

Highest-Legal Standards *Prove*¹ Jesus' Resurrection

It isn't rare in Christian apologetics² today to encounter arguments for Jesus' resurrection that distance their cases from support by the Bible.³ I grant that that has its merits. After all, hostile *prejudice* is rampant in our secular age to the degree that it hinders the Bible from getting even a scant hearing.⁴ Yet despite mounting positive support to the contrary, certain teachers still regard the Gospels⁵ as if they carry only *secondary* weight instead of valuing them as *primary* documents that *accurately* report the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. For this reason I seek to assist in returning the Gospels to their rightful status as *primary* histories such as *The Works of Josephus*.

It was some forty years ago that I discovered another author using a different method that highlights *integrity* as the standard by which the veracity of the characters in the Gospel narratives can be exonerated. I'm not suggesting credulity on his part. His additional skill in *philosophical*-reasoning to the contrary dismantled rebuttals designed to discredit Jesus' resurrection. Notice in note #58 for example that he not only dismantled Hume's charge that non-scholars can't discern whether a body covered by scars from an *excruciating* execution (John 20:27) is really the very same "alive-and-kicking" person who declared, "*Peace be with you*" (John 20:26),"⁶ but also stifled Spinoza's and Laplace's empty charge that Creators of a cosmos are helpless to fiddle with nature's laws.

Nevertheless my specific purpose is to highlight that area of the author's *specialty* which distinguishes truth from deceit by means of *testimonial* features. I am chagrined to admit the duration of time it has taken me to fully grasp the core point of the document I am about to identify. For example, I had previously held that *if any person of such great scholarship as the author's believed Jesus rose from the dead, then I could surely believe it too!* But today I thank God for enlightening me to the more satisfactory view that God-breathed-Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) both can, and actually does, show itself to stand on its own merits as *self-evidently* valid in its witness.

I now identify my mystery personality as Simon Greenleaf, LL.D who was both Professor and co-founder of Harvard Law School with fellow Justice, Joseph Story in the mid-1800s. First of all he produced his three-volume *Master Work*, "A Treatise on the Laws of Evidence," which is still valued as a *professional* authority on that subject.⁷ Yet the work I am *most* eager to highlight is his book, The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence (1843).⁸

Please bear with me as I offer one further relevant aside. I also recently discovered the concept of apologetic argumentation through *legal*-reasoning⁹ in the writings of John Warwick Montgomery (**JWM**) who states, "*The advantage of a jurisprudential approach [to making a case] lies in the difficulty of jettisoning it: legal standards of evidence develop [by refining the means] of*

¹ "Proof beyond a *reasonable* doubt" is the closest one can reach toward certitude outside the realms of logical syllogisms and mathematical formulas. It is deemed to better account for the facts than any other hypothesis. See my papers, "12 Historical facts Affirming Jesus' Resurrection" ** and "Hoax? Myth? Or Literally True?," at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com/articles

² An "apology" is NOT an "*I'm sorry*," but an intellectual defense of a given truth-claim. ** An "apologist" is a proponent of a truth-claim.

³ WL Craig. Reasonable Faith. 3rded. (Crossway, 2008), p.11. ** Habermas and Licona. Case for the Res. of Jesus. (Kregel, 2004), p.44.

⁴ Peter Singer in a debate with John Lennox ("Is There a God?") inexcusably imagines faith resting its beliefs on no evidence at all (30:f).

⁵ Hereafter unless specified otherwise, the solitary word "Gospels" is a reference to all four of them: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

⁶ John 20:27. Jesus' scars remained so as to affirm necessary continuity in Jesus' body. Also 1 Corinthians 15:1f. that includes mention of a crowd of over 500 people having witnessed Jesus alive.

⁷ Pamela Binnings Ewen. Faith on Trial: An Attorney Analyzes the Evidence for the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. (Broadman and Holman, 1999), She writes, "*Simon Greenleaf was, and today remains, an established authority on the rules of evidence...one of the most important works ever written on the law of evidence and one that is still used by lawyers in the United States*," p.10.

⁸ Simon Greenleaf. (Kregel Classics, 1995).

⁹ John Warwick Montgomery. History, Law, and Christianity. (Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, Inc., 2002).

resolving the most **intractable** disputes in society ... Significantly, both in philosophy and in theology, there [is increasing interest to] introduce **juridical** styles of reasoning.”¹⁰ He ends this section by noting that, “Mortimer Adler at the close of his [journey to embrace God’s existence¹¹ appealed to] the legal standard of **proof beyond a reasonable doubt**.”¹² Further, JWM elsewhere notes that what makes legal reasoning particularly important is that by such “*rules of evidence, issues of life and death are necessarily decided*.”¹³ Indeed it is because of the **finality** of legal verdicts that codified standards of legal reasoning adhere to the heavily-travelled path of refinement and clarification so that its codes be deemed as just and trustworthy as is possible in the face of the **sinful** (fallen) aspect of human nature. This is possible only if we adhere to the straight and narrow path (Matthew 7:13) that alone yields a society that is acknowledged to be fair and just. Such a goal is highly vulnerable for the reason that our fallenness chronically resists the *moral* and *spiritual* commitments that are required in order for rationality to thrive¹⁴ into the future.¹⁵

Throughout this paragraph all page references pertain to footnote #8. The legal-reasoning (**LR**) introduced just above leads us directly into the methodology employed by Professor Simon Greenleaf (**PSG**). For example, one consistent aspect of the passion accounts in the four Gospels is that its’ train of events are conveyed through **descriptive** narration as opposed to *analytic* speculations. For example (**PSG**) indicates firstly that people under interrogation normally tell the truth (p.31) unless their admissions would implicate them in *criminal* activity. To this substantial concern, LR then appeals to the distribution of factual details of the testimony as to whether they are testable (as opposed to vague) and whether they are reconcilable to other asserted details on the table (p.39). Moreover, this narrative is advanced by means of *visually*-depicted human encounters laced with dialogue that *consistently* advances the story-line. PSG writes, “*In almost every miracle related by the evangelists, the facts separately taken, were plain, intelligible, transpiring in public, and about which no person of ordinary observation would likely mistake* (p.37). Finally, in among his most famous statements, PSG declares it *morally* inconceivable that the disciples would invent a lie that would lead to their punishment by the sentence of death. As he states, “*Propagating this new faith...they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings...torments and cruel deaths...Yet this faith they zealously did propagate...As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors [continued] their work with increased vigor and resolution...It is therefore impossible that they could have persisted...had not Jesus actually risen from the dead...and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.*” (pp.31f).

There can be **no greater degree of certitude** concerning phenomenal events such as the **physical appearances** of Jesus having been raised to life after His crucifixion that are attested to by crowds of people. Along with **PSG’s** criteria, the challenge posed in my paper “12 Historical Facts...” (Op.cit. (1)) **further proves beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus rose from the dead!**

Gary Jensen, NALC Lutheran Pastor, retired © March 22, 2025

Gjensen549@gmail.com ** Christianityontheoffense.com ** lookanothertime.blogspot.com

M.Div., Luther/Northwestern Theological Seminary ** M.A. with Honors in *Science and Religion*, BIOLA University

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 69.

¹¹ Mortimer Adler. *How to Think About God*. (Mortimer Adler, 1980), p.148f.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpk9eHCj4RI>

¹³ J.W. Montgomery. *The Law Above the Law*. (NRP Books, 2015), p. 89.

¹⁴ Secularists by their self-determined definition-part company with the **latter two** of these three values. “*Secularism is the view that religious considerations should be excluded from civil affairs or public education.*” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th Edition: <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=define+secularism&t=chromentp&ia=web>

¹⁵ Contrary to the facts of life, today’s Democrat party insist that people with masculine genitalia become female if they say they are.