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Article Critique

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Abstract

In this paper, the analysis of Mark Jones' book *Criminals of the Bible: Twenty-Five Case Studies of Biblical Crimes and Outlaws* is conducted. The book is devoted to famous biblical characters who committed crimes or were accused of it. The paper highlights some important points of the book and analyzes Jones' views contained there. The case studies descriptions are accompanied by quotations from various scholarly criminal justice references.

Keywords: Bible, criminals, case study, murder, adultery, subornation of perjury, conspiracy to commit murder.

Article Critique

There is a growing interest to the Bible in the community. If earlier it was seen as unshakable truth, now it looks more like the original source, full of contradictions and innuendo. This historic document ought to be learned like ancient Greek myths, inscriptions on Egyptian tombs or manuscripts in Sanskrit. One of the unusual studies related to the Bible is Mark Jones' *Criminals of the Bible: Twenty-Five Case Studies of Biblical Crimes and Outlaws*.

As for me, author does the right thing paying attention to such social factors as cultural differences of Biblical Eras and draws parallels with American history. It claims that Afro-Americans, Chinese and Hispanics were unequal some decades ago. Inequality also existed in ancient times. The Mosaic Law did not recognize equality of the all nationalities before the law. Only fellow Israelites were entitled to certain protections. According to Jones, intolerance to Samaritans was reflected in the New Testament. Considering all this, the author has the opinion of inequality before the law in biblical times. The big difference is also the fact that the state is separated from the church, there is

freedom of conscience and religion in modern America. In ancient Israel there was a theocracy, so rulers were tried for their religious deeds, not for political decisions. Jones also noted the positive impact of freedom of speech and the independence of judges. The author said he had been shocked having compared the number of American democratic and liberal laws (2006).

I think that the author compares the two different worlds with different legal bases, considering some biblical criminals from the modern point of view. Mark Jones accuses Cain of murder, Pharaoh of genocide, Amnon of raping, Jeremiah of rebellion, and Moses of homicide. In addition, the book profiles cases with some characters, such as John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, who are innocent victims of the law.

Jones can not ignore the history of the world's first murder. He examines the history of Cain and Abel. Once, they offered a sacrifice to God as a sign of love, humility and thanksgiving. The Lord did not accept the sacrifice of Cain. Seeing that his sacrifice was not accepted, Cain was angry with his brother and became jealous of him. The author analyzes the reason why God did not accept Cain's gifts and comes to the conclusion that he did not bring him the best fruits of the earth, and Abel, in turn, laid the best animal from his flock on the altar (2006).

The Bible states that human life is a gift of God, so man has no right to deprive himself of life or take it away from others. Murder is one of the most serious sins. God commands capital punishment for murders, but he defended Cain from those who could be seeking for revenge or trying to harm him. The author draws parallels with modern law enforcement agencies that protect prisoners and criminal suspects from lynching (2006). The Lord just cast Cain out. Despite the apparent lightness of punishment, banishment must have seemed a very terrible punishment to primitive man, because he had to be one-on-one with the wildlife. Exile was a common punishment for offenders in the infancy of mankind (Jones, 2006).

However, Cain's punishment was not only relegation. The author claims that murderer's livelihood was hurt. (2006). Cain could not engage in agriculture, because the ground was no longer giving crop for him.

Jones analyzes this case and comes up to conclusion that Cain's crime was premeditated. That is why it can be characterized as Murder in the First Degree, what states for killing which is premeditated and deliberated or committed in the presence of other aggravating circumstances. In the author's opinion, the main lesson of this story is the following: 'Hate, greed, envy, and jealousy are not illegal, but they can easily lead to behaviors that are'(2006).

In modern USA most states retain the capital punishment for criminals convicted of their highest level murder offense. In states which do not impose the death penalty, life imprisonment without the possibility of parole is generally a punishment for a first degree murder charge with aggravating factors (FindLaw, 2014).

David is an outstanding, contradictory personality, the shepherd, who became the king, frightening even the mighty Egyptian Pharaohs, a talented military leader and politician. He is also one of the most ambiguous rulers of the history. One evening, he was walking on the roof of the king's house and saw a very beautiful woman bathing. David knew that it was Bathsheba, who is the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

At that time, a brave warrior Uriah was in the king's army ruled by Joab, which was besieging the neighboring tribe Ammonites. Despite the marriage of woman, David sent messengers, they brought Bathsheba, and he slept with her.

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After a while Bathsheba told the king about her pregnancy. And according to the law of Moses, for that, both the perpetrators waited for death - stoning. David was trying to arrange a meeting with the wife of Uriah, but the soldier did not go home. Then David asked Joab to send this warrior to the most dangerous section of the front and make sure that Uriah was one-on-one with numerous enemies at some point there (Jones, 2006).

Jones claims that the sin of David and Bathsheba is Adultery, but the king is also committed in Conspiracy to Commit Murder (2006). Although David repented, God's punishment was not long in coming: the kingdom was rocked by revolts and uprisings, one of which was led by his son Absalom - David even had to flee from Jerusalem for a while. Endless struggles between David's children had nearly ruined the state.

If to speak about 2014, adultery remains a criminal offense in 21 states, although prosecutions are rare. Massachusetts, Idaho, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Wisconsin consider adultery a felony, while in the other states it is a misdemeanor. Penalties vary from a \$10 fine (Maryland) to life sentence (Michigan). Conspiracy to murder is punished by imprisonment for any term of years or for life (Adultery, 2005).

As it is seen, Jones is not in power to analyze all the crimes described in the Bible, but he chooses such cases that if they happened in our time, they would cause an unprecedented public response. One such case study is the story of the king Ahab.

One day the king Ahab was very sorrowful. Jezebel asked him why he was sad. Ahab said that he wanted to buy a vineyard, but the man whose name

was Naboth refused the king. Queen Jezebel was punishing Ahab king because he could not terrorize his citizen ("This is how you act as king over Israel?"). Jezebel wrote letters to the chiefs of some cities where Naboth lived. She ordered unworthy to find some people who had said, that Naboth had defied God and the king, then to take him out of the city and throw stones to death. Having heard that Naboth was already killed, she said Ahab to go and take his vineyard. Examining Jezebel's crime, Jones refers to the scandal with Monica Lewinsky and Simpson trial. Lessons of Jezebel and Ahab case study can be concluded in the ninth and tenth commandments, which warn against danger of uncontrolled political power, "meeting our own needs", and "taking responsibility" in legal practice (Jones, 2006).

In modern American law, subornation of perjury is a false oath swearing to tell the truth in court proceedings, whether in oral or written form. The term 'subornation of perjury' also describes the circumstance in which the lawyer causes the client to lie under oath or allows the other party to lie under oath. Title 18 U.S.C. § 1622 of American federal law provides that: perjury procurer is guilty of subornation of perjury, and shall pay a fine or go to prison not more than for five years, or both (Garner, 1999).

Thus, it can be concluded that in carefully written book *Criminals of the Bible* Holly Bible has been attentively researched. This investigation's results are entertaining, informative, accurate and thought provoking. More detailed examination of the Bible shows that it is not just a biography of saints. It contains details of shocking crimes that prove - the people in ancient times differed little from modern ones, they also had their vices and their perpetrators, even among celebrities. This book shows some lessons from the Bible in the criminal area. The main its ideas, as for me, are that not every accused is a real criminal and that the cruelest person can divine forgiveness.

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