The Great Mars Hill Resurrection Debate

Robert Greg Cavin

Michael Licona

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The Resurrectionist

“Smith”

Represents: Licona, Craig, Davis, the McGrews, Swinburne, et al.
The Anti-Resurrectionist

"Jones"

Represents: Cavin and Colombetti
Cavin: Background on the Problem of the Resurrection
Academic Background

• B.A. in Religion—USC
  • President of Trojan Christian Fellowship at USC
  • Member Campus Crusade for Christ

• M.A. in Theology—Fuller Seminary

• Ph.D. in Philosophy—UC Irvine
  • Nelson Pike, Brian Skyrms, & Karel Lambert

• Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies—Cypress College
Pre-Bayesian Influences

Josh McDowell
Evidence That Demands A Verdict
Pre-Bayesian Influences

John Warwick Montgomery

History & Christianity

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Pre-Bayesian Influences

Wolfhart Pannenberg

Jesus—God and Man

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Pre-Bayesian Influences

Alan Richardson

History—Sacred and Profane

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Pre-Bayesian Influences

George Eldon Ladd

I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus
Pre-Bayesian Influences

Antony Flew

“Miracles”

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy
The Resurrectionist is Guilty of the Fallacy of Special Pleading

The Argument for the Resurrection comes down to an arbitrary case of special pleading:

1. It is **psychologically impossible** that the disciples stole the body and lied.

2. It is **biologically impossible** that Jesus merely swooned on the cross and then recovered in the tomb.

3. It is **psychologically impossible** that the disciples had hallucinations of Jesus.

4. Therefore, the **biologically impossible** must have occurred: Jesus rose from the dead!
The Resurrectionist is Guilty of the Fallacy of Special Pleading

One can just as well argue:

1. It is **psychologically impossible** that the disciples stole the body and lied.

2. It is **biologically impossible** that Jesus merely swooned on the cross and then recovered in the tomb.

3. It is **biologically impossible** that Jesus rose from the dead.

4. Therefore, the **psychologically impossible** must have occurred: the disciples hallucinated the Risen Jesus!

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The Resurrectionist is Guilty of the “Naturalism Fallacy” Fallacy

Scholars who reject the Resurrection do so, not on the basis of the historical evidence, which is strong, but, rather, on the basis of naturalist, metaphysical, presuppositions.

But this Resurrectionist claim is false!

The “Naturalism Fallacy” Fallacy is the fallacy of dismissing anti-Resurrectionist arguments on the basis of the myth that these presuppose a naturalistic ideology.

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Bayesian Influences

Wesley C. Salmon

Logic

The Foundations of Scientific Inference
Bayesian Influences

Bayes' Theorem

Bayesian Confirmation Theory

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Bayesian Influences

Brian Skyrms

Choice & Chance

Causal Necessity

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Bayesian Influences

Belief is a Matter of Degree

Rational Plausibility must be Probability

\[ P[p|Ch(p)=n] = n \]
Cavin's Critique of Craig

Cavin's doctoral dissertation showed that Craig's argument violates the basic principles of probability.
Cavin's Critique of Craig

W. Lane Craig

Craig changed his argument in Reasonable Faith but still violates the canons of probability
Cavin’s F&P/TET Article

“Is There Sufficient Historical Evidence to Establish the Resurrection of Jesus?” showed that the evidence is insufficient!
Alvin Plantinga

Preeminent Christian Philosopher

Alvin Plantinga cites Cavin's argument in his

Warranted Christian Belief:
Cavin’s Debate Opponent

Michael R. Licona
The Resurrection of Jesus
A New Historiographical Approach

In this 718 page book, Licona ignores Cavin’s argument but still claims that the Resurrection is the best explanation!
Cavin's Hope for the Debate

That Licona will answer Cavin's argument in his opening address since it is the most direct refutation ever given against the claim that the Resurrection is more probable than not on the historical evidence!
What Cavin Will Do Tonight
1. Argue that the prior probability of a specifically supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God is so astronomically low that the Resurrection Theory has virtually 0 plausibility
What Cavin Will Do Tonight

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2. Argue that the Resurrection Theory is a dismal failure as an explanation of the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus—being ad hoc and almost completely devoid of explanatory power and scope.
What Cavin Will Do Tonight

1. Argue that the prior probability of a specifically supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God is so astronomically low that the Resurrection Theory has virtually 0 plausibility.

2. Argue that the Resurrection Theory is a dismal failure as an explanation of the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus—being ad hoc and almost completely devoid of explanatory power and scope.

3. Show that there is an alternative theory to the Resurrection that is a far superior explanation.
Blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!

Mt. 23:24
The Argument for the Resurrection:
Straining at Gnats while Swallowing Camels!

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Hey, Jones!
Look!
There's a gnat in your soup!
But Smith!
I see.

Yeah, I see!
The Sixteen Deadly Camels of the Resurrection
The Sixteen Deadly Myths of the Resurrection

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The Skeptic is Required to Explain the Empty Tomb and Postmortem Appearances of Jesus
The Skeptic is Required to Explain the Empty Tomb and Postmortem Appearances of Jesus
Licona’s thesis for tonight’s debate is...
Given the historical evidence, it is more probable than not that Jesus rose from the dead.
To win the debate, all Cavin must show is that Licona has not justified this thesis.
And, to show this, it is not necessary that Cavin produce an alternate explanation of the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus.
However, Cavin will show that it is actually the resurrectionist who is unable to produce an explanation of the empty tomb and post-mortem appearances of Jesus!
That is, Cavin will show that the Resurrection theory fails as an explanation of the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus!
Moreover, Cavin will suggest an alternative hypothesis that can more logically explain the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus!
The Skeptic-falsely assumes that God does not exist—so his skepticism about the Resurrection is unjustified.
The Skeptic falsely assumes that God does not exist—so his skepticism about the Resurrection is unjustified.
The existence of God is a non-issue in this debate.

It is, in the words of St. Paul: “a false stumbling-block”.

It’s a Red Herring!
I will assume—but merely for the sake of argument—that the traditional God of Western Monotheism actually exists and has been proven to exist.
The Natural—Not-Supernatural—Resurrection is Impossible Objection

Camel #3

Resurrection cannot be caused by Purely Natural Means
The Natural—Not-Supernatural—Resurrection-is-Impossible Objection

Resurrection cannot be caused by Purely Natural Means

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Resurrection from the dead by purely natural means has super-low prior probability.
The Natural—Not-Supernatural—Resurrection-is-Impossible Objection

But my hypothesis is that Jesus was raised from the dead supernaturally by God!
In fact, resurrection by natural means is just a matter of moving around the particles of the corpse to positions that correspond to life. There's nothing improbable about that—especially given modern medical nanotechnology!
Alcor (of Scottsdale Arizona) is working on this even as we debate.
The Natural—Not-Supernatural—Resurrection-is-Impossible Objection

Behold, natural resurrection via the “Christenstein Machine”!
The Divine Interference Objection

Camel #4

The skeptic wrongly ignores God’s supernatural intervention by saying that the Resurrection has a low Prior Probability.
The skeptic wrongly ignores God’s supernatural intervention by saying that the Resurrection has a low Prior Probability.
You skeptics ignore God!
But prior probability must consider God’s supernatural power!
The one hundred billion people who've died and stayed dead prove only that apart from God's supernatural intervention the dead don't rise.
However, if God wanted to raise Jesus, then the Resurrection becomes 100% probable!
Consider an analogy: Floating above the water in your swimming pool!
You skeptics would dismiss this as having extremely low prior probability!
The Divine Interference Objection

But all bets are off if some external agent lifts you out of the water!
The Divine Interference Objection
Likewise, you cannot say the Resurrection has a low prior probability since doing so ignores the activity of an external agent—namely, God!
You employ a far too simplistic manner of determining prior probability!
What's more, God is a free agent and so it's difficult to know a priori what he would will to do!
Because of this, we're forced to say that the prior probability of the Resurrection is simply inscrutable.
To justify your skepticism, you'll need to provide the background knowledge required to show that it's antecedently unlikely that God would want to raise Jesus from the dead.
No problem!
I agree that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good and that He can supernaturally intervene in the world in any way He wants!
God made the laws discovered by science, so they're in His power—not vice versa!
Then how can you say the prior probability that God would supernaturally raise Jesus from the dead is astronomically low?
The Divine Interference Objection

Simple!
Possibility is not probability!
"If" does not mean "does"!
If God wills that I turn into a gigantic green cucumber...
...then I’ll turn into a gigantic green cucumber.
But it’s hardly probable that God would will this!
The fact that God can supernaturally intervene doesn't make it in the least likely that He does.
Let's return to the swimming pool analogy.
It's not unlikely for me to float in my swimming pool supported by the water.
Jones Floating in the Pool
being supported by the Water:
Possible—and Very Likely

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But, even though it’s possible, it’s not very likely that someone’s going to lift me out of the water so that I “float” above it.
Jones “floating” above the Water in the Pool being supported by Smith: Possible—but not Very Likely
Indeed, observation shows that the frequency of external agents lifting me out of the water is very low.
Not to say, of course, that probability can or should be based on frequency!

Μὴ γένοιτο!
And, while it *is* scientifically possible, it’s astronomically unlikely for me to “float” above the water with no physical support.
Jones floating above the Water in the Pool with no Physical Support: Possible—but Astronomically Unlikely
And Probability Theory shows that it's even less likely for me to "float" above the water being "supported" by God!
Jones floating above the Water in the Pool being “supported” by God:
Possible—but even more Unlikely!
It’s a blatant straw man to saddle me with the view that the antecedent probability of what God wills must be determined a priori.
Your fallacy is to ignore the evidence of God’s self-revelation in Nature—seen a posteriori in everyday experience and science.
To see why supernatural intervention by God is antecedently improbable, we must consider Natural Theology, and, specifically, the Via Negativa.
The Divine Interference Objection

St. Augustine of Hippo said...
God's Self-Revelation in Nature

Dei Voluntas Rerum Natural Est!

St. Augustine of Hippo
Civitate Dei, XXI, 8
God’s Self-Revelation in Nature

Nature is the Will of God!

St. Augustine of Hippo

Civitate Dei, XXI, 8
And Moses Maimonides added that we learn about God through the Via Negativa, a.k.a., the Way of Negation.
We can learn about God by seeing what He is not!

Moses Maimonides
Guide for the Perplexed
God’s self-revelation in Nature shows that He has an exceptionally strong tendency not to supernaturally intervene in natural affairs!
Indeed, God reveals in everyday experience and science that He possesses an exceptionally strong tendency not to supernaturally raise the dead!
Since whatever God wills to happen must happen, it follows that the antecedent probability that God would will Jesus to rise from the dead is astronomically low.
And, since God is omnibenevolent, it follows that He must have the best of reasons for not willing to supernaturally raise Jesus from the dead!
This enables us to formulate the following Anti-Resurrection Prior Probability Argument.
The Astronomically Low Prior Probability of a Specifically Supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God

The Anti-Resurrection Prior Probability Statistical Syllogism

1. 99.999...999% of the dead are not supernaturally interfered with by God, and, thus, not raised by Him.

2. Jesus was dead.

3. Jesus was not supernaturally interfered with by God, and, thus, not raised by Him.

Prob[j is not-S | 99.999...999% of Ds are not-Ss & j is D] = 0.999...
This is an instance of a standard—and one of the most widely used—argument patterns of Inductive Logic: Statistical Syllogism.
The Astronomically Low Prior Probability of a Specifically Supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God

The Statistical Syllogism

1. X% of Fs are Gs.
2. a is F.
[X% Probable]
3. a is G.

\[ \text{Prob}[a \text{ is } G \mid X\% \text{ of Fs are } Gs \& a \text{ is } F] = 0.X \]
It's not an appeal to observational-relative frequencies!

Μὴ γένοιτο!
I'll return to these later on.
It's thus clear that the prior probability of a specifically supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God is astronomically low!
You can't accuse me, as you do Hume, of employing "a far too simplistic manner of determining probability" since my argument is predicated on the existence of an external supernatural agent, namely, God!
The Divine Interference Objection

My argument isn't Humean:

David Hume
1711-1776
The Divine Interference Objection

My argument isn't Humean:

David Hume
1711-1776
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a dead man to rise!

Jesus Christ
The Resurrection Theory is the best explanation of the Empty Tomb and Postmortem Appearances of Jesus

Camel #5

The Best Explanation Objection

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The Resurrection Theory is the best explanation of the Empty Tomb and Postmortem Appearances of Jesus.

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There are four major problems here!
First, as defined by Licona, the Resurrection Theory becomes a Viciously Circular “Explanation”!
Suppose we ask:

Why did individuals and groups, both friends and foes, experience appearances in objective visions or within ordinary vision of Jesus in his bodily raised corpse?
And suppose we are told...
That’s simple!

I explain the fact that these people experienced these appearances of Jesus by means of the Resurrection Hypothesis—which I hereby explicitly define as the hypothesis that these people experienced these appearances of Jesus!
We’d flatly reject this as a viciously circular “explanation”!
Yet Licona gives this exact "explanation" in his book!
Licona defines the Resurrection Theory in terms of the postmortem appearances of Jesus—thus rendering it a viciously circular explanation!

I herein define the resurrection hypothesis as follows:

*Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse.*

(TROJ: 582-583)
The moral, of course, is that it is illogical to define the Resurrection Hypothesis in terms of the historical facts that it needs to explain!
This leads to the second problem for the Resurrection Theory!
When it is no longer defined as a circular explanation, the Resurrection Hypothesis lacks both explanatory scope and explanatory power!
The Best Explanation Objection

To see this, consider…
The Parable of Mr. Jones
Suppose...
Jones' house is found empty by Peter, John, and the two Marys.
But later that morning...
Jones is seen by the two Marys.
And later that day...
Jones is seen at the club by his employees.
And three years later...
Jones is seen up in the clouds skydiving.
So now suppose we ask...
Why was Jones' house found empty?
And we are told...
That's simple!
It's because Jones woke up!
We'd all say...
Sure, Jones had to wake up. But that’s no explanation of why his house was found empty!
To explain that we'd need to suppose that Jones left his house!
Suppose we now ask...
Why was Jones seen by the two Marys?
and are told...
That's easy!
It's because
Jones woke up!
We'd all say...
That's a lame explanation!
To explain why Jones was seen by the two Marys we’d have to suppose he encountered them!
Suppose we now ask...
Why was Jones seen by his employees?
and are given the answer...
That's a snap! It's because Jones woke up!
We'd all say...
That's a bogus explanation!
To explain that we'd have to assume that Jones encountered his employees at the club!
Suppose we now ask...
Why was Jones seen skydiving three years later?
and are given the answer...
That's obvious!
It's because
Jones woke up!
We'd all agree...
That’s a ridiculous “explanation”!
What we'd have to suppose here is that Jones jumped out of an airplane three years later!
But now suppose what really happened three years later was that ...
Jones was seen floating above the clouds of "Heaven" in resplendent glory!
We would surely ask...
Why was Jones seen floating above the clouds in glory?
If we were told...
That's simple! It's because Jones woke up!
We'd reject this as absolutely preposterous!
Getting out of bed cannot explain Jones’ floating above the clouds in glory three years later!
Moral of the Parable
The hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead can no more explain the empty tomb and postmortem appearances...
...than the hypothesis that Jones rose from his bed can explain his empty house and later appearances!
To explain the empty tomb and the postmortem appearances requires appeal, not to the Resurrection itself, but to the postmortem activities of Jesus!
For example, just to explain the “heavenly” appearance of Jesus to Paul, we’d need to add two supplementary assumptions:

Jesus somehow ascended “up” into “Heaven” (wherever that is)!

Jesus somehow acquired the power to know what was going on “down” on earth and to create visions of himself in “heavenly” glory!
Thus we can see that, left to its own devices, the Resurrection Hypothesis lacks both explanatory scope and explanatory power!
This leads to the third problem for the Resurrection Theory!
The Resurrection Hypothesis is highly ad hoc because it must be supplemented by dubious assumptions regarding the postmortem activities of Jesus that it doesn’t imply and aren’t implied by our existing knowledge.
These assumptions include, the Ascension, the ability to pass through solid matter and to appear and disappear at will, telepathy, clairvoyance, and the power to create “heavenly” visions of glory!
This leads to the fourth and most pressing problem for the Resurrection Theory!
Atoms or Schmatoms?
Let's reconsider Licona's definition of the Resurrection Hypothesis—but now stripped of those elements that render it a viciously circular explanation:
I herein define the resurrection hypothesis as follows:

Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, [involving] Jesus [as a] appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse.
The problem now becomes the "indeterminate nature" of the Risen Jesus.
This “indeterminate nature” makes the Risen Jesus into a veritable “unknown”: the true “X-Man”!
Is this indeterminate “X-Man” composed of atoms?
Or is “he” composed of some unknown something else that, for lack of a better term, we can just call “schmatoms”?
The Best Explanation Objection

How can an indeterminate, an unknown “X”, explain any historical facts?
The Best Explanation Objection

Obviously, it can’t!
It is clear, then, that the resurrectionists’ “X-Man” Hypothesis faces the following “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma!
The "X-Man": he is he
Atoms or Schmatoms?!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

- Jesus Rose from the Dead
  - It is claimed the Resurrection can explain these facts!
  - Empty Tomb
  - Appearance to the Women
  - Appearance to the Disciples
  - Appearance to Paul
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Yet the question Resurrectionists can’t answer is “How”?

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul
There are only two possibilities—and both fail!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Horn 1

Atoms

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Jesus Rose from the Dead
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

On the Positive Side:

- Empty Tomb
- Appearance to the Women
- Appearance to the Disciples
- Appearance to Paul

- Jesus Rose from the Dead

Atoms
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

On the Positive Side:
- Can Interact with the Physical World!
- Can be Seen, Heard, and Touched!
- Can Pick Up and Eat Fish!
- Can Move about without Passing through Other People’s Bodies, Floors, and the Surface of the Earth!

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Atoms

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Atom-Jesus can be seen because light is reflected from his body!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

On the Negative Side:

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Atoms

Jesus Rose from the Dead
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

On the Negative Side:

Physically Weak!
Subject to Disease, Injury, and Aging,
Mortal!
Stuck down on the Earth—no way to
ascend “up” into “Heaven”!
Inglorious!
Fully aware of these limitations!
No triumphant Savior-Messiah!

E.g.: Merely Resuscitated
(Like Lazarus)
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

On the Negative Side:

- Physically Weak!
- Subject to Disease, Injury, and Aging,
- Mortal!
- Stuck down on the Earth—no way to ascend “up” into “Heaven”!
- Inglorious!
- Fully aware of these limitations!
- No triumphant Savior-Messiah!

E.g.: Merely Resuscitated (Like Lazarus)

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

**Atoms**

**Empty Tomb**
- Appearance to the Women
- Appearance to the Disciples
- Appearance to Paul

**Even Worse:**
- Jesus Rose from the Dead

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The "Atoms or Schmatoms" Explanatory Dilemma

Atoms

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Even Worse:
Allows for Transformation into Non-Human Forms!

Jesus Rose from the Dead

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Atoms

Even Worse:
Allowing for Transformation into Non-Human Forms!
E.g.: Alien Jesus

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Jesus Rose from the Dead

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma
The "Atoms or Schmatoms" Explanatory Dilemma

Atoms

Even Worse:
Allows for Transformation into Non-Human Forms!
E.g.: Beast Jesus

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Jesus Rose from the Dead

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Worst of All: No Way to even “Guesstimate” what Form Atom-Jesus will assume!

Jesus Rose from the Dead

No Way to “Guesstimate”!

Very Weak Explanation!

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul
The "Atoms or Schmatoms" Explanatory Dilemma

- Empty Tomb
  - Appearance to the Women
  - Appearance to the Disciples
  - Appearance to Paul

- Jesus Rose from the Dead
  - No Way to "Guesstimate!"

- Horn 2
  - Very Weak Explanation!

- Atoms
The "Atoms or Schmatoms" Explanatory Dilemma

- Empty Tomb
- Appearance to the Women
- Appearance to the Disciples
- Appearance to Paul

- No Way to "Guesstimate"!
- Very Weak Explanation!

- Jesus Rose from the Dead
- Horn 2
- Schmatoms

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

- Empty Tomb
- Appearance to the Women
- Appearance to the Disciples
- Appearance to Paul

- Jesus Rose from the Dead

- No Way to “Guesstimate”!

- Very Weak Explanation!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Atoms

Schmatoms

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

No Way to “Guesstimate”!

Very Weak Explanation!

Transformed into Some Wholly Other Form of “Life”
Perhaps Outside of Space-Time!

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Jesus Rose from the Dead

E.g.: Soma Pneumatikon
Imperishable, Powerful, Glorious, “Living” Body!

Atoms

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

Schmatoms

Very Weak Explanation!

No Way to “Guesstimate”!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

No way to “Guesstimate” what Schmatom-Jesus would be!

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The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

No way to “Guesstimate” what Schmatom-Jesus would do!

Atoms

No Way to “Guesstimate”!

Very Weak Explanation!

Schmatoms

No Way to “Guesstimate”!

No Way to “Guesstimate”!

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women

Appearance to the Disciples

Appearance to Paul

Jesus Rose from the Dead

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That doesn't matter anyway because schmatoms can't interact with the physical world!
Schmatom—Jesus cannot be seen because his “body” can’t interact with light!
Mary can see nothing but her surroundings!
There is no observational difference between Schmatom-Jesus and nothing at all!
Thus, be it atoms or schmatoms, the Risen Jesus is a Complete Unknown—an “X”!

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Thus, be it atoms or schmatoms, the Risen Jesus is a Complete Unknown—an “X”!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” Explanatory Dilemma

Atoms

Very Weak Explanation!

Schmatoms

Empty Tomb
Appearance to the Women
Appearance to the Disciples
Appearance to Paul

The One True “X-Man”!

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And so the Resurrection Theory becomes the “X-Man” Theory!

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We have no way to even "Guesstimate" what the "X-Man" would be and so we have no way to "Guesstimate" what he would do!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” “X-Man” Dilemma

Thus the probability of what the “X-Man” would be is incalculable!
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” “X-Man” Dilemma

Atom-Jesus confers a very low probability on the facts of Easter whereas Schmatom-Jesus confers a zero probability upon them!
Thus the “X-Man” Theory gives us no way of explaining the empty tomb and the postmortem appearances!
Atoms or Schmatoms?
The "Atoms or Schmatoms" "X-Man" Dilemma

\[ P(T & A \text{ on } R) = \]
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” “X”-“Man” Dilemma

\[ P(T \& A \text{ on } R) = P(T \& A \text{ on } "X") \]
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” “X”-“Man” Dilemma

\[
P(T \& A \text{ on } R) = \begin{cases} 
P(\text{Atoms on } "X") \times P(T \& A \text{ on } "X" \& \text{Atoms}) \\
+ \\
P(\text{Schmatoms on } "X") \times P(T \& A \text{ on } "X" \& \text{Schmatoms}) 
\end{cases}
\]
The "Atoms or Schmatoms" "X"-"Man" Dilemma

\[ P(T & A \text{ on } R) = \begin{cases} 
\text{Very Low} \\
? + ? + \text{Very Low}
\end{cases} \]

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P(T & A on R) = ? \times \text{very low} + ? \times 0
The “Atoms or Schmatoms” “X”-“Man” Dilemma

\[ P(T \& A \text{ on } R) = ? + 0 \]
P(T & A on R) = ?
What this means is that, their protestations to the contrary not withstanding, resurrectionists do not take the (alleged) historical facts seriously—they have no explanation for the empty tomb or the postmortem appearances of Jesus.
Even the most outlandish “naturalistic” hypothesis—e.g., Deceptive Space Aliens—is a better explanation of the (alleged) historical facts than the indeterminate unknown postulated by the “X-Man” theory!
Of course, what little bona fide historical evidence there is in Paul and the Gospels is far too weak to allow us to ever know for sure what really happened!
Paul and the Gospels contradict one another in what they say the Resurrection is, when and where the Risen Jesus was seen, and who the witnesses were, etc.!
Still, the Resurrection skeptic need not deny that Jesus saw himself as some kind of messianic figure, believed he must die in that capacity, and told his disciples to go to Galilee, after his death, where they would see him in heavenly glory.
This hypothesis would explain the existence of the New Testament and its specific contents far better than do more skeptical theories, e.g., Borg's, and more radical ones, e.g., Crossan's.
For example, it fits in perfectly with Jesus' use of Daniel 7:13 and the tradition that he told the high priest that "a man" would be seen being seated at the right hand of Power.
The passion-resurrection predictions of Jesus as they now stand in Mark bear many legendary elaborations—yet the hypothesis that there is an historical core to them would explain the fact that they exist.
If the disciples were eagerly expecting Jesus to rise from the dead and appear to them from "heaven" in Galilee, it would not be too surprising that their minds would project these expectations in the form of group hallucinations and false memories.
Such hallucinations might be **nocturnal and hypnopomic**—coming out of dreams “replaying” the suggestions of the premortem Jesus—and thus seem utterly real!
Being in the form of visions, the idiosyncratic nature of the group hallucinations would be of no concern.
The tomb in Jerusalem would be too far away to adversely affect the disciples’ expectations.
Moreover, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the body of Jesus would have been moved from the tomb without his family and followers knowing.
The Best Explanation Objection

This theory of the unknown removal of the corpse of Jesus from the tomb and group hallucinations based on strong expectations has a higher overall balance of prior probability and explanatory power than the Resurrection!
This is all the more so in light of the "Atoms or "Schmatoms?" Dilemma, which shows that the resurrectionist "X-Man" theory has no explanatory power at all!
Of course, this is not to say that this proposal is the best explanation of the (alleged) historical evidence or that it is more probable than not.
The Best Explanation Objection

But it beats the Resurrection “X-Man” theory hands down!
It is a fallacy to appeal to frequencies as evidence for the low prior probability of the Resurrection since this ignores the action of external agents.
It is a fallacy to appeal to frequencies as evidence for the low prior probability of the Resurrection since this ignores the action of external agents.
The Frequencies Objection

It may be a fallacy to appeal to frequencies as evidence of the low prior probability of the Resurrection—but not for the reason given by the objection, namely, that such frequencies ignore the action of external agents, such as God. For they don’t!

Cases we’ve observed where the dead have not risen

Cases we’ve observed where an external agent has not raised the dead
The cases we've observed of the non-risen dead are *ipso facto* cases in which an external agent (e.g., God) has not supernaturally raised the dead.
The Frequencies Objection

Thus, the observed frequency of non-resurrections automatically factors in the frequency with which external agents (e.g., God) do not supernaturally raise the dead!
Of course, this hardly means that we can or should use observational-relative frequencies as the basis for calculating the prior probability of the Resurrection!

Μὴ γένοιτο!
Although generally speaking observational-relative frequencies serve as one very important kind of evidence for calculating probabilities ...
...they are, in fact, particularly ill-suited for the purposes of calculating the prior probability of the Resurrection!
The problem, of course, is that for all or almost all of us the observational frequency of resurrections is strictly zero...
...yet Inferential Statistics does not permit us to calculate a strictly zero prior probability from (finite) observational frequencies of zero!
More importantly, as we shall see next, scientific considerations show that the Resurrection has a non-zero, albeit astronomically small, prior probability!
Science cannot prove that the Resurrection is Improbable
The Science Objection

Camel #7

Science cannot prove that the Resurrection is Improbable

Myth!
Science cannot be used to try to show that the Resurrection theory has a low antecedent probability!
You're wrong because you are ignoring Natural Revelation and the Via Negativa, which includes what we know about the World and God through Science!
The supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God violates the Second Law of Thermodynamics and thus has an astronomically low prior probability!
The Second Law of Thermodynamics tells us that:

the entropy of a physically isolated system is always increasing.
Now, since the supernatural realm, e.g., God, is non-physical, it lacks mass-energy, thus making the Universe a physically isolated system!
The Science Objection

Even if God exists...
The Science Objection

Even if God exists,
He is not physical...
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy...
The Science Objection

Even if God exists,
He is not physical,
and thus lacks energy,
and so cannot exchange energy...
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!
The Science Objection

Even if God exists,
He is not physical,
and thus lacks energy,
and so cannot exchange
energy in any form with
the Universe!
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!

The Universe is thus...
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!

The Universe is thus physically isolated...
Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!

The Universe is thus physically isolated: there is nothing with which it can exchange energy in any form!
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!

The Universe is thus physically isolated: there is nothing with which it can exchange energy in any form!
The Science Objection

Even if God exists, He is not physical, and thus lacks energy, and so cannot exchange energy in any form with the Universe!

The Universe is thus physically isolated: there is nothing with which it can exchange energy in any form!
The Universe is thus **physically isolated**: there is nothing with which it can exchange energy in any form!
The Science Objection

The Universe is thus physically isolated: there is nothing with which it can exchange energy in any form!
Thus, even if God exists...
...it makes no scientific difference!
The Universe **is still** a **physically isolated** system!
But, the entropy of the Universe markedly decreases in a supernatural resurrection from the dead!
Thus, the supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God violates the Second Law of Thermodynamics!
Gottcha!
So what if the Universe is physically isolated?
It's not causally isolated from God!
You’re right—but that doesn’t matter! The Second Law of Thermodynamics has been shown to hold for physically isolated systems—even if they are not causally isolated, e.g., from God.
The Second Law as part of the Via Negativa thus shows that God chooses **not** to supernaturally interfere with physically isolated systems!
This argument can be given a much deeper formulation in terms of the science of Statistical Mechanics.
Statistical Mechanics tells us that all microstates having the same energy have the same equal prior probability.
This is known as the Postulate of Equal A Priori Probabilities.
However, the name “Postulate of Equal A Priori Probabilities” is a misnomer.
It's actually a well-established empirical hypothesis whose justification lies in its ability to explain an amazing range of facts from various fields of science.
Statistical Mechanics thus tells us that, even if God has a chosen people, He has no chosen microstates—that is, all microstates having the same energy have the same prior probability!
The microstates of the corpse of Jesus together with its surroundings were of equal energy since this was merely exchanged in various forms back and forth between the two.
The Science Objection

Total Energy of Microstates of body of Jesus together with its Surroundings is Constant
But the equally probable microstates in which the corpse of Jesus is dead vastly outnumber those in which his body is alive!
Statistical Mechanics & the Prior Probability of Death, Decomposition, & Resurrection

Microstates of Death

Microstates of Life
Compartmentalization

Decompartmentalization

Statistical Mechanics & the Prior Probability of Death, Decomposition, & Resurrection

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Statistical Mechanics & the Prior Probability of Death, Decomposition, & Resurrection

Gazillions of These!  Comparatively Few of These!
Energy is simply exchanged between the body and its surroundings, so all microstates of their combined system have equal energy.

Because all the microstates have equal energy, the Postulate of Equal “A Priori” Probabilities applies, and thus all the microstates have equal prior probability.

Because the number of microstates instantiating death and decomposition is vastly greater than those instantiating life, the prior probability that the body will die and undergo complete decomposition is virtually 100%.
Because the number of microstates instantiating death and decomposition is vastly greater than those instantiating life, the prior probability that the corpse will not resurrect is virtually 100%.

Energy is simply exchanged between the body and its surroundings, so all microstates of their combined system have equal energy.

Because all the microstates have equal energy, the Postulate of Equal "A Priori" Probabilities applies, and thus all the microstates have equal prior probability.
The number of microstates ("ways") in which the constituents of the body of Jesus form a corpse astronomically exceeds the number of microstates ("ways") in which they form a living body.
Thus, it follows that the prior probability of a specifically supernatural Resurrection of Jesus by God is astronomically low!
This, of course, has **nothing** to do with observational-relative frequencies!

Μὴ γένοιτο!
The Total Evidence Objection

The Prior Probability of the Resurrection is Inscrutable because the Total Relevant Evidence isn’t Available
The Total Evidence Objection

Camel #8

The Prior Probability of the Resurrection is Inscrutable because the Total Relevant Evidence isn’t Available

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The Total Evidence Objection

Your argument can't be right! Prior probability **must** be based on the total evidence—something we don't possess!
No, you misunderstand the Total Evidence Requirement!
It does not state:

“The total relevant evidence must be used in reaching a conclusion.”
That’s preposterous!

We never have the total relevant evidence on any subject.
Your error is to leave out the crucial word: “available”!
What the requirement states is:

“The total available relevant evidence must be used in reaching a conclusion.”
The Total Evidence Objection

Please see:

by the great Inductive Logician, Wesley C. Salmon (1925-2001)
And my argument—based on the evidence of Natural Theology—states the total relevant available evidence!
And this all boils down to the following:

(1) God has an extraordinarily strong tendency not to supernaturally raise the dead.

and

(2) Jesus was dead.
The Skeptic ignores the Religio-Historical Context of the Resurrection
The Religio-Historical Context Objection

Camel #9

The Skeptic ignores the Religio-Historical Context of the Resurrection

Myth!
I gottcha now!

You leave out the evidence comprising the Religio-Historical Context of the Resurrection.
The Religio-Historical Context Objection

This includes the message, ministry, messianic claims, fulfilled prophecies, miracles, and sinless life of Jesus and how these fit into the Heilsgeschichte of Israel.
You leave out, crucially, the evidence that Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that God needed to raise Him so that we would know these things.
These aren’t items of available evidence—they’re clearly dogmas of faith!
The sinless life and miracles of Jesus are highly questionable, and, to paraphrase NT scholar James M. Robinson, the OT gives us prophecies the NT never fulfills while the NT gives us “fulfillments” the OT never prophesied!
Available evidence must be more probable than its denial—and these items, at the very best, are equal in probability to their denials.
For example, one can’t cite the existence of the Loch Ness Monster as “available evidence” against Evolution because the existence of Nessie is a mere belief that isn’t more probable than its denial.
The Religio-Historical Context Objection

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I'm not denying that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, or that the Resurrection was God's "super-miracle" to show this.
My point is that these are mere **dogmas of faith**—not bona fide available evidence!
Thus, it’s not that the skeptic ignores the “Religio-Historical Context”—it simply doesn’t exist!
Given the non-existence of the "Religio-Historical Context," your appeal to the supernatural intervention of God is a Deus ex Machina!
Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς
Given the available evidence, it is clear that the prior probability of the Supernatural Resurrection of Jesus is astronomically low!
The Reference Class Objection

It is impossible to determine the Correct Reference Class for the Resurrection.
It is impossible to determine the Correct Reference Class for the Resurrection.
The correct “reference class” for the Resurrection is determined by our total relevant available evidence—just given above.
The Anti-Resurrectionist assumes the Truth of Naturalism!
The Naturalism Objection

Camel #11

The Anti-Resurrectionist assumes the Truth of Naturalism!
Some skeptics do reject the Resurrection on the basis of anti-supernaturalist metaphysical presuppositions.
But it is clear that my argument does not!
Resurrectionists must be careful to avoid committing what Cavin and Colombetti call: The “Naturalism Fallacy” Fallacy!
The "Naturalism Fallacy" Fallacy is the fallacy of dismissing someone's anti-Resurrection argument as assuming naturalism when it does not!
Consider the analogy of Andre Kole.
The Naturalism Objection

Andre Kole
World Famous Christian Illusionist

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The Naturalism Objection

Miracles or Magic?

Andre Kole

Debunker of Supernatural Hoaxes

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Kole was suspicious of a story he’d heard about a Liberian witch doctor raising a villager back from the dead three days after he had killed him for disobedience by shooting him with a rifle.

So Kole investigated the case for himself.

Andre Kole
Debunker of Supernatural Hoaxes
Kole found that the witch doctor and villager had faked the latter’s death and resurrection by:

- Loading the rifle with blanks
- Planting a balloon with pig’s blood under the man’s shirt
- “Burying” the man in a coffin with a trap-door so he could escape out the back and hide for three days before returning to be “raised” by the witch doctor

(Miracles or Magic? pp. 13-14)
Kole's initial suspicion was well-founded because supernatural resurrection has an extraordinarily low prior probability.

Yet, this hardly made Kole a faithless anti-supernaturalist!
For all Kole knew a priori, perhaps the witch doctor had raised the dead man through God’s supernatural intervention.

Nonetheless, the low prior probability Kole assigned to this alleged resurrection was hardly inscrutable and, in fact, fully justified by the evidence of Natural Theology.

Andre Kole
Debunker of Supernatural Hoaxes
The Resurrection Theory alone satisfies all the Criteria of Adequacy
The Resurrection Theory alone satisfies all the Criteria of Adequacy.
The Resurrection Theory alone satisfies the criteria of explanatory scope, explanatory power, plausibility, being less ad hoc, and illumination!
# The Criteria of Adequacy Objection

## Table 5.6 Licona's Analysis of RH

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<th>Scope</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Plausibility</th>
<th>Less Ad Hoc</th>
<th>Illumination</th>
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</table>
No, the “X-Man” Theory fails to adequately satisfy any of these!
<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Plausibility</th>
<th>Non-Ad Hoc</th>
<th>Illumination</th>
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<td>Virtually 1</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>XH</td>
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<td>Extremely Low</td>
<td>Virtually 0</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mathematics Objection

Mathematical Probability Theory cannot be Applied to the Resurrection!
The Mathematics Objection

Mathematical Probability Theory cannot be Applied to the Resurrection!

Camel #13
You can’t apply mathematics to history! That’s using the wrong tool. It’s like trying to find cancer with a telescope.
Well, you’re ignoring the fact that it’s already been done!
Craig himself uses Bayes' theorem in his article, “Was Jesus Buried in Shame: Reflections on B. McCane's Proposal”!
Besides, the same reasons you give apply \textit{a fortiori} to non-mathematical approaches, e.g., Licona's five criteria of adequacy!
For example, “plausibility” is the same thing as prior probability; and explanatory power-scope is the same as explanatory likelihood!
The Plausibility-Prior Probability Objection

Plausibility Must be Used as a Criterion in Place of Prior Probability

Camel #14
The Plausibility-Prior Probability Objection

Plausibility Must be Used as a Criterion in Place of Prior Probability

Camel #14

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You can’t appeal to prior probability. You have to substitute “plausibility” instead!
But it’s been shown that any so-called “plausibility” that is not actually probability is wacky and leads to irrational beliefs and decisions!
The Plausibility-Prior Probability Objection

Brian Skyrm

Brilliant Inductive Logician

Choice & Chance

Causal Necessity

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Showed that plausibility, to be well-behaved rationally, i.e., not “wacky,” must be probability, i.e., conform to the axioms of the Probability Calculus and, thus, Bayes’ Theorem!
Plausibility that is not probability leads to the loss of those things we value—no matter what happens!
Bayes’ Theorem Theory cannot be Applied to the Resurrection!
Bayes' Theorem cannot be Applied to the Resurrection!
Recent studies indicate that the human brain is “hard-wired” for Bayesian reasoning!
Humans live in a world of uncertainty. A shadowy figure on the sidewalk ahead could be a friend or a mugger. By flooring your car’s accelerator, you might beat the train to the intersection, or maybe not. Last week’s leftover kung pao chicken could bring another night of gustatory delight or gut agony.

People’s paltry senses can’t always capture what’s real. Luckily, though, the human brain is pretty good at playing the odds. Thanks to the brain’s intuitive grasp of probabilities, it can handle imperfect information with aplomb.

“Instead of trying to come up with an answer to a question, the brain tries to come up with a probability that a particular answer is correct,” says Alexandre Pouget of the University of Rochester in New York and the University of Geneva in Switzerland. The range of possible outcomes then guides the body’s actions.

A probability-based brain offers a huge advantage in an uncertain world. In mere seconds, the brain can solve (or at least offer a good guess for) a problem that would take a computer an eternity to figure out — such as whether to greet the approaching stranger with pepper spray or a hug.
The Anti-Bayesian Resurrectionist is **Committed** by Virtue of Logical Equivalence to the Bayesian Formulation he opposes!
The anti-Bayesian resurrectionist affirms:

Given the historical evidence, it is more probable than not that Jesus rose from the dead.

but denies that formal probability theory and, in particular, Bayes' theorem, can be applied to the problem of the historicity of the Resurrection.

However, as is shown in the next several slides, the non-Bayesian affirmation is, in fact, logically equivalent to the Bayesian formulation.
Step 1: The Non-Bayesian Affirmation:

Given the historical evidence, it is more probable than not that Jesus rose from the dead.
Step 2: Paraphrase:

Given the historical evidence, it is more probable that Jesus rose from the dead than it is that Jesus did not rise from the dead.
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Step 3: Abbreviate:

Given $B \& E$, it is more probable that $R$ than it is that $\sim R$.

Abbreviations:

$B =$ our background information

$E =$ the special evidence to be explained: the empty tomb, the postmortem appearances of Jesus, and the origin of Christianity

$R =$ the hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead

$\sim R =$ the hypothesis that Jesus did not rise from the dead
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Step 4: Paraphrase Again:

The probability of $R$ given $B \& E$ is greater than the probability of $\sim R$ given $B \& E$.

Abbreviations:

$B =$ our background information

$E =$ the special evidence to be explained: the empty tomb, the postmortem appearances of Jesus, and the origin of Christianity

$R =$ the hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead

$\sim R =$ the hypothesis that Jesus did not rise from the dead
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Step 5: Complete Abbreviation:

\[ P(R|B \& E) > P(\sim R|B \& E) \]

Abbreviations:

- \( P(q|p) \): the probability of \( q \) on \( p \)
- \( >: \) greater than
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Step 6: Apply Bayes’ Theorem

\[
P(R \mid B \ & \ E) = \frac{P(R \mid B) \times P(E \mid B \& R)}{P(R \mid B) \times P(E \mid B \& R) + P(\neg R \mid B) \times P(E \mid B \& \neg R)}
\]
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Step 6: yields the Bayesian formulation:

\[
P(R|B \& E) = \frac{P(R|B) \times P(E|B\&R)}{P(R|B) \times P(E|B\&R) + P(\neg R|B) \times P(E|B\&\neg R)}
\]

\[
P(\neg R|B \& E) = \frac{P(\neg R|B) \times P(E|B\&\neg R)}{P(\neg R|B) \times P(E|B\&\neg R) + P(R|B) \times P(E|B\&R)}
\]
The Bayesian Approach beautifully accommodates, systematizes, and codifies the Criteria of Adequacy.
The Anti-Bayes' Theorem Objection

\[
P(R|B&E) = \frac{P(R|B) \times P(E|B&R)}{P(R|B) \times P(E|B&R) + P(\sim R|B) \times P(E|B&\sim R)}
\]
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(R|B&E) \leftarrow \text{Posterior Probability of } R \]

\[ P(R|B) \leftarrow \text{Prior Probability of } R \]

\[ P(\sim R|B) \leftarrow \text{Prior Probability of } \sim R \]

\[ P(E|B&R) \leftarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } R \]

\[ P(E|B&\sim R) \leftarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } \sim R \]
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(R|B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } R^* \]

*Same as Plausibility of R*
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(R|B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } R \]

Includes logical virtues of:

- Simplicity
- Modesty
- Conservatism
- Non-Ad-Hoc-ness
The Anti-Bayes' Theorem Objection

\[ P(R|B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } R: \]

- **Simplicity** = \( P(R) \) and thus is included in \( P(R|B) \)
- **Modesty** is a function of the content of \( R \) and thus is included in \( P(R|B) \)
- **Conservatism** is a function of the evidential relation between \( B \) and \( R \) and thus is included in \( P(R|B) \)
- **Non-Ad-Hoc-ness** is an aspect of conservatism and thus is included in \( P(R|B) \)
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(\sim R \mid B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } \sim R^* \]

*Same as Plausibility of \( \sim R \)
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(\sim R \mid B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } \sim R \]

Includes logical virtues of:

- Simplicity
- Modesty
- Conservatism
- Non-Ad-Hoc-ness
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(\sim R | B) \leftrightarrow \text{Prior Probability of } \sim R: \]

Simplicity = \( P(\sim R) \) and thus is included in \( P(\sim R | B) \)

Modesty is a function of the content of \( \sim R \)
and thus is included in \( P(\sim R | B) \)

Conservatism is a function of the evidential relation
between \( B \) and \( \sim R \) and thus is included in \( P(\sim R | B) \)

Non-Ad-Hoc-ness is an aspect of conservatism and
thus is included in \( P(\sim R | B) \)
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

Although explanatory power and explanatory scope are distinct, it is impossible to disentangle them logically since the more facts one puts into E, the lower n must be, and the greater n is, the less one can put in E.

\[ P(E \mid B&R) = n \leftrightarrow \text{Explanatory Power of R}^* \]

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(E|B&R) = n \leftrightarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } R^* \]

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination

This definition of explanatory power and explanatory scope automatically includes “non-distortion” of facts to be explained—for this is just a metaphorical way of designating the degree of probability that a hypothesis confers on those facts: the more/less distortion, the less/more probability conferred.
Bayesian Explanatory Power and Explanatory Scope

The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(E | B & R) = n \leftarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } R^* \]

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination

*Fruitfulness and Illumination are actually functions of \( P(E | B & R) \) and \( P(E | B & \sim R) \) combined
Although explanatory power and explanatory scope are distinct, it is impossible to disentangle them logically since the more facts one puts into $E$, the lower $n$ must be, and the greater $n$ is, the less one can put in $E$. 

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

$P(E|B&\sim R) = n \leftarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } \sim R^*$

$\uparrow$

Explanatory Scope of $\sim R$

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination

This definition of explanatory power and explanatory scope automatically includes “non-distortion” of facts to be explained—for this is just a metaphorical way of designating the degree of probability that a hypothesis confers on those facts: the more/less distortion, the less/more probability conferred.
The Anti-Bayes’ Theorem Objection

\[ P(E | B & \sim R) = n \leftrightarrow \text{Explanatory Power of } \sim R^* \]

*Includes Predictive Power, Fruitfulness, and Illumination

*Fruitfulness and Illumination are actually functions of \( P(E | B & R) \) and \( P(E | B & \sim R) \) combined
The Bayesian Approach does not create problems—it merely serves to make them clear!
Formalizing the argument for the Resurrection by using Bayes' Theorem does not create problems, e.g., those of background information and incomplete evidence.

Formalization only serves to make these problems—problems that already exist anyway—clear.
The Bayesian Approach solves problems that the Anti-Bayesian approach cannot!
The informal, anti-Bayesian approach of McCullagh begs key questions that only the formalized, Bayesian approach can answer.

It is clear that such criteria as plausibility and explanatory scope and explanatory power must be taken into account in determining probable historicity. But why?

Only the Bayesian approach can explain why these must be taken into account via the mathematics of Bayes’ Theorem.
The informal, anti-Bayesian approach of McCullagh is incapable of explaining how the various criteria fit/work together or when and how one criterion takes precedence over another.

In contrast, the Bayesian approach explains these with precision via the mathematics of Bayes’ Theorem.
The Anti-Bayesian Approach Creates Problems only the Bayesian Approach can Solve
For example, defining “plausibility” in terms of the number of propositions that imply a theory won’t work, for two reasons:

First, there is no objective way of counting the number of propositions that imply a theory since propositions can be combined into any smaller number you please by the operation of conjunction.

Second, let $P_1$ through $P_n$ be all the propositions that each imply theory $T$. Then every conjunction of two or more of the $P_i$ entails $T$. Yet, for any such conjunction $C$ and any $P_i$:

$$P(T|P_i) = P(T|C) = P(T|P_1 \& \ldots \& P_n).$$
The Bayesian Approach shows that, to be well-defined, Plausibility must be Bayesian Prior Probability!
The same problems that anti-Bayesians urge against Bayesian Prior Probability arise equally for Plausibility!
Even if one assumes that plausibility is not prior probability, it is clear that all of the problems that anti-Bayesians urge against the latter—e.g., the problems of background knowledge and incomplete evidence—arise equally for the former.

Thus, if it is true that it is impossible to determine the prior probability of the Resurrection, then the same is true a fortiori for the plausibility of the Resurrection.
The There-Are-No-Contradictions-in-the-Easter-Narratives Objection

The Skeptic falsely holds that there are Contradictions in the Easter Narratives
The There-Are-No-Contradictions-in-the-Easter-Narratives Objection

Camel #16

The Skeptic falsely holds that there are Contradictions in the Easter Narratives

Myth!
Angel(s) at The Empty Tomb

... he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.

Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man . . .

Mark:
Jesus told them that he would go to Galilee

Luke:
Jesus told them in Galilee that the Son of man . . .

Why?
Historical? Literary?
I restrict the appearances of the Risen Christ to the greater Jerusalem area: Emmaus, the Upper Room, and the Mount of Olives.

So I can’t very well follow Mark in having the Angels order the women to tell the disciples to go meet Jesus in Galilee!
Thus I changed Mark’s original “he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you” . . .

. . . to “Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man . . .”!

Luke the Evangelist
Postscript to the Debate
The Resurrection:  Bad News!

According to most members of this audience, if Christ be raised, then Licona and most of you are going to Heaven while Cavin and the vast majority of humanity are going to Hell.  But, it's probable that Christ was not raised, and none of us are going anywhere.
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