Bethsaida, which, as you know, is *northeast* of the Sea of Galilee, took shipping and came over to Capernaum on the *west* side; and when they found Jesus over there, they said, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" (John vi. 25). Why did they put that particular question to Jesus? Was it mere idle curiosity, or was there some special reason for their surprise and wonder at finding Jesus in Capernaum so early the next morning? Let us see. Elsewhere we learn that in the latter part of the day of the miracle, the disciples took the *only boat* there was at Bethsaida to cross the lake to Capernaum, and Jesus was not with them, for he had gone apart into a mountain to pray. As there was *no other boat* left at Bethsaida, the people who thus addressed Jesus naturally wondered how he could have crossed that night so as to be in Capernaum early the next

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morning. Turn to Matthew and you will find how it happened (xiv. 25). He tells us that in the fourth watch of the night Jesus joined his disciples on their way over to Capernaum, "*walking upon the sea.*" And this was in the very darkest hours of the night; the people in Bethsaida had no knowledge of Jesus's departure, and supposing he was still in the mountain on the east side behind Bethsaida, where his disciples had left him the night before, they might well be surprised at finding him so early the next morning over in Capernaum, on the west side of the sea, and therefore naturally exclaimed when they met him, "Why, Master, how in the world did you get over here this morning?"

But still another interesting question arises: If the disciples had taken the *only* boat there was at Bethsaida on the evening of the miracle, how could the other people of Bethsaida, who addressed Jesus thus, have themselves gotten over to Capernaum the next morning? Did some boats arrive

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at Bethsaida during the night? That was an awful night on Galilee. And in Matthew (xiv. 24) we learn that the disciples on their way from Bethsaida to Capernaum had a fearful time, "and their ship was tossed with the waves, for the wind was *contrary.*" If the wind was contrary to the disciples, going westward from Bethsaida to Capernaum, it must have been favorable to other persons bound eastward to Bethsaida from the west side of the lake, and so it *might have* carried boats towards Bethsaida that night. But neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke mentions any such circumstance. Turn now to John (vi. 23), where he says, "Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias [which, like Capernaum, was on the west side of Galilee,] nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks." And so a wind which to the disciples going southwest from Bethsaida to Capernaum would be "contrary," was exactly a wind to carry other ships that night from Tiberias north-

eastward to Bethsaida; and that is how these citizens of Bethsaida might have gotten over to Capernaum that morning.

What adroit forgers these evangelists were; the one to narrate facts which would not easily have happened unless some boats had arrived at Bethsaida that night, but without saying so; the other to have incidentally mentioned such arrival in his account of the transaction. I do not positively say that the people at Bethsaida did cross the lake by boat to Capernaum, for they might have gone by land around the end of the lake, as it is not over ten miles; but I simply say that the facts stated in the several evangelists all harmonize with that view, although the story of no one alone brings it all out.

*The Healing the Centurion's Servant.*

Luke informs us (vii. 3) that when the centurion heard of Jesus, "he *sent unto him* the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant." On

the other hand, Matthew as positively declares that the centurion *went himself* unto Jesus, beseeching him (viii. 5). Some critics seem to think these two statements inconsistent. But are the two accounts so utterly irreconcilable? Let us see. Would it be impossible or unnatural that the centurion should *first send* the elders to Jesus, as Luke says he did, and after they had been gone for some time, becoming anxious and impatient at their long delay, that he should set out himself to plead in person with Jesus, — for this servant was "very dear unto him," — and so meet Jesus and the elders on their way back, as Matthew intimates he did. If this were all the discrepancy between the two accounts, it might be readily explained. But unfortunately, it is not, for Luke again, in verse 6, repeats the assertion that as Jesus was returning with the elders, the centurion *sent friends* to him, saying, "Lord, trouble not thyself," etc. But the Greek word used in this part of the story, and translated "sent,"

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is ἔπεμψεν, not the same word translated "sent" in verse 3, where he speaks of sending the elders. That word is ἀπέστειλεν, from ἀποστέλλω, which always means to dispatch, to send off, etc. But this word ἔπεμψεν, used in the 6th verse, means not only to send, but also, according to approved lexicons, "to lead, to escort, conduct, proceed with," and is used in that sense by Homer and other writers. If Luke intended to convey the same meaning in the second place as in the first, why did he use a different word? Therefore the centurion might himself be conducting or proceeding with his friends, and so all meet Jesus returning with the elders. Indeed, the language that Luke puts into the centurion's mouth naturally imports that the latter was *personally present* with his friends, as they met Jesus; for the centurion said, "Lord, trouble not thyself, for *I* am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself *worthy* to come to thee: but say the word only, and my ser-

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vant shall be healed." Was not the man who spake these words standing face to face with Jesus? If so, it is true that the centurion *first sent* elders to Jesus, as Luke narrates in verse 3; it is true that in the second place he did go himself, as Matthew records; it is true that when he went himself, he was accompanied by his friends, as Luke asserts in verse 6, and there is now no contradiction, but all is in perfect harmony.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Two Thieves.*

The different stories about the two thieves upon the cross furnish a very gratifying theme for criticism to some enemies of the Bible. You remember that two evangelists say that they who were crucified with Jesus reviled him, and cast the same in his teeth. But Luke tells us that one of



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them said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Are those two accounts both false?

Would it be unnatural or impossible that both malefactors should have *at first* joined with the insulting crowd, and afterwards that the more tender-hearted of the two should have repented in the agony of approaching death, and exclaimed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"?

Nay, in our modern criminal courts, how often does it happen that when two are arrested for some offense, they both deny it for a while to the officer, and yet afterwards one turns state's evidence, and convicts both of the offense.

How many a mother has called her two young children to her side for some disobedience of her command, and although both at first deny it, yet moved by her tender appeals the more conscientious of the two at last breaks down, and, choking with sobs, confesses the whole transaction.

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Do not, therefore, I pray you, give up your Bible, your religion, or your God because of such flippant talk about the contradictions of the Gospels, come from whom it may!

Thus, by undesigned coincidences, by indirect confirmations, by unexpected corroborations, by natural and for the most part easily reconcilable differences, scattered throughout these four histories, may we be abundantly satisfied of the truth and harmony of the Gospels. The variations in these stories do not detract from their reliability, but rather the opposite. What would be our opinion of a man who denied the real existence of another merely because four photographs of him, one a front and one a back view, and two others of opposite sides of his face, did not present the same features? Is it not from the four views combined that you get the fullest and truest idea of the person portrayed? So from the combined pictures of the acts and doings of our Lord, in the four Gospels, or rather this

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fourfold Gospel, do we best comprehend the fullness of his life and power. What wonder, then, that Rousseau felt compelled to declare that if the Gospels were an invention, the inventor was greater than the hero, or a still later than Rousseau to assert that the forger of such a Jesus must have been superior to Jesus himself.

*Conclusion.*

This would be our conclusion if we were judging of the Gospel story simply by the light of intellect and of reason, and were endowed with no nobler and higher faculties; but there is a spiritual power within us, which makes the same answer; a faith which is higher than mere belief, as spirit is higher than mind, or mind higher than body. There is a part of us transcending the intellect, a part more deep, more boundless, and more sublime, than that of the mind; a part which "no fowl knoweth and which the vulture's eye hath not seen;" a part by which we may claim kinship with

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the cherubim and the seraphim; that part which enables us to see with the eye of a spiritual vision, and discern with a celestial insight; that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" which enables young men to "mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint;" a faith which inspired the celebrated Congregational divine, Dr. Palmer, to pen that devout hymn, so full of trust, love, and confidence, —

"My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary."

Let not, therefore, the criticism of the skeptic, the jeers of the scoffer, or the doubts of the agnostic disturb our calm confidence in the actual existence, the splendid example, and the divine attributes of him whose earthly life, miracles, and teachings are thus described in the four Gospels.

Nay, let us rather, with that abiding conviction derived from reason, faith, and love

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combined, confidently proclaim with the inspired apostle, "I know in whom I have believed;" or with that perfect and upright man of old, "*I know, I know*, that my Redeemer liveth." Yes, yes, —

"Jesus lives, I know full well,  
Naught from Him my heart can sever;  
Life, nor death, nor powers of Hell,  
Shall keep me from His side forever."

Amen.

AN EXAMINATION & CRITIQUE OF  
THOMAS PAINE'S  
*AGE OF REASON*

by  
Joseph P. Gudel

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Gudel is a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Christian apologetics at The Simon Greenleaf School of Law. On the basis of this essay, he was awarded the School's Martin Luther - John Calvin Award for excellence in the field of Jurisprudence at the Commencement exercises on May 10, 1981.

Thomas Paine was one of our country's greatest spokesman for independence and his contributions to the birth of our nation can hardly be minimized. As a writer he was unparalleled in his day. "He was extraordinarily fertile in ideas, and broad minded and progressive. He was in fact a genius."<sup>1</sup> He openly advocated complete freedom for the United States while the members of our Continental Congress were still hoping for a reconciliation with Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1776 his work *Common Sense* was published and became an overnight "best seller". It immediately sold almost a half million copies and newspapers throughout the Colonies ran excerpts from it. This work, more than anything else, pushed the people and the Congress toward declaring independence.<sup>3</sup>

One of Paine's most inspirational and well known writings came early in the war, shortly after General Washington's army had been thoroughly defeated in the battle of Long Island, Washington's army was in retreat, the Continental Congress fled from Philadelphia to Baltimore, and morale was at its lowest ebb. The British forces appeared invincible.<sup>4</sup> It was at this time that Paine wrote his *Crisis I* which begins as follows:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.<sup>5</sup>

Washington had Paine's pamphlet read to his men, and being greatly encouraged, they proceeded on the Christmas Eve of 1776 to cross the Delaware River and achieve their great victory at Trenton.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout his life Paine fought for the economic and political freedoms of the common man. In America he strove "... for reforms ranging from anti-slavery to the abolition of

dueling."<sup>7</sup> Later on he attempted to instigate a revolution in Great Britain in order to procure economic liberty for the working class. He failed and fled to France where the revolution there was growing more violent every day. He tried to work for the people and yet restrain the excessive bloodshed. For his efforts he was rewarded with imprisonment.<sup>8</sup>

It was while in France that he wrote his famous (or perhaps infamous) work, *The Age of Reason*. It consists of two parts, the first being finished just before his imprisonment, the second part was written after he was released.<sup>9</sup> This work is an excoriation of "revealed" religion in general, and Christianity in particular, and it is to this that we will now turn our attention.

Thomas Paine was a zealous Deist, which, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century came to be defined as "... belief in a God, or First Cause, who created the world and instituted immutable and universal laws that preclude any alteration as well as divine immanence -- in short, the concept of an 'absentee God.'"<sup>10</sup> Paine, in referring to an earlier writing of his, stated that "... the only true religion is Deism, by which I then meant, and mean now, the belief of one God, and an imitation of His moral character, or the practice of what are called moral virtues."<sup>11</sup> At the conclusion of *The age of Reason* Paine states that Deism "... teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the handwriting of the Creator himself, the certainty of His existence and the immutability of His power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries."<sup>12</sup> Paine continues and says that for the Deist "... religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in His works, and in endeavoring to imitate Him in everything moral, scientific and mechanical."<sup>13</sup>

*The Age of Reason* went through seventeen editions in America and tens of thousands of copies were sold. Paine had succeeded in bringing Deistic ideas, which up until that time were generally held only by members of the upper classes, to the common people. None of his ideas were unique or novel, yet Paine's ability to reach the masses gave great impetus to Deism. Eric Foner, in his biography of Thomas Paine, states that "*The Age of Reason* became the 'Bible' of American deists, and Paine their hero."<sup>14</sup>

Besides promulgating his deistic beliefs in *The Age of Reason* Paine also did not hesitate to vilify Christianity and the Bible. In his conclusion he states that:

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics. ... so for as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.<sup>15</sup>

To this he adds that "... the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system."<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the Bible Paine says: "Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the Word of God. . . for my part, I sincerely detest it."<sup>17</sup> Later he states that "Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the groveling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt."<sup>18</sup>

Paine, at various points in *The Age of Reason*, makes it clear that he is not attempting to attack or ridicule Jesus. "Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced . . . has not been exceeded by any."<sup>19</sup> However, he rejects any notion that Jesus was divine: ". . . He was the Son of God in like manner that every other person is -- for the Creator is the Father of All."<sup>20</sup>

Paine begins his assault against Christianity with some general arguments. First of all, he attempts to draw a parallel between ancient mythology and Christianity. He says that the belief in Jesus to be the Son of God is easily explained.

He was born at a time when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story . . . it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles, or Mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God, and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.<sup>21</sup>

Paine believed that most of the New Testament and much of the Old Testament was derived from Greek and Roman mythology. Elsewhere he states that ". . . the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology and partly from the Jewish traditions."<sup>22</sup>

Another area Paine assaults is the reliability and authenticity of the Biblical documents, the books of the Old and the New Testaments. He says that the first question we must ask is if these books are genuine.<sup>23</sup> He then tries to show that they are not.

Concerning the Gospels he states that they were written ". . . many years after the things they pretend to relate . . ." and that

". . . they have been manufactured, as the books of the Old Testament have been, by other persons that those whose names they bear."<sup>24</sup> He believed that all of the New Testament documents were written two or three hundred years after Jesus' death,<sup>25</sup> thus, he asserts, we cannot trust anything in them.

In the second part of *The Age of Reason* Paine begins a book by book critique of the Old and New Testaments. It is not possible within the purview of this paper to look at and answer all of his objections. We will, however, examine some of his foremost arguments to see what kind of "problems" and "contradictions" led him to say that ". . . the stupid Bible of the Church . . . teacheth man nothing."<sup>26</sup>

One of Paine's main fusillades against the Old Testament centers on the authorship of the Pentateuch. He says that:

. . . there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books . . . In Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (for everything in Genesis is prior to the time of Moses, and not the least allusion is made to him therein), the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, 'the Lord said unto Moses,' or 'Moses said unto the Lord', or 'Moses said unto the people' or 'the people said unto Moses'; and this is the style and manner that historians use in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing.<sup>27</sup>

Paine cites Numbers 12:3 as additional proof that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Paine states that ". . . it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd."<sup>28</sup>

Another reference Paine quotes is Genesis 36:31. The verses immediately prior to this give a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau and a list of the kings of Edom. Verse 31 says,

"And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Paine deduces that this passage "... could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and, consequently, that book of Genesis, so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least.<sup>29</sup>

One final point Paine makes here is that if the accounts recorded in the Pentateuch are true then Moses is one of the most despicable men in all of history. To prove this he points to Numbers 31:13 and following.<sup>30</sup> The Israelites had just returned victoriously from battling the Midianites and Moses goes out to meet them.

And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.<sup>31</sup>

Paine states that "among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account is true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers and debauch the daughters."<sup>32</sup>

Paine's attempts to pillory and repudiate the New Testament center around what he sees as contradictions in the text. A few of these should suffice to show his general thrust.

One apparent contradiction, Paine says, is the different genealogies of Jesus given by Matthew and Luke.

The book of Matthew gives a genealogy by name from David up through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ; and makes there to be twenty-eight generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes these to be forty-three generations; besides which, there are only two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists.<sup>33</sup>

Another discrepancy for Paine is the different inscriptions on the cross. Matthew's account states, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."<sup>34</sup> Mark's states, "The Kind of the Jews."<sup>35</sup> Luke's reads, "This is the King of the Jews."<sup>36</sup> And finally, John's says, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."<sup>37</sup> From this Paine concludes that the facts here are irreconcilable.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Paine says that the different accounts of the angel's visit to Mary and Joseph are another contradiction. "The story of the angel announcing what the Church calls the 'immaculate conception' is not so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to Mark and John; and is differently related in Matthew and Luke. The former says the angel appeared to Joseph; the latter says it was to Mary."<sup>39</sup>

One final example of what Paine thought were irreconcilable differences pertain to the resurrection accounts. There are differences in each one, for example, Matthew states that the Jews asked Pilate for a guard to be placed, they sealed the tomb and set a watch. The other Gospel narratives omit these facts. Matthew also says that there was an earthquake, that an angel rolled back the stone and then sat upon it. Again, the other accounts omit this. "Mark says the angel was within the sepulchre, sitting on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the feet."<sup>40</sup>

Paine continues and shows some other alleged contradictions

and then concludes that "... if the writers of those four books had gone into a court of justice ... and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropped for perjury, and would have justly deserved it."<sup>41</sup>

Paine, who was not the meekest man "upon the face of the earth," proudly stated, "... I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease, and with a library of Church books about him, can refute."<sup>42</sup> To this he adds, "And now ... what have ye to say?"<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps in beginning our critique of Paine's work we may slightly alter Dante's immortal line to read "Abandon all REASON ye who enter here,"<sup>44</sup> for *The Age of Reason* is neither reasonable nor logical. In fact, the author really had little comprehension or understanding of what Christianity actually is.

There are numerous places within Paine's work where he either deliberately misrepresents Christian beliefs or misunderstands them. For instance, Paine declares that only eight or nine persons allegedly saw Jesus after His resurrection.<sup>45</sup> But the Scriptures show that all of the apostles, except Judas, saw the risen Lord, at least four or five women saw Him, and Paul asserts that Jesus appeared to over five hundred at one time.<sup>46</sup>

Paine also states that Jesus probably contemplated delivering the Jewish nation from the Romans.<sup>47</sup> At various times though, Jesus specifically denied this. At one time the people tried to take Him and forcefully make Him their king, but He refused and left them.<sup>48</sup> At His trial before Pilate He plainly declared that His kingdom was not of this world.<sup>49</sup> Instead of being a political savior Jesus said that He came to give His life as a ransom for our sins.<sup>50</sup>

Elsewhere Paine commented that the amount of time between Jesus' crucifixion and His "so called" ascension was "but a few days."<sup>51</sup> But the New Testament says that forty days transpired.<sup>52</sup>

There are many other instances of Paine's ignorance. He said that Moses was not an Israelite,<sup>53</sup> that Jesus was not really well known in Israel,<sup>54</sup> that the only Apostle near the crucifixion was Peter,<sup>55</sup> and he thought that Luke was supposed to have been one of the apostles and an eyewitness.<sup>56</sup> Thus, even a precursory reading of *The Age of Reason* would show that Paine was either vastly ignorant of what he was talking about or a deliberate deceiver.

But we must move on in our critique. Throughout his diatribe against Christianity Paine continually asserted that he was not attacking Jesus, rather, he thought Jesus was a virtuous man whose moral teachings have never been surpassed.<sup>57</sup> And yet Paine still denied the Deity of Christ. But if he would have thought of the consequences of what he was saying he would have seen that this position is logically inconsistent. Jesus could not have been a simply a man, with great moral teachings, and yet have made the claims that He did. The great Catholic apologist G. K. Chesterton illustrates this in his book *The Everlasting Man*.

Normally speaking, the greater a man is, the less likely he is to make the very greatest claim. Outside the unique case we are considering, the only kind of man who ever does make that kind of claim is a very small man; a secretive or self-centered monomaniac ... It is possible to find here and there human beings who make this supremely super-human claim. It is possible to find them in a lunatic asylums; in padded cells; possibly in straight waistcoats. But ... nobody supposes that Jesus of Nazareth was that sort of person. No modern critic in his five wits thinks that the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount was a horrible half-witted imbecile that might be scrawling stars on the walls of a cell. No atheist or blasphemer believes



that the author of the Parable of the Prodigal Son was a monster with one mad idea like a cyclops with one eye. . . . Yet by all analogy we have really to put him there or else in the highest place of all.

The well known modern apologist C. S. Lewis further expounds on this:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic -- on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg -- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>59</sup>

One of Paine's first attacks in his book was in trying to equate the Bible with ancient heathen mythology. This was thoroughly refuted in the 1960's by Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon. Dr. Gordon, who was not a Christian and thus cannot be attacked as being partial, showed in his book *Before the Bible: the common background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* that ancient mythology was derived from Hebrew sources and not vice versa. For example Hercules came from the story of Samson and the fall of the Titans came from the fall of the angels.<sup>60</sup>

Likewise Paine's assertion, that the New Testament Gospels were not written until two or three hundred years after Jesus, does not correspond with any facts. By A. D. 160 there already was a harmony of the four Gospels done by Tatian. One of the earliest

New Testament manuscripts in existence is the Bodmer Papyrus II which is dated about A. D. 150-200 and contains nearly all of the Gospel according to John. Another earlier manuscript, the John Rylands Manuscript, is dated about A. D. 100-130. This manuscript was found in Egypt and contains a portion of John's Gospel.<sup>61</sup> In addition to this we have numerous writings of the Church Fathers, who quote extensively from the Gospels as well as the rest of the New Testament, all of which dates from A. D. 100 to A. D. 200.<sup>62</sup>

Dr. William F. Albright, probably the world's greatest Biblical archaeologist stated in an interview for Christianity Today: "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D. (very probably sometimes between about A.D. 50 and 75)."<sup>63</sup> Like Dr. Gordon, Dr. Albright also was (apparently) not a Christian. Thus we can see that Paine's assertions regarding the Gospel documents are fallacious.

As we look at the various arguments Paine raises against the Old Testament we will see that they too are as erroneous as his previous objections. In attacking the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Paine says the Moses could not have written the books because they are written in the third person, a style more fitting for historical writing. The answer to this is twofold. First of all, it is very possible that Moses may have dictated his work to scribes. This was a common practice back then for eminent men. And secondly, Moses may have actually written in the third person. There are certainly precedents for this in that other writers of antiquity, such as Josephus, Xenophon, and Julius Caesar, all wrote their works in this style.

Paine continuing his argument, states that Moses would be "truly ridiculous and absurd"<sup>64</sup> if he were the author because of the verse in Numbers saying that Moses "... was very meek, above

all the men which were upon the face of the earth."<sup>65</sup> There are several legitimate answers to this. John W. Haley, in his classic book *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, states:

Moses, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, was writing history "objectively." Hence he speaks of himself as freely as he would of any other person, It is also to be observed that he records his own faults and sins with the same fidelity and impartiality. It is remarked by Calmet: "As he praises himself here without pride, so he will blame himself elsewhere with humility."<sup>66</sup>

It is also possible that the word "meek" may not be the best translation. "It may be observed, further, that the word 'anav', meek, is frequently interchanged with the cognate word 'ani', and that the meaning may be 'bowed down', or 'oppressed.'"<sup>67</sup>

Paine assumes in his next argument that the reference to kings reigning in Israel, in Genesis 36:31, proves that this verse could not have been written until the time of Saul at the earliest. The fallacy in Paine's argument lies in his presupposing that predictive prophecy is impossible. Shortly before this God had promised Jacob that "... a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins."<sup>68</sup> Thus all Moses was doing was reaffirming God's promise that there would indeed be kings reigning over Israel.

Finally, in his tirade against the Old Testament Paine cites the destruction of the Midianites by Israel and Moses' order to preserve the "keep alive for yourselves" all the female Midianites who were virgins.<sup>69</sup> Paine says that it is impossible that "... an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers and debauch the daughters" could have come from God.<sup>70</sup> There are two points we must examine here; first, the order to destroy the Midianite nation, and secondly, the order to keep the young Midianite women alive.

Bishop Richard Watson, who was a contemporary of Paine's, wrote *An Apology For the Bible* in reply to *The Age of Reason*. The Bishop asks:

... is it repugnant to reason that God, should, by an express act of his providence, destroy a wicked nation? I am fond of considering the goodness of God as the leading principle of his conduct towards mankind, of considering his justice as subservient to his mercy. He punishes individuals and nations with the rod of his wrath; but I am persuaded that all his punishments originate in his abhorrence of sin; are calculated to lessen its influence; and are proofs of his goodness; inasmuch as it may not be possible for Omnipotence itself to communicate supreme happiness to the human race, whilst they continue servants of sin.<sup>71</sup>

Earlier in Israel's history a similar situation arose when God had the Israelites destroy the Canaanites. The two incidents are parallel and the comments Bishop Watson makes concerning the Canaanites apply equally to the case of the Midianites. Watson states:

As to the Canaanites . . . they were idolaters, sacrificers of their own crying or smiling infants; devourers of human flesh; addicted to unnatural lust; immersed in the filthiness of all manner of vice. Now, I think, it will be impossible to prove, that it was a proceeding contrary to God's moral justice to exterminate so wicked a people. He made the Israelites the executors of his vengeance; and in doing this, he gave such an evident and terrible proof of his abomination of vice, as could not fail to strike the surrounding nations with astonishment and terror, and to impress on the minds of the Israelites, what they were to expect, if they followed the example of the nations whom he commanded them to cut off.<sup>72</sup>

But what of the order to keep the young female virgins alive, was it to debauch them as Paine asserts? If this were the case then it would contradict everything God had previously told them for

in Exodus 20:14 and in scores of other passages God forbids sexual immorality. William F. Arndt, preeminent New Testament Greek scholar and American Editor of Bauer's *Lexicon*, comments on this. ". . . [T]he women mentioned in Numbers 31:18 had not been active in seducing the Israelites to participation in the immoral worship of Peor, hence they were permitted to live, although they had to become the slaves of the Israelites. That it was an impure, wicked motive to which they owed their preservation is an assumption of scoffers which is not in keeping with the trend of the whole narrative and may safely be discarded as dictated by blind prejudice and hate."<sup>73</sup>

When we turn to the New Testament Paine resorts to showing alleged contradictions, beginning with the different genealogies given in Matthew and Luke. Paine's argument here is not new and has been answered as long ago at the time of the Church fathers. One of the answers given to this is that Matthew is giving us the family line of Joseph while Luke is giving the genealogy of Mary. Mary's name is not given in Luke 3 because she was already mentioned several times in the first two chapters as being Jesus' mother. Besides, the usual way the Jewish genealogies were given was by listing the father, grandfather, etc. . . . Luke does this and gives the name of the legal father, Joseph, however he asserts that Joseph was not really Jesus' father but was only "supposed" to be so (because Jesus was virgin born).<sup>74</sup>

"A literal translation of Luke 3:23 would be, 'Jesus, when He began, was about thirty years old, being the son of Joseph, as it was thought, of Heli . . .' This does not at all mean that Jesus was the son of Heli, but that Jesus was a descendant, on His mother's side, of Heli. The word son has this wider meaning."<sup>75</sup>

Besides this, no problem with the genealogies was ever put forth by the early enemies of Christianity. They never considered these genealogies as being contradictory. Albert Barnes in his

commentary on Matthew states that ". . . the Jews were fully competent to show that these tables were incorrect, if they were really so; and it is clear that they were fully disposed, if possible to do it. The fact, therefore, that it is not done, is clear evidence that they thought it to be correct."<sup>76</sup>

Another so called discrepancy for Paine is that none of the Gospel writers recite the inscription on Jesus' cross in exactly the same words. But we are also told that the inscription was written in three different languages; Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.<sup>77</sup> So how do we know that there was not a slight verbal difference in the inscriptions themselves. We do not and thus the differences can easily be explained. Though all the inscriptions had the same meaning" . . . it is probable, that, if two men had translated the Hebrew and the Latin into Greek, there would have been a verbal difference between their translations."<sup>78</sup>

A similar type of "contradiction" for Paine is in the different accounts of the angel appearing to Mary and Joseph to announce the immaculate conception. The answer, is in most cases of alleged discrepancies, is simple. The angel appeared twice, once to Mary and then later to Joseph.

Finally, Paine notes the differences in the resurrection accounts and cites them as irrefutable proof that the Gospel stories are spurious. In fact, Paine says, a court of law would find the Gospel accounts so different that the writers of them would be found guilty of perjury.

When we actually look at the differences though they pertain to the minute details, not to anything major, and they can be explained or harmonized. For instance, Matthew mentions some things that the others omit, but this does not mean that they did not occur. "It is quite clear that all of the Gospels relate their portraits of Jesus differently. This is what we should expect. No four witnesses (or news reporters), all of whom witness a series of

events, will write them up in exactly the same way, detail for detail. If they did, there would be obvious collusion."<sup>79</sup>

Simon Greenleaf was one of the greatest legal minds of our country during the 19th century. "Greenleaf's famous work, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, the first volume of which appeared in 1842, was 'regarded as the foremost American authority,' passing through edition after edition, is still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure. Greenleaf, trained in weighing evidence, while still professor of Law at Harvard, wrote in 1842. . . *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*."<sup>80</sup> I shall quote Greenleaf at length in regard to the so-called discrepancies in the Gospel accounts:

There is enough of discrepancy 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 occurred . . . . The discrepancies between the narratives of the several evangelists, when carefully examined, will not be found sufficient to invalidate their testimony. Many seeming contradictions will prove, upon closer scrutiny, to be in substantial agreement; and it may be confidently asserted that there are none that will not yield, under fair and just criticism. If these different accounts of the same transactions were in strict verbal conformity with each other, the argument against their credibility would be much stronger.<sup>81</sup>

Thus we have seen that all of Mr. Paine's arguments, though emotional and sometimes eloquent, are in reality specious. But why, one might ask, would someone of such obvious intellectual capacities be found guilty of such shallow reasoning? From whence does his hatred of Christianity spring?

Undoubtedly part of it stems from his upbringing. Eric Foner

states that "we can be certain that Paine's father's Quakerism influenced his son's rejection of hierarchies in church and state . . . . It was also natural that the son of a Quaker always criticized the laws excluding Protestant Dissenters from public office, the universities and many professions and favored the separation of church and state."<sup>82</sup>

Another influence on Paine was the rise of Newtonian science, which emphasized a universe of order and harmony which was guided by natural laws.<sup>83</sup> Paine's Deistic beliefs would be in complete agreement with this.

But perhaps the one factor that, more than any other, prevented Paine from seriously considering the Christian claims was his own pride. We have already seen several instances of this in *The Age of Reason*. Another example of it can be seen from a letter wrote to Benjamin Franklin in Paris in 1778, in which he said: "I have the pleasure of being respected and I feel a little of that satisfactory kind of pride that tells me I have some right to it."<sup>84</sup> *The New-Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* states: "Comparison of the contemporary biographies, both of friends and foes, seems to show these facts; Paine was through life a harsh, unfeeling, vain, conceited, and disagreeable man."<sup>85</sup>

Paine even admitted in *The Age of Reason* that no amount of evidence would induce him to accept the Bible as the Word of God. After stating why he rejected the Bible Paine said: "Did the book called the Bible excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books that are now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the Word of God, because the POSSIBILITY would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon."<sup>86</sup>

The problem with Paine's statement is that everything we do

in life is based on PROBABILITY, not POSSIBILITY or absolute CERTAINTY. We do not deal with possibilities because, in a contingent universe, anything is possible. Likewise, when judging evidence we look for the probability of something being true or false “. . . since absolute certainty lies only in the realms of pure logic and mathematics, where, by definition, one encounters no matters of fact at all.”<sup>87</sup>

In conclusion one final critique needs to be mentioned. Paine, as a Deist, rejected any possibility of revealed religion or a written Word of God. Paine believed “that the creation we behold is the real and ever-existing Word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaims His power, it demonstrates His wisdom, it manifests His goodness and beneficence.”<sup>88</sup>

The question is, how in the world, apart from a direct revelation by God, can man know that God is a loving and beneficent being? How can a Deist tell people who are born into poverty, sickness, disease, etc., that God loves them? In 1863 a man was born with “. . . an incurable infestation of bone, skin and nerve tumors known as multiple neurofibromatosis.”<sup>89</sup> The following is a description of him as he grew into adulthood:

His head is enormous, a grotesquely swollen tuber. His right eye is squashed beneath a protruding mass of bone, as if his skull had partially melted, and a similar bony stump juts from his mouth, distending his upper lip to create a drooling, unclosable hole. His short, cruelly twisted body is festooned with cauliflower-like clumps of skin, and a large putrid sac of flesh hangs from his back. His feet are rooted like knobs, his right arm little more than a club.<sup>90</sup>

This man's name was John Merrick and he was popularly known as the Elephant Man.

Deism offers the John Merricks and the other unfortunates of

the world nothing. To them God can be seen as nothing but a capricious and pernicious being who delights in mankind's misery.

It was not Deism that touched John Merrick's heart; rather it was the 23rd Psalm which revealed a loving compassionate God. Deism and Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* only lead men into utter darkness and despair. In Christianity, we have God, loving His creation so much that He comes down to reach us, to give us an abundant life here as well as when we die. Jesus declared: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”<sup>91</sup>

The importance of this paper is that “. . . deism did not die; it did not even fade away, and it still exists in fact, though perhaps not in name.”<sup>92</sup> Likewise, Paine's “. . . *Age of Reason* is still circulated and read. The replies written at the time are not.”<sup>93</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, s.v. "Paine, Thomas."

<sup>2</sup>Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 135, in "The Fate of Thomas Paine," written in 1934.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Paine, *The Life and Major Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), pp. XIII - XIV.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. XV - XVI.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50, in "The American Crisis I."

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. XVI.

<sup>7</sup>Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Paine, *The Life and Major Writings of Thomas Paine*, *op. cit.*, pp. XXVII - XXXV.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. XXXVI.

<sup>10</sup>*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972 ed., s.v. "Deism," by Ernest Campbell Mossner.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1974), p. 168.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup>Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason.*, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.

- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 171, 174.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 189.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 107.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114.
- <sup>31</sup>Num. 31:15-18
- <sup>32</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, pp. 114-115.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.
- <sup>34</sup>Mt. 27:37.
- <sup>35</sup>Mk. 15:26.
- <sup>36</sup>Lk. 23:38.
- <sup>37</sup>Jn. 19:19.
- <sup>38</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, pp. 160-161.
- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160.
- <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 164.
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>44</sup>Dante Alighieri. *The Inferno*, Canto III:9
- <sup>45</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, p. 51.
- <sup>46</sup>I Cor. 15:4-8.
- <sup>47</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, p. 55.
- <sup>48</sup>Jn. 6:15.
- <sup>49</sup>Jn. 18:36.
- <sup>50</sup>Mt. 20:28.
- <sup>51</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, p. 168.
- <sup>52</sup>Jn. 20:1, 15, 26; 21:1; Acts 1:3.
- <sup>53</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, p. 60.
- <sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.
- <sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 161.
- <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 162, 169.
- <sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.
- <sup>58</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (Garden City: Image Books, 1955), pp. 201-202.
- <sup>59</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan 1975), pp. 55-56.
- <sup>60</sup>Cyrus H. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations* (New York: Harper, 1962).
- <sup>61</sup>Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernadino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), pp. 48-49.
- <sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
- <sup>63</sup>William F. Albright, quoted in *Christianity Today*, VII, (Jan. 18, 1963), 3.
- <sup>64</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, p. 107.
- <sup>65</sup>Num. 12:3.
- <sup>66</sup>John W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 248-249.
- <sup>67</sup>C. J. Ellicott, *The 'Layman's Handy Commentary' Series: Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), p. 90.
- <sup>68</sup>Gen. 35:11.
- <sup>69</sup>Num. 31:15-18.
- <sup>70</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason, op.cit.*, pp. 114-115.
- <sup>71</sup>Richard Watson, *An Apology For The Bible* (London, 1818), pp. 210-211.
- <sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
- <sup>73</sup>W. Arndt, *Does The Bible Contradict Itself?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 21.
- <sup>74</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Answers To Tough Questions* (San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1980), p. 60.
- <sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), pp. 2-3.

<sup>77</sup>Jn. 19:20.

<sup>78</sup>Watson, *An Apology For The Bible*, *op.cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>79</sup>McDowell and Stewart, *Answers To Tough Questions*, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>80</sup>Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1945), pp. 423-424.

<sup>81</sup>Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*, pp. 122-123, in John Warwick Montgomery, *The Law Above The Law* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1975).

<sup>82</sup>Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>85</sup>*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, *loc.cit.*

<sup>86</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason*, p. 63. Capitalization used by the author for emphasis.

<sup>87</sup>John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter Varsity Press, 1976), p. 79.

<sup>88</sup>Paine, *The Age of Reason*, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>89</sup>"The Elephant Man," *Rolling Stone*, No. 330 (November 13, 1980), p. 10.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup>Jn. 10:10.

<sup>92</sup>*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *loc.cit.*

<sup>93</sup>*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, *loc.cit.*

## BOOKS FROM FRANCE



## BOOKS FROM FRANCE

*The Simon Greenleaf School of Law conducts a unique European program: each summer, in conjunction with the annual Study Session of the world-famous International Institute of Human Rights, Strasbourg, France, Simon Greenleaf holds its International Seminar in Theology & Law, offering students the opportunity to study law and human rights from a biblical standpoint amid the historical and contemporary glories of the French Rhineland. Recent French publications in the School's fields of interest — now available in The Simon Greenleaf Library — are worthy of being brought to the attention of our readers.*

### THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Jean Imbert, *Le procès de Jésus* ("Que sais-je?," No. 1896; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), 128 pages. Price: 16 French francs (FF).

Many books — good, bad, and indifferent — have been written concerning the historicity and legality of the trial of Jesus. Prior to Imbert's volume, the best analysis was certainly Blinzler's German treatment of the subject, available also in French and English translations. The worst was doubtless Haim Cohn's *Trial and Death of Jesus* (English translation from the Hebrew published by KTAV in 1977), an expansion of his article that originally appeared in 2 *Israel Law Review* 332-79 (1967). For Cohn, the Romans were solely responsible for Jesus' execution, since (in his view) first century Jewish legal procedure would clearly have been violated had Jesus been treated as the Gospel writers say he was. Cohn — a Justice on the Israel Supreme Court who has represented Israel on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights — tendentiously ignores

independent historical evidence that the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time were perfectly capable of violating their own legal standards! In contrast, Imbert, like Blinzler, finds both the Roman and the Jewish leadership responsible for Jesus' death, and leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that the Gospel accounts ring true historically and juridically. Imbert is a prolific legal scholar, not a theologian (he is professor of law at the University of Paris), and his approach and conclusions remind one of A.N. Sherwin-White, who twitted liberal theologians and practitioners of form-criticism with the fact that the four Gospels give a better historical base for Jesus' life than Tacitus, Suetonius, Velleius Paterculus and Cassius Dio provide for the biography of Tiberius Caesar (*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963]).

#### HUMAN RIGHTS AFTER HELSINKI

*Liberté Religieuse et Défense des Droits de l'Homme*, Vols. I-V (Paris: Istina, 1977-1979), various paginations. Prices of the 5 volumes: 31 FF, 43 FF, 40 FF, 58 FF, 60 FF.

This continuing series is extracted from the journal ISTINA (45, rue de la Glacière, 75013 Paris), and consists almost entirely of documentary evidence on human-rights violations in Eastern bloc countries since the Helsinki accord. Vol. I deals with the U.S.S.R.; Vols. II and V with Czechoslovakia; Vol. III into Poland and Lithuania; and Vol. IV with the U.S.S.R. and Romania. The record speaks for itself and utterly gives the lie to the Socialist claim that one should leave the question of alleged violations of human rights to the internal policing of the sovereign national states in question. By signing the Helsinki final act (to say nothing of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), Socialist bloc states placed themselves beyond national sovereignty in the human rights area. Their hypocrisy is plain for all to see in the legal documents, pleadings,

and testimony (often smuggled out from behind the Iron Curtain at great personal cost) now made accessible in French translation.

#### JACQUES ELLUL

*Jacques Ellul: A temps et à contretemps*. Entretiens avec Madeleine Garrigou-Lagrange (Paris: Le Centurion, 1981), 209 pages. Price: 59 FF.

Jacques Ellul should need no introduction to the readers of *The Simon Greenleaf Law Review*. One of the most provocative social critics of our day, author of thirty-six books translated into some twelve languages — and member of the Board of Reference of Simon Greenleaf's European program at the International Institute of Human Rights — Ellul epitomizes the Christian intellectual who seeks to present Christ as the only answer to a fallen society. The volume under review consists of interviews with Ellul conducted by one of France's best and most sensitive Christian journalists. The result is a superb insight into the way Ellul — law professor and lay theologian — handles the interrelation between biblical truth and social-political reality. Interview topics include: "The Gospel and Marx's *Das Kapital*," "The Gospel Is Revolutionary," "Church and Spirit," "The Christian Is Always Out in Front," "Altering Pastoral Training," "With Youth in the Streets," "Theology and Technology," etc., etc. Here is a single example, to whet the reader's appetite: "Sad to say, the Christian is always behind, when he ought to be in front. It's his prophetic mission to try to use his head before events become fatalities. . . . What particularly discourages me is the radical incapacity of Christians to intervene when situations are fluid, and their habit of reaching passionate commitment when the outcome is already inevitable: they push and shove the wheels of vehicles already rolling down the slope." Not, however, Ellul: his career (from his association with the French Resistance in World War II to his identification with

Simon Greenleaf) displays a passion to intervene just when radical commitment to revelational standards and objectives can make a difference to a world in need of divine law and saving grace.

J.W.M.

**THE NEXT ISSUE**

## COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Volume Two (Academic Year 1982-83) of the *Simon Greenleaf Law Review* will feature the hitherto unpublished texts of three lectures delivered in France in the summer of 1980 by Professor Elmer Gelinas (B.A. in Philosophy, University of Western Ontario, M.A. and Ph.D., University of Toronto), Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, St. Mary's College, California. Professor Gelinas' lectures were sponsored by Simon Greenleaf's International Seminar in Theology & Law, held conjointly each year with the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The three lectures — which were received with great enthusiasm by Simon Greenleaf students and guests — deal with "Thomas Aquinas and the Law," "Hobbes' Philosophy of Law and Politics," and "The Ethical Foundations of Legal Theory." They are guaranteed to stimulate your thinking, as will the other articles, features, and reviews in Volume Two. Why not subscribe today?



Professor Gelinas (left), Dean Montgomery, and two students on the Bastille Day outing in medieval Riquewihr during the 1980 Simon Greenleaf summer session (Alsace, France).